LOWER SCHOOL BALANCED LITERACY

Newman’s Balanced Literacy Curriculum enables teachers to use an integrated approach to teaching Language Arts and gives all of our students the opportunity to gain proficiency in reading, writing, word study and grammar, communication, and handwriting. The Balanced Literacy Curriculum encourages differentiated instruction and learning based on the student’s individual needs and interests, while offering authentic reading and writing experiences. These authentic opportunities for introducing skills are modeled by the teacher through mini-lessons and are reinforced through practice on the student’s “just right” level either independently, in partnerships, or in small groups with teacher guidance.

**Reader’s Workshop** includes Shared Reading, Guided Reading, and Independent Reading. Using these methods, students develop a love of reading and are exposed to a variety of strategies and skills. Based on formal and informal assessments, teachers gain insight into each student’s growth and development as a reader, helping to further develop decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills. Reader’s Workshop allows teachers to effectively differentiate student reading levels in their classrooms so that all children are engaged and reading independently, becoming confident, motivated, and enthusiastic readers.

**Word Study and Grammar** includes phonemic awareness, phonics, word patterns, vocabulary, and grammar. Using the Words Their Way program, teachers are able to formally and informally assess each student’s spelling knowledge and differentiate spelling instruction for each individual in the classroom. The goal of Word Study is for every student to become a spelling problem solver and make informed choices when applying spelling patterns in their everyday writing.

**Communication** is an essential life skill. We strive to foster good listening and speaking skills in every grade at Newman, encouraging our students to feel comfortable sharing their ideas and actively listening to others’ ideas.

**Handwriting** focuses on correct letter formation and pencil grip. Newman uses the Handwriting Without Tears program to help all of our students become fluent writers who can easily get their ideas on paper accurately and efficiently.

**Writer’s Workshop** includes Shared Writing, Guided Writing, and Independent Writing. Using the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Writing Workshop, lessons focus not only on the mechanics of writing, but also on the craft and style of writing. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods including whole class sessions, small group mini-lessons, student-teacher conferences, and sharing of written work. Students write every day and thus see themselves as writers.