



Early Childhood Curriculum

Language Arts

Reading

In preschool and kindergarten, students begin their reading journeys through exposure to books, conversations, storytelling, drawing, pretend play, and other symbolic activities. Our literacy-rich environment creates interest, engagement, and responsiveness: children learn that text can build a bridge to greater understanding of an interesting topic, and that stories can be windows into other worlds, or inspiration for their richest imaginative play. These experiences build crucial foundations for later conventional reading.

We respond to our young students' varied developmental levels, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds, meeting each child where they are on their path to becoming readers. Rich project work allows those with beginning reading skills already in place to practice those skills as they seek to expand their knowledge, while pre-readers are encouraged through exposure, literacy games, and explicit instruction to build new competencies. Students begin to establish an understanding of print, enjoy the pleasure of stories and informational text, and learn about authors. They begin to develop reading habits, form hopes around becoming a reader, and gain beginning foundational literacy skills (phonics and word analysis skills). Students are energized to handle books with confidence, talk about the books they've experienced through read-alouds, develop a working knowledge of concepts of print, build a beginning sight word vocabulary, and gain an understanding of the alphabetic principle and letter/sound correspondence.

Writing

In preschool, students' interest in and ability to use symbols to represent words and ideas is encouraged throughout each day. Students understand that writing is language/speech transcribed. They begin to develop writing habits, form hopes around becoming effective writers, and gain some beginning literacy skills. As they industriously create signs, lists, and notes to enrich their daily play, preschoolers begin to see themselves as inventors of messages that have growing meaning and purpose. Students participate in shared group writing experiences, such as dictating thank-you notes, invitations, story creation, and announcements.

Kindergarteners begin the year knowing that they can and will write often. Through participation in regular writers' workshop, where they create, revise and illustrate books and stories of various genres with independent purpose, they quickly come to see themselves as authors. Periodic writing celebrations underscore this accomplishment. As part of their play and project work, students also explore using print for a variety of everyday purposes, including letter/card writing, labeling, list making, informational writing, and book making. Phonetic spelling is encouraged, and students begin to use letters to represent the sounds with increasing accuracy. They are introduced to different conventions of writing through shared writing experiences and mini-lessons that are offered during writers' workshop times. Handwriting is also introduced to promote correct letter formation.

Speaking and Listening

The foundation for active listening and effective speaking skills is set in preschool and kindergarten. Students are introduced in preschool to the formalities of conversational speech, discourse, and reciprocal communication. Students learn the conventions of language and strategies for clear, thoughtful and empathetic communication through dramatic play, read alouds, teacher-led conversations, peer discussions, and sharing.

As they move into kindergarten, students continue to work on the skills they need to be focused, calm, and responsive active listeners. They become more aware of the need to listen to and incorporate other's ideas and points of view. They learn to differentiate between questions and comments, between fact and opinion (or fiction), and continue to understand more conventions in spoken language. Our school day is incredibly collaborative and social, allowing for opportunities to both listen and communicate one's own ideas thoughtfully, through morning meeting greetings and sharings, journal writing, advocating ideas for project work, creating dramatic representations of literature, discussing books in both small and large literary circles, and in the constant peer negotiation that goes on during a school day.

Math

Throughout the early childhood years, we encourage children to notice and engage with the mathematical dimensions of their world. They explore patterns, investigate quantities, navigate spatial relations, and grapple with authentic, day-to-day problems such as building stable block structures or sharing harvested cherries from our garden fairly with classmates. Mathematics helps children make sense of their world, both in and outside of school.

Our early childhood classrooms are designed with intentionality to provide the materials, time, and teacher support for children to engage with, explore and manipulate mathematical ideas. During project work, children engage in rich math investigations and activities as a natural part of exploring high interest topics: for example, preschoolers learning about mice might measure out quantities to better understand and demonstrate how much a mouse eats each night, while kindergarteners might categorize and graph the types of bones discovered while dissecting an owl pellet during their project study on owls native to their outdoor classroom.

Through a combination of whole group, small group, and individual work, teachers support preschoolers as they grow in their ability to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence when counting, recognize and connect numerals to their corresponding quantities, identify shapes and patterns, and place objects in order, sequence, and category. In kindergarten, students are pushed to grow this mathematical understanding, as they begin to understand that quantities are composites of smaller units and can be composed and decomposed in a variety of ways, practice skip-counting and counting backwards, and represent numbers with written and spoken numerals. As preschoolers and kindergarteners work and play with patterns, numbers and concepts, they are becoming more confident and creative mathematical thinkers, developing mathematical habits and dispositions that will support them throughout the grades.

Science

Our garden is both a play space and a science classroom. Working alongside our garden educators, students learn to tend our garden; watering, harvesting, and enjoying the fruits of their labor. There is a wide variety of herbs, fruits and vegetables that children have the opportunity to care for and enjoy. In the winter months when the garden is



put to bed, students plant seeds indoors, tending to them under grow lights, until the last frost has passed the garden is once again ready to be planted. The garden is also a rich environment for observation and experimentation—with both preschool and kindergarten classrooms often diving into the study of a plant or animal found in this rich ecosystem.

Spanish

In Preschool and Kindergarten Spanish we begin to develop our listening and speaking skills through greetings, movement, songs, active play, stories, and hands-on activities. Our youngest students practice

greetings, explore cultural celebrations, and express their likes, dislikes, and preferences. They also describe people and things using simple phrases. Some topics include greetings, sharing feelings, counting, describing the weather and clothing, animals, and food. Learners practice active listening, participate by echoing and repeating, observe gestures, make predictions, and look for visual and auditory clues to make meaning.

Physical Education

Students in preschool and kindergarten take part in movement classes, focusing on developing movement patterns, gross motor skills, basic fundamental sports skills, and spatial awareness. Students practice skills individually, in pairs, and in small groups. Students also gain additional practice through thematic games, dance, and yoga.

Music

The Early Childhood music program is designed to help preschoolers and kindergarteners develop their singing voices, develop their ability to respond to a steady beat through movement, and enhance their listening skills. Music activities help bring awareness of the student's immediate surroundings and also the world at large. Classes include experience with rhythm and orchestral instruments, musical games, creative movement, group dances, singing and performing, creating rhythm compositions, and musical literature.

Art

In preschool and kindergarten, through guided discovery, children are taught to value different media and art tools, as well as techniques for their use. They are then ready for explorations of line, shape, color, and texture. They experience sculpting, building, painting, drawing, collage, and printing. As students become more familiar with the materials, they are encouraged to work at a slower pace and with more intention and awareness. Ideas form, and exciting products of their own design emerge. Art promotes critical thinking and invites children to communicate emotions, questions, and insights. The skills they learn in the studio enhance their work and play in the classroom.