



English literacy—the code of the English language and how to read and think—are critical to life-long well-being and cognitive development.

Treasure Valley Classical Academy uses Access Literacy’s neuro-linguistic approach to teach English literacy. This is a research proven method that integrates writing and spelling to teach reading and promote thinking.

Languages are first of all spoken.

Learning the English language begins with a conversation about the sounds it makes and how these sounds are mapped to a written code.

Three numbers help us better understand how the English language is coded.

First, English uses 42 basic sounds (called phonemes) to create over 1 million words.

Second, we use the 26 letters of the English alphabet to represent these basic sounds. This poses an obvious challenge—there are many more sounds than letters. As a result, some of the letters represent more than one sound and sometimes, multiple letters are combined to represent one sound.

This leads us to the **third** number: there are 72 common letter combinations (called graphemes) that represent these multiple sounds. This is necessary because sometimes the same sound is made by different letter combinations. For example, the words “play” and “eight” have the same “A” sound but are spelled differently. Why are there so many different spellings for the same sound? The reason relates to the rich heritage of the English language, which draws from a number of different languages and cultures, including German, French, Latin and Greek.

The core of the literacy program is built around 72 phonograms.

The phonograms are a structured system used by teachers to help students learn the single and multi-letter spelling patterns and the sounds associated with those patterns. This is the essential code of the English language. Learning the phonograms creates phonemic awareness, which is one of the best predictors of early reading success.

Children are naturally curious and enjoy solving problems, and English words are like coding challenges or puzzles. Children are first taught to encode the sounds they hear by writing them and by spelling words. Writing is important because it is a physical (kinesthetic) act that neurologically wires the brain to correctly program the 72 sound-to-symbol relationships. By doing this, students are laying the foundation to decode words. Decoding reverses the code and teaches students how to read. Students practice reading by decoding and then segmenting and blending the words they learned to write and spell by encoding.

In the process of learning the code and in the daily analysis of vocabulary, children’s brains are stimulated for complex thinking. Teachers actively use multisensory instruction to engage students to *see it, hear it, say it, and write it*. Students explore vocabulary words through analysis that requires cause and effect, inference, part-to-whole and whole-to-part thinking.

The Access Literacy program trains students to think well and think deeply, and this is carried with them into the study of other disciplines such as mathematics, science, history, and literature.

