



## **Reading**

We value the pleasure of reading and view it as an end in itself; we hope that Overlake students graduate with an appreciation of reading that stays with them throughout their lives. We approach reading as a vehicle for reflection and understanding; we believe that reading helps students learn more about experiences that are different from their own while also affirming their identities.

We use essential questions that are relevant to students to guide the reading experience, and we emphasize close reading skills to help students become critical thinkers and writers. Our courses value depth and breadth: we expose students to a variety of perspectives and genres that yield insight into the essential questions, highlighting that there is no single, correct answer. During middle school, we focus on foundational skills to help students make inferences about texts and discover connections to their own lives. In upper school, we build upon that and focus on context and values; we examine the context in which works are created and ask students to consider how the context they are currently living in influences the way they understand texts. Overall, we hope that reading helps students cultivate empathy and develop a deeper sense for who they are.

## **Oral Communication**

The dialogue in our classrooms enriches speaking and listening skills. Our classrooms are student-centered and question-oriented; we value open-mindedness, and we encourage students to approach new people and perspectives with a willingness to learn. We believe that ideas evolve through engaging in dialogue. We also emphasize presentation, debate, and public speaking skills so that students learn how to communicate their ideas effectively to different audiences. Overall, we help students develop their voices so that they can participate responsibly and respectfully in all types of dialogue.



We create learning environments that are safe so that students can become uncomfortable: by creating trust within our classrooms, we help students move outside of their comfort zones so that they can hear, grapple with, and examine a range of ideas surrounding complex topics. We help students learn how to step up and step back in group discussions, and we appreciate that each person's contribution to a conversation can be different in light of their personality and background. We teach active listening skills so that students understand how to non-verbally communicate their respect to a speaker. We hope that students graduate from Overlake with an understanding of how messy the challenges of pluralism are; we hope they see those challenges as rich opportunities for continued learning through civil discourse.

### **Writing**

We value writing as a tool to cultivate curiosity. We believe that students become passionate about writing when they have choice and ownership in the writing process. We take a process-oriented approach that teaches pre-writing, drafting, and editing strategies that prepare students for many different types of writing. We create forums for students to reflect on their journeys as writers, as we believe that metacognition and self-awareness enable students to become more clear and competent communicators.

We create environments where students can approach us with their writing so that they can take risks with their ideas and questions. We view writing as an interaction between writer and reader; we teach students that understanding their audience can help them articulate their ideas more effectively. We teach students writing structures and conventions that help them communicate with clarity and precision. Overall, we value the power of words, and we emphasize the importance of clear, well-reasoned, and coherent writing.