

Lower School

Curriculum Overview – Grades 3-5



Lower School students expand their horizons and begin to see things from different perspectives.

All Lower School academic classes are taught in French or English, so students don't merely learn two languages – they learn *in* those two languages. This enables students to experience different ways of thinking and reasoning on a daily basis, enhancing their intellectual flexibility. It is a lifelong benefit that not many other elementary schools can match.

Beginning in grade 3, students spend half of their core classroom time in French and the other half in English.

Lower School follows a curriculum that aligns with the official program of the French Ministry of Education. Additional topics are added based upon United States education that further enhance the program and give the students an education that is rich and unique.

Language Arts

The upper elementary grades are a time to strengthen the language skills taught in grades 1 and 2. Students are now focusing on interpretation of reading material, both fiction and non-fiction, and developing their critical thinking skills. They are now reading for learning and gaining an appreciation for the craft of writing. As a result, as writers, they are developing their own voices and focusing on how to improve their writing through such things as: the writing process, “show not tell”, and a variety of other tools for becoming good writers and communicators. Students have more and more opportunities to present their work to an audience thereby working on their public speaking skills as well. English or French as a Second Language is provided in small groups to those not able to participate fully in the regular language arts activities. Throughout the year time spent in ESL/FSL will diminish as a student is better prepared to do all of the classroom activities.

Mathematics

The Lower School math program follows the mathematics guidelines from the French Ministry of Education as well as many of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. In grades 3-5 the math curriculum is divided between the English and French classes. As methods for teaching math and presenting problems differ between the French and American educational systems, the classroom teachers work together to present topics in a manner that will make the most sense to the students. At the same time teaching math through both languages allows the students to see that there are a number of ways to reach the same answer leading to more flexibility of thought.

Science

A weekly hands-on, discovery-based science class is taught through the language of English. Topics covered are further studied and reinforced by reading and writing assignments throughout the week. Topics studied introduce students to all the main areas of the field: physical sciences, life sciences, earth and space sciences, and engineering, technology, and applications of science. Through a partnership with Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary in Belmont, students get a deeper look at nature-based education.

Humanities

Humanities (Social Studies in the English language program and *Histoire-Géographie* in the French one) is taught in both languages as a way to help students gain a greater understanding of themselves and others. The program based upon both French and United States models and topics inherently presents the students with more than one perspective. Teachers also make additional global connections wherever possible. The students benefit a great deal from the overlap of topics such as learning about revolutions where they discuss topics from two different points of view, and create group projects that transcend the two languages.

Arts

At ISB students study the arts to learn about the world around them and to understand their own historical and cultural heritage and those of others within their community. Participating in artistic expression plays a significant role in the development of the student's spirit and broadens one's appreciation for and understanding of the role of music in our lives.

Through the performing arts of music and theater student increase their self-confidence in expressing themselves in two languages. They also learn the skills associated with performing in front of an audience and of creating a group work. In grade 4 students begin to learn how to play the recorder in music class.

The visual arts allow students to develop their individual creativity as they learn techniques of working with a variety of medium such as paints, pastels, charcoal or clay. Students' ability to look closely at a piece of art work and critique it is also a focus of the program.

Physical Education

The objectives of our Lower School Physical Education program are to help students develop their motor skills, access the cultural heritage related to various physical activities and acquire life-long skills related to knowing and respecting their bodies and keeping them healthy. This is done through playing team sports where they learn to work cooperatively with their peers and to follow rules. It is also done through building one's individual strength and honing one's skills. Additionally, students learn how to express themselves creatively through the movement of acrobatics, gymnastics, and dance.

Information Technology

Starting in grade 3, students have a weekly IT class where they begin to learn what it means to be a good digital citizen. Through a variety of activities linked to classroom projects, students are able to develop their computer skills. They learn their way around a computer and how to work within the school environment understanding connecting to the network and how and where to save documents. They learn to create, produce, process and use data, and how to search on the internet.

Library

Students have a scheduled hour in the library each week when they learn some additional research skills through the use of books. The librarian will also introduce the children to new literature and further develop their appreciation of literature through author and illustrator visits. Naturally, students have the opportunity to borrow both French and English books.

Character Education

Throughout the year students learn about the importance of different character traits. Through discussions and activities about such topics as empathy, respect, global mindedness, gratitude, and perseverance, students gain a better understanding about living and working together in a community and what it means to be a global citizen. During periodic assemblies, students are introduced to the theme of the month and are able to share activities they have done in class related to the previous theme.

Student Support Services and Programs

As part of the Lower School curriculum, students have various opportunities for support and enrichment. Our Individualized learning support team made up of two English speaking literacy specialists and two French speaking learning specialists, provides small group help to students both outside the classroom and within the classroom as needed. ESL and FSL professionals as well as classroom assistants also help teachers to further differentiate instruction to meet all the students' needs.