

How is Grammar Taught in the Kyrene School District?

Grammar instruction looks a lot different in today’s schools than what most adults today experienced as children. Educators have learned a lot in the last several years about best practices in developing grammar skills from educational research.

First, it is important to acknowledge that since language evolves over time, what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate language in mainstream culture is also frequently changing. In Kyrene, we embrace that our students speak a variety of world languages, variants of English, and/or General American English.

Aligned with educational research¹ and with Arizona ELA standards², we model conventions of General American English in classroom instruction and invite students to communicate in the following manner:

Instead of...	Kyrene students will...
Saying language is “good” or “bad”	Learn that language can be effective or ineffective in certain contexts
Correcting “errors” in discussion or writing	Be invited to utilize the appropriate language pattern for the task at hand

Research tells us that isolated grammar drills are ineffective to get students to speak and write in General American English.³ Instead, we develop grammar through two ways:

1. Explore how language is used within texts read in class
2. Apply knowledge of grammatical conventions to writing

How do Kyrene students explore language?

- Our mentor texts in Amplify CKLA (grade K-5) and myPerspectives (grades 6-8), as well as anchor novels in grades 3-8, allow us to explore language and the grammar utilized by various authors. Teachers lead classroom discussions on how authors use language in text.
- In grades 3-8, students are taught the meaning of prefixes, suffixes and root words that appear in readings

How do Kyrene students apply knowledge of grammatical conventions to writing?

- *All grades:* Teachers teach a short lesson on grade appropriate General American English conventions and students immediately making appropriate edits in their own writing.⁴
- *Grades K-2:* students are explicitly taught the parts of speech and sentence structure patterns to write their own sentences with a clear subject and predicate.
- *Grades 3-8:* Students examine their own writing and look for places to combine simple sentences into complex ones.

¹ Wheeler, R.S., & Swords, R. (2006). *Codeswitching: Teaching standard English in urban classrooms*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

² Arizona Department of Education. (2021, October 27). *Arizona’s English Language Arts Standards: 2016, Anchor Standards*.

<https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2017/02/Anchor%20Standards%20ELA%202016%20Final.pdf?id=58a2197c1130c2091cf212c3>

³ Gartland, L. B., & Smolkin, L. B. (2016). THE HISTORIES AND MYSTERIES OF GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION: Supporting Elementary Teachers in the Time of the Common Core. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 391–399.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1408>

⁴ Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 445-476. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.445>