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Family School Program

Overview

Family School is an alternative K-8 program offered by the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). Students attend a public school program that combines a half-day of classroom instruction with a half-day of home-based instruction. This unique arrangement helps parents take an active role in the education of their children. Students develop their own knowledge by actively engaging in problem-solving lessons and community activities.

APS Family School's multi-age, open-ended curriculum is designed to help students take responsibility for their learning process. The program's use of both classroom and home environment encourages students to grow into self-initiating, life-long learners. The student curriculum is a rigorous, hands-on, integrated, self-directed approach to cooperative learning. This curriculum is offered in an environment that provides both high expectations and the necessary support to meet these expectations. The parent curriculum is designed to help parents share responsibility for assessing and educating the student.

Expectations of Parents

Expectations of Parents at Family School are to buy into the philosophy of Family School as a partnership between the families and the school to educate your child(ren) and also...

1. Provide transportation within the drop off/pick up windows for the class
2. The home school parent responsible for the majority of the teaching is required to attend 2 meetings each month with the teacher.
3. Provide an average of 10 to 15 hours of home school instruction and document it through a log to be turned in to the teacher on a regular basis.
 - In the younger grades the log is maintained by the parents, but in the older grades the expectation is for the student to maintain the log.
 - The home school instruction is predominantly work generated by the classroom teacher, but allows for the parent to individualize the lesson for the child at home.
 - Some projects may allow for more input and design by the parent.
4. Some voluntary time may be expended by:
 - Helping in the classroom.
 - Going to classroom to watch presentations by students.
 - Going to training sessions given at the school.
 - Helping with FTO projects.

Lessons Learned

(1) Goals are Foundational

It is important when looking into Family School that as a family you are clear about your goals. Define why you want to be here, make sure that the family (as a whole unit) is agreed on the desired outcome. Although we all share common goals, each family is unique and individual – and within the workings of Family School each family will have different experiences based on those variations. Make sure you understand the philosophies of Family School so that you can decide if your family’s goals can be obtained within those parameters.

In the setting of family goals it is significant to have the child(ren) involved in the discussing, setting, revisiting, changing and achieving of those goals. The parent/child relationship is fundamental to success at Family School as the impact of this method of learning is challenging and demanding on the entire family.

(2) What We Know to Be True

Time

The utilization of time is necessary to accomplish your goals. Be creative. Strategize. Use the variety of events of your daily lives coupled with the Family School home studies to create a stimulating learning experience. You will need to allot time for fulfilling the required work sent home with your child(ren) and also accommodate your other studies, activities, and daily lives. This can be accomplished through an assortment of ways and can only be personalized and determined by the individual family. Remember to be flexible and creative!! Break out of the norms and routines you may have previously been familiar with. You have twenty four hours a day and seven days a week to accomplish your goals – your schedule will not be the same as the family sitting next to you! Recreational time is just as important as academic time – we all need physical, mental and emotional challenges and stimulation – balance is key.

Community

Family School is just that – a family school. We are unique in that our families create a family in and of itself. The community is an inexhaustible wealth of information, support and encouragement. Utilize the assets available to you to make your experience as rewarding as possible for your family. Ask, ask, ask!

Coping

As in any family there are challenges that arise as we try to move forward. Within your own family, and within Family School, challenges will surface – but don’t despair! First thing to remember is you’re not alone and others have traversed the path before you. We offer the following:

- Use the parent class meetings for strategies, affirmation and validation – we’re here to support one another.
- Take care of yourself – exercise, find a hobby, do something out of the norm, treat yourself to something special.
- Learn when it’s time for either you or your child to take a break. Be flexible.
- Be aware of the effects of outside influences on you and your child’s behavior – i.e. lack of sleep, hunger, medications, etc. Adjust your schedule until the affected one is able to be productive.
- Remember what your goals are – is this challenge thrusting you forward, or is it time to reconsider the approach?
- Your teacher is there to work WITH you – keep open communications so that your child benefits fully from the process. Discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly so that as a “family” you can help your child succeed.
- Remind yourself, and your child, of the successes, the blessings, and the joys in your life.

- Stay aware of learning experiences. It's not always the "perfect" experience that creates the greatest learning experience – it's how we take what we've experienced and process the information to understand life on a deeper level. You are surrounded by learning opportunities all day long, at work, school, grocery store, church, driving, dry cleaners, etc. – take advantage of those times.
- Always find time to laugh with your child! Keep your humor! Laugh at yourselves.
- Chocolate – dark, white or milk! It's all good. ☺
- Find creative ways to blow off steam.
- Discuss challenges with other parents. We're all here to see that our children thrive.
- Keep open communication with your child. It is essential that you learn to LISTEN to your child.
- Allow your child the opportunity to schedule time for themselves to do what they enjoy. Downtime is necessary.
- Maintain the big picture – keep things in perspective – the world won't fall apart if an assignment isn't on time, less than quality or less than anticipated. Learn from the experience, not the product!
- Perseverance!! Irrepressible resilience!

(3) *Helpful Insights*

- As parents we are facilitators of Family School's curriculum, co-teachers with the classroom teacher – we are not homeschoolers.
- Make no assumption of who knows what. Communicate!
- This is an educational *process* – there are good days, and not so good days.
- Family School requires a huge commitment from the whole family.
- Classrooms change year to year, due to influx/out flux of families and yearly theme – relax in the change.
- Your teacher is available!
- Know what to take seriously – be flexible – have transition time – be open to changes.
- Younger children need your commitment, older children to be independently committed.
- Evolve WITH your child(ren)

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that states, school districts and schools be held accountable for ensuring that all students meet high academic standards. On time, daily attendance is a critical component of this educational process. New Mexico law dictates that:

- **Students between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18) years of age are mandated to attend public school, private school, home school or at state institution.**
- The Albuquerque Public School District reports habitual truants to the Children's Court Liaison Office and to the State of New Mexico .

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- APS Family School students are allowed no more than 4 unexcused absences per trimester.
- The parent/guardian must notify the school each day that the student will be absent, in accordance with the notification procedure established by the school.
- Absences may be excused for the following reason, **with appropriate documentation**:
 - Doctor's appointment
 - Death in the family
 - Religious commitment
 - Illness
 - Family Emergency
 - Diagnostic Testing
 - School or college visit

- In the event that the school has not received notification of absence by a parent for **3 consecutive days, the school must make an attempt to contact the parent/guardian.**
- Students out ill for more than 3 days must get a Doctor's Excuse for documentation.
- Excessive excused absences may result in further inquiry from the principal and request for additional documentation.
- Family vacations are considered unexcused absences, and it is expected that parents will schedule vacations during periods of time when school is not in session.
- **Students who are signed out before the end of the instructional day must have written documentation of the reason (as defined under excused absences) or be subject to the same consequences as tardy.**

Variety of Home School Days

There are many factors that contribute to the daily/weekly routine of each family. Things to consider when formulating your schedule are: how much parental involvement is necessary, lunch, naps, snacks, activities, free time, socialization, deadlines, homework, and additional studies. It is important to consider all time requirements and create a flexible schedule. The best solution is to design a calendar that accommodates your family goals. You may want to discuss it with the teacher and fellow parents within your classroom for ideas or suggestions on improvements. Only you will know whether the calendar will work for your family. Understand that flexibility and change are your allies. Keep your eye on the big picture.

There are many resources available to facilitate outside activities or academia that you and your child(ren) might desire to pursue. The following are a few you can research, however always check with other parents – the list is endless!

UNM Music Prep
 Albuquerque Art Museum
 Harwood Art School
 City of Albuquerque
 Community Centers
 Parks and Recreation
 AYSO
 YAFL
 Private teachers

Transitioning In, Around and Out of Family School

(1) Transitioning In and Around

If this is your first time considering Family School for your child(ren)s educational success or if your child(ren) is(are) already enrolled but you are going to change teachers, it is recommended that you visit the classroom during an Open House. Once your child has been placed in a classroom, work closely with the teacher to transition your child(ren). Whether the child is coming from another school or another classroom, it can be a disruptive time not only for the child, but for the family as a whole. Close communication with the teacher and other families will make the transition easier and allow your child(ren) to merge into the community successfully.

(2) Transitioning out

Experience has shown that transitioning out of Family School presents its own unique challenges. Whether the child has attended one year, or all eight years of their initial education at Family School – because of the distinctiveness of the program and the success of student academic progress - following up with high school educational alternatives requires careful consideration.

First and foremost, know your child – again personality, character, academic level and goals. These factors alone should drive the search for the next step. There are many options available: private schools, charter schools, home school, alternative schools, public schools and testing out (GED). Discuss the options with your family, your child’s teacher and most importantly, your child. Visit the schools you’re interested in with your child, research them, and make sure you’re aware of deadline dates for entry testing, gifted programs, scholarships and AP classes. Talk with other parents about their experiences – many parents at Family School have already transitioned out older children. They are a wealth of information.

Once again – remember you can always change your mind!

As your child completes 8th grade and the year winds down, students experience different things. Some are ready to move on and do so with little consequence. Other students appear to have difficulty in saying “goodbye” to the close community and the friends they have developed over the years. Be aware of your child’s responses, giving them room to process the change. Make opportunities for your child to reconnect with friends, whether others who have also transitioned out, or still remain behind at Family School.

Exiting the School

Upon disenrollment from the school, parents must fill out paperwork with Veronica. If a parent leaves in the first trimester and chooses to return to school before the second day of school in January, they will be placed on the school waiting list according to their exit date and will not have to attend an information meeting. If they choose to return to Family School after the second day in January, they will need to start the application process all over again and attend a new informational meeting.

Class Placement

Teachers will determine placement of children based on their knowledge of the student, parent input, and classroom balance. Parents may recommit to a classroom and remain. Parents who decide to move will submit their teacher preference and any information that will advocate for their child’s placement. We will continue to try and honor graduating siblings and existing sibling situations.

Once your child has been placed in a classroom, you may request a class change during the first two weeks of school. If there are spots available in a classroom, you may request the spot. After the first two weeks, parents must meet with their child’s teacher and attempt to resolve any concerns about the placement. After this point, then parents may watch for openings in other classrooms. Classroom openings are posted on the Family School Web Site (familyschool.org) or in the office. Class openings are posted for 24 hours. Requests must be submitted before the posted deadline. A placement team consisting of teachers and an administrator will make the selection based on the needs of both classrooms. Students will only be moved once per year. If the parent refuses the new placement the child will remain in the current class until the following school year.

Resources for Home-schooling

“One of the great things about our home school time (especially pre-middle school) is all the extracurricular activities we can do.”

- Family School parent

This section lists ideas and resources in and around Albuquerque for the homeschooling portion of your child's K-8 curriculum. Many of the venues accommodate homeschoolers by offering discounts or classes during traditional school hours.

Please note that there is no express or implicit statement that resources listed here are appropriate for your child's curriculum. The parent may expect guidance from the teacher regarding relevancy and amount of time involved with homeschooling activities.

Further, please note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive or necessarily current.

Here are some we've done and some we've heard of:

Field Trips

The fire station in Rio Rancho has a trailer they fill with smoke to teach kids how to get out of a smoke-filled room.

Art Attack!

Mama's Minerals

Rainbow Bakery

Aunt Annie's Pretzels

Dion's Pizza

Village Pizza in Corrales lets you make your own pizza.

Corn Maze at Los Poblanos Field

McCall's Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze in Moriarty (during October)

Wild Bird Center offers a homeschoolers class.

Rio Grande Nature Center Traveling Trunk Shows

Petroglyphs have a guided tour.

Explora offers birthday parties; they probably offer field trips with similar activities.

War Eagles Air Museum, Dona Ana County Airport

Mobile Dairy Classroom (505) 627-6953 - This is the only contact info we have.

Art

Albuquerque Museum (offers classes: Saturday Art Studio for ages 6-10, this class features a variety of art activities within the museum setting. Family Art Workshops open to all ages, it's a chance to explore art by making a specially designed project. Beginners welcome and materials supplied. Free with Museum admission.)

Harwood Art School and other commercial schools offer both public and privately run classes.

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum (Santa Fe)

Languages

Spanish Champs

Curriculum (on-line?) at the Rio Grande Public Library

Math, Science, Inquiry

Explora (offers classes, both public and privately run)

Lodestar Planetarium

National Atomic Museum

Rattlesnake Museum (Old Town)

Rio Grande Nature Center (offers guided tours and loans Traveling Trunk materials)

Natural History Museum (periodically offers series of classes meeting once or twice per week especially for homeschoolers on topics such as geology, astronomy, aquatic environments)

Rio Grande Zoological Society, BioPark, Aquarium (offers classes)

Social Studies

Pueblo Indian Cultural Center

Bandelier National Monument

Chinese Cultural Center

Maxwell Museum of Anthropology

Ernie Pyle Library

Events

Local bookstores offer “meet the author” events. Check bookstore or Sunday Albuquerque Journal for listings.

Pizza Hut Book-It Program - enrollment deadline is in February. Kids keep track of their reading and get free pizza - www.bookitprogram.com

Rio Grande Public Library System offers a summer reading program, “Read, Albuquerque!”

Dion’s Pizza offers a summer reading program.

Material Resources

Learning Is Fun (on Menaul) for materials, laminating, and workbooks. Sign up for their mailing list, and you will get coupons for monthly discounts.

Purchase workbooks, manipulatives, etc. from Staples, Office Depot and Wal-Mart.

Consider e-bay.com for purchasing materials for homeschool: laptop batteries, peripherals, dance costumes, etc.

Rio Grande Library System

Tireman Library (College of Education Library on the UNM Campus)

Title Wave Book Store and other commercial bookstores.

Weemagination – UNM Family Development Program – Offers recycled materials that can be used in play.

Facility Resources

Title Wave Book Store

They have a room that is free and all you have to do is clean up after the class – they also offer a store discount the day you use the room. They have tables and white boards. Contact Kirin or Riva.

Public Library (?)

Online Resources

Edhelper.com provides lesson plans and resources.

Core-curriculum.com provides homeschool curriculum packages.

Alpha Omega publications at www.aom.com.

www.howstuffworks.com

<http://www.abqhomelearners.org/>

<http://nmhomeschoolcommunity.blogspot.com/>

Extracurricular Resources

Live Theatre (both performance and classes)

Popejoy Schooltime Series - Tickets are generally purchased for shows for the entire year sometime in September. Tickets are \$4 each—www.schooltimeseries.com

Albuquerque Little Theater

Growing Stage

South Broadway Cultural Center (theatre and library)

Gorilla Theatre

Popejoy Ovation Series

Music

Orchestra (Youth Symphony)

Band (there is one for homeschoolers)

Albuquerque Girls' and Boys' Choirs

Dance classes and performances offered by commercial studios.

UNM Music Prep School - Saturday classes for the younger K-3 children: music, dance, Spanish music, and instrument.

Home-school Groups

Some of the parents at Family School have been a part of home-school groups, but we do not have specific recommendations.

Fundraising Resources

Albertsons – You can donate just by using your Albertson's preferred savings

card. Albertsons will donate up to 4% of your Albertsons Preferred Savings Card eligible purchases to support our fundraising goals. In order to do this you will need to have a preferred savings card. Go online to http://www.albertsons.com/abs_inthecommunity/, click on Community Partners. You will then choose to register your preferred savings card. The number for Family School is 49001012998.

I Scream Ice Cream (Carlisle Blvd) – This modestly-priced ice cream shop is filled with all sorts of great toys to play with during your visit, and the owner donates a portion of sales every Thursday night to Family School. Please mention the Family School on your visit so that the receipt is set aside for the donation.

Student Standards – Overview

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) uses a Standards Based approach to measure student achievement. In the following chapter, you will find the published APS Standards for each grade level within each area of study. Parents will often hear about Family School Standards vs. APS Standards. Student work at the Family School is evaluated using “rubrics”. Rubrics are “requirements documents” that are presented as skills matrixes that outline the skills required at each “level” of measured student achievement. A score and weight are added to the rubric to judge if student work meets the requirements of the given academic area. These levels are generally associated with a specific grade level, however students may work at any level based upon their individual academic standing in a variety of subjects.

The Family School standards are based upon district standards provided to all schools, parents, and students by APS. Family School rubrics are modified versions of the APS standards and require more specific and sometimes more rigorous achievement in specific work areas. Current APS standards are published on the APS web site at, www.aps.edu.

School Wide Standards

Critical Reframers: Critical Reframers (Reframers) are used throughout all subjects and grade levels at Family School. Reframers represent a framework from which students approach problem solving and teachers approach instruction. Reframers represent a common vocabulary and approach used throughout the school by teacher, parents and students. As student or work group develop an area of study, they are required to look at their assignment from different perspectives by “reframing” the questions, strategies and issues associated with the specific area of study. While not standards in their own right, the activity of reframing question within various subject areas is included in almost all areas of Family School academic life. It follows that reframing areas of study allows the student to develop “critical thinking” skills, the ability to use logic in researching an academic question.

Upon entering the school, your child may need to review work that was already covered at their previous school, due to a missing area of mastery as outline on the Family School rubrics. The missing areas generally represent differences between the APS rubric and the Family School rubric and are not a reflection of your child’s intelligence but more a reflection of what they have been taught previously, at what conceptual depth, and in what order. For example, a child who is competent with addition at a prior school, but has never learned how to add in base 6 or another base, will not meet “Family School Standards” until they have successfully demonstrated ability in the specific area. Doing addition in different bases is part of the Family School rubric for added conceptual knowledge in addition.

Figure 1, lists academic areas currently associated with rubrics at Family School. The attached “Requirements Matrix Document” allows an overview of each academic area and the standards rubrics associated with them. Below are summary descriptions of each academic area:

Inquiry: The area of Inquiry is commonly referred to as the scientific method. At Family School, students are required to do “Inquiries” periodically over the school year. Inquiry represents the formal science curriculum at FS, however science content is also covered in theme based areas of workshop and Brainteasers. The number of Inquiries required per student may vary, depending on the teacher, however, all inquiries share the following elements:

- The students pick a question on any topic they may be wondering about.
- The student uses critical reframers to pick a final “I wonder” question.
- The student refers to any existing knowledge he or she may already know about the inquiry area and documents possible areas where their knowledge may be lacking.
- Using observation only, the student uses the predefined “Family School Process” to develop a postulate, (sometimes referred to as a “thesis”) and prove or disprove the postulate.
- The student then designs a process to explore the inquiry question.
- Finally, the student writes an analysis, with supporting data, charts and graphs to answer the original questions. Include in the analysis is a description of how the information learned might be used by various people.
- Specific scientific content is not standardized within Inquiry.

It is interesting to note that the child is encouraged to use observation vs. research in the elementary grades. Traditional research is encouraged based upon teacher discretion and is not standardized by age or grade level. There are no right or wrong answers in Inquiry projects with the focus on integrity within the defined Inquiry Process.

Math:

Family School Math consists of following units of study:

- Anticounting
 - Addition 1
 - Addition 2
 - Subtraction
 - Multiplication
 - Division
 - Fractions 1
 - Fractions 2
 - Decimals/Percentages
 - Geometry
 - Algebra
1. At each level, manipulatives are used within the math unit as the student begins learning the specific concepts. As the student gains experience with the concept, the manipulative are used less and less until they are no longer required.
 2. Mastery is assessed with a unit test on which the student must achieve a minimum of 85% accuracy.
 3. Classroom math groups are made up of students who are working on the same skills rather than organized by grade level.
 4. Math groups meet twice each week with the teacher for evaluating homework, instruction, and making new assignments.
 5. Math is frequently incorporated into Brainteaser, Workshop and Inquiry Projects.
 6. A student who “passed” a level at the end of the school year will be reassessed at the beginning of the next school year for placement in a group. Prior year testing does not over ride current year assessment for placement in math groups.

Reading

Students at Family School are assessed, for reading group placement, as in Math, during the first 40 days of the new school year. The teacher meets with each student and assesses their abilities in areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Based upon this assessment, the students within each group work on reading assignment by retelling what they have read within a Reading Journal. Reading Journals follow the following progression:

JOURNAL NAME	GRADE STANDARD
Story Boards	K-1
Pre-Retell	2
Retelling	3
Personal Commenting	4
Writing Technique	5
Critical Thinking	6
Structure	7
Research	8

Reading Journal Goals Overview:

- Reading Comprehension and the ability to extract information and details from the text.
- Analyze
- Taking Clear notes
- Organizing thoughts, main ideas and supporting details.

- Copies of the Literary Insight with exemplars are available in the office.

After initial assessments, students are grouped with children of comparable abilities for the school year regardless of their current grade. Within each group, the students, with help from the teacher pick appropriate reading materials.

Writing

Writing rubrics are in place for each grade level K-8. Writing rubrics are used in a number of ways throughout the school year to track student progress and to help students and parents throughout the year. Rubrics are assessment tools used by the teacher to understand the student's current ability. Additionally, the student and parent use them as a requirements document during writing homework and in the classroom to evaluate writing performance. Rubrics help track areas of proficiency and areas requiring improvement. At the beginning of the school year the rubric for the student's grade level is used to access areas of weakness. These areas are assessed throughout the school year, culminating with an independent writing "performance" by each student at the end of the year.

Workshop

Workshop is drawn from science and social studies standards based upon the range of grade levels with a classroom. The teacher chooses a theme for the year (space, tree, poverty) and works within theme to present APS Standards within the theme.

Brainteasers

Brainteasers are a part of the classroom curriculum in which students may work in small groups or individually on math or writing based upon activities that engage students in deeper thinking and where they use multiple strategies to solve problems. Most classrooms alternate between math and writing using two-week cycles.

Sophie/Dictation & Sophie Letters/Dialogue Journals

The "Sophie/Dictation" covers spelling and grammar standards. The "Sophie Dictation" may include the Workshop Theme the teacher has picked for the year. The "Sophie Letters/Dialogue Journal" incorporates the writing standards required of students & letter writing.

Introduction to the Modes of Engagement

The modes of engagement are the standards-based curricular components that make up the identity of Family School. While each classroom implements the modes in a manner unique to the teacher, they do embody the philosophy of Family School and its staff. They integrate the standards of various disciplines into one ongoing activity. This integration allows for creating the most efficient manner of coverage over several grade spans of expectations. We believe that children learn best through the ability to explore, connect, discuss and deeply understand the world around them. The modes of engagement offer a consistent and successful way for children to engage in and own their learning on a daily basis.

Mode: Inquiry

Inquiry provides a unique opportunity and process for students to learn, practice, and perform the following educational standards: data analysis, algebraic equations, statistics and probability, spoken and written expressive language, research, patterns, functions and algebraic concepts, among others. During inquiry, students are able to create, ask and answer their own questions through the process of discovery and subsequent analysis. It is a time when children can use critical thinking and problem solving to discover answers for themselves to questions they may have been asking you, such as, "Why is the sky blue?"

At the core of Inquiry are the critical reframers, a series of questions designed to put a different lens on viewing the question being explored. The emphasis is on the design and communication of their problem

solving, which elicits their own critical thinking in collecting, recording and analyzing data. Students also develop criteria and ideas to form their own conclusions. The students are then encouraged to analyze, connect and communicate their conclusions in both written and graphic forms.

Mode: Math

At Family School, we teach math groups through a conceptual approach, emphasizing the use of manipulatives, such as base 10 blocks, and advanced questioning techniques. In this way, children construct their knowledge of numbers and operations. In the math progression, students transition into using traditional algorithms with pencil and paper calculation where ORKing (orderly recording of knowledge) is emphasized. We expect two things in math: The first is accuracy where “silly mistakes” are considered “serious errors”. The second is connective understanding as evaluated by their ability to express their thinking out loud. In our multiage setting, students are grouped by their math ability into small, fluid groups designed to meet the needs of individuals. We feel is important to teach a concept in its entirety before progressing to the next one: for example, all of the addition, from single digit problems to adding in other bases, is mastered before subtraction is begun. We believe that this approach moves children most efficiently through number and operation skills. Students need to show proficiency on a written test before progressing to the next level. Below is the algorithmic math unit progression:

- Anticounting
- Addition 1
- Addition 2
- Subtraction
- Multiplication
- Division
- Fractions 1
- Fractions 2
- Decimals/Percentages
- Geometry
- Algebra

Mode: Reading Journal

The reading journals are a series of structured writing experiences designed to guide students through a critical reading process while at the same time teaching writing techniques. The journals ultimately build the skills necessary for writing a thesis. The students are divided into leveled reading groups where they meet and discuss portions of a chosen book. Through reading, discussion, lessons, writing assignments, and feedback on the writing, students move from reading for pleasure to the ability to take pleasure in a deeper understanding of written works. They arrive at a deeper understanding of the text by exploring and writing about the manner in which the book is crafted (writing techniques such as dialogue, brushstrokes, foreshadowing) as well as the lens of the time, place, and societal values within which the book was written. The reading journals progress as follows: retelling; personal commenting; writing technique; critical thinking; structure; and research.

Mode: Workshop

Workshop is a time for students at different levels and grades to work collaboratively on research and learning which supports the classroom theme. There are a series of workshops throughout the year, each involving a different set of classmates, skills, cooperative learning goals and content knowledge. During these workshops, students move through the performance cycle (process, rehearsal, performance and reflection) as a framework for developing a group constructed knowledge base and demonstrating this learning. Workshop is a time in which students bring together all of their skills from other modes to fruition toward constructing knowledge and understanding in the content areas of Social Studies and Science. This collaborative learning

opportunity allows children to draw on individual strengths, build individual weaknesses, develop collaborative learning skills and learn in an independent, less teacher-led, venue.

Mode: Math and Writing Brainteaser

Brainteasers (BTs) are whole group, multi-age activities designed to stimulate the students' minds as well as encourage problem-solving in a cooperative setting. At the start of the activity, children are given an opportunity to explore the unknown through math or writing. BTs can be posed either on the board for the whole group or on individual sheets. BTs are holistic; students must pull together from different areas critical thinking skills and new ideas in order to solve them. Through BT, children learn to examine present knowledge, utilize prior knowledge, create new knowledge, and express it all in a cohesive manner. (Understanding, Strategy, Communication). BTs are an efficient way to explore concepts in a multi-age classroom. Children have the opportunity to make use of the "community brain" (the sum of all of the children's experience and knowledge). BTs are an experience where students can explore academic topics in the same way professionals do—by experimenting with patterns and relationships to explain how they define our world. It is also a place where new ideas are introduced.

BT provides a setting for generalizing and globalizing strategies.

In order to emphasize this, BTs are presented at a level beyond the students' current knowledge. BT follows the performance cycle: process, rehearsal, performance, and reflection (often referred to as debriefing). The latter is almost always done in a group setting.

Mode: Projects

Projects are a way for students to explore specialized knowledge about a content area and themselves as learners. Projects often are largely completed at home, but may connect to the classroom's theme or be supported through learning experiences in the classroom setting. There are three projects, which become a part of the final report card for the year: Goal, Specialized and a Final Inquiry.

The Goal Project allows the student and parent(s) to determine an area of growth/exploration that they would like to pursue. Much like an Inquiry, Goal is a method of studying a question about oneself, working on improvement and analyzing the results. When culminating this project, the student presents their new knowledge of his/herself in this area in a small/large group setting, adding the additional experience of presenting to the full experience.

The Writing Project allows the student to work on a writing genre or project that exhibits grade level writing standards. This project is designed by the teacher and may or may not be facilitated at home.

The Science Project is an area in science assigned by the teacher that the child researches and presents a lesson on to the class. The science standard come from the science standards created by APS and is appropriate for the grade level of the student.

Parent Support

Inquiry Classes

A two and a half hour, potluck session that describes the different components of inquiry such as: reframing/question, brainstorm, present knowledge, postulate, design, investigation, data presentation/performance, and critical analysis. All explanations are followed by application. Not only does the class cover the basic components, but it requires the participants to explore the process of finding and asking questions.

Critical Reframers Classes

Two potluck sessions, two and a half hours each, that explores the definition and application of each reframer not only in the context of inquiry, but in writing, reading, and the other disciplines. The class stresses and demonstrates the importance of the critical reframers in helping to build analytical, problem-solving, and learning strategies within learners. Exercises include the process of reframing a question through the 15 different reframers, looking at the reframers in everyday life, and defining their specific roles within the various disciplines.

Parent Support Math Classes

All math classes are taught at the beginning of the school. Classes are intended for parents only (children are not allowed). Each class is 2 ½ hours long and a potluck meal is suggested. Parents are given the opportunity to receive hands-on instruction

on how Family School math units are taught. Attending these classes is highly encouraged due to the different approach taken at Family School The units include:

- **Anti-counting** – (Early Primary Grades) Anticounting primarily focuses on number sense and includes the handgame, introduction to base ten blocks, and understanding of place value.
- **Addition** – (Early Primary Grades) The addition unit builds on knowledge gained from the anti-counting unit. Through the use of the base ten blocks children develop a deeper understanding of numbers, which includes: addition (as well as addition in other bases); reading, writing, and dictation of numbers into the millions; estimating and rounding; simple math; and multi-step word problems.
- **Subtraction** – (Primary Grades) The subtraction unit continues to build on the knowledge that the children have gained up to this point from the two previous units. Through the use of the base ten blocks, children develop an understanding of subtraction, which includes: subtraction (as well as subtraction in other bases); estimating and rounding; mental subtraction of dictated numbers; symbol math; and multi-step word problems.
- **Multiplication** – (Secondary Grades) The multiplication unit consists of teaching the conceptual understanding of multiplication through the base ten blocks. A sequential approach is taken, beginning with single digit multiplication and advancing up to multi-digit multiplication. At the same time, students are learning to apply their multiplication skills in meaningful applications, which includes word problems.
- **Division** – (Secondary Grades) The division unit consists of teaching the conceptual understanding of division through the base ten blocks. Similar to multiplication, a sequential approach is taken, as students learn to work with division of single-digit numbers to multi-digit numbers. At the same time, students learn to apply their division skills in meaningful applications, which includes world problems.
- **Fractions** – (Upper Secondary to Middle School Grades) The fraction unit uses hands-on fraction slides to help teach the concept of fractions. This unit includes teaching the definition of fractions; reading and writing fractions; adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions; improper and mixed number fractions, equivalent fractions, comparing and ordering of fractions, and word problems.
- **Decimals** – (Upper Secondary to Middle School Grades) The decimal unit includes the understanding of the relationship between fractions and decimals, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing decimals, comparing and ordering decimals and percentages, and word problems.

Family School FTO Information

The Family-Teacher Organization (FTO) is composed of parents and teachers who meet approximately once a month to organize special events and support for the children at the Family School.

Family Teacher Organization (FTO) supports the following activities:

- Supplies for the School and for Teachers
- A Fund for furnishing our new buildings
- Teacher Appreciation Brunches for Friday Teacher Meetings
- Art and Poetry Night Cookie/Dessert Sale
- Teacher-Parent exchange of ideas
- Support for the students of Family School whenever possible

FTO Meetings

There are generally **seven FTO meetings** throughout the year. In 06-07, these meetings are scheduled from 1pm to 2pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month. The meeting time and date may change from year to year. Children are welcome at the meetings. The FTO provides snacks for you and your children. Children are with a babysitter and do a craft during the meeting in the same room with the parents. You may apply this crafting time toward home school hours, if it is okay with your teacher. The FTO understands that teachers and parents have a heavy meeting load, so the meetings are run efficiently and productively. With only seven meetings a year, there is much to cover in each meeting.

FTO Class Representatives

Ideally, each classroom will send a representative to attend the seven FTO meetings per year. This allows each class to be personally represented and informed about school events through the FTO. Any creative sharing of the duties is welcomed by the FTO, even if a class sends a different parent to each meeting.

Every effort should be made to have a representative from each class attend the FTO meetings. The FTO Rep should be prepared to report the current FTO information to the classroom parents and teacher at the next Thursday Evening Parent Meeting.

How to Help with Events

The best way to find out how to help with events is to attend the FTO meeting prior to the event. As special events approach, the FTO asks for volunteers to assist the committee organizing the event. Sometimes there is a sign-up sheet in the Office for those who cannot attend the meeting but still want to help.

The FTO recognizes that the parents of this community are especially dedicated to working hard with their families. Our community has amazing parents that are fun to work with. *If every parent signs-up to volunteer one to two hours a year at a school event, every event would be properly covered.* Many thanks to those parents who have volunteered and helped make our school a very special place for the children.

Teacher Appreciation Guide Sheet

At the Family School, parents realize what dedicated, hard-working teachers we have. One opportunity parents have to show their appreciation to the teachers is by providing a nice brunch for them on one of their working Fridays throughout the year. Each class is asked to provide one lunch (out of twelve) per year. Parents organize the effort, bring the food, and clean up afterwards.

The following information should help in setting up for the Teacher Appreciation Lunches.

Time: Lunch should be ready to serve by 12 pm. Usually, teacher meetings are scheduled to begin at 8:30am. Occasionally, Ms. Gael is required to attend an APS meeting on a Friday morning; then, the teacher meeting is either held at the same time without her, or postponed until the afternoon. About a week or two before your class' scheduled food day, please check with your teacher to be updated on the meeting time.

Set-up and Clean-up in the Office: The parents do the set up and clean up in the office. The meal should be ready by 12:00 p.m. The teachers serve themselves and then go into Ms. Gael's room for the meeting. The parents may then clean up and be done before 1:30 p.m. *or* the parents may decide to leave the food set up for teacher-grazing throughout the afternoon. In that case, one parent returns in a few hours for the clean-up. It works fine either way.

What to serve: Parents supply all the paper products and all the food. Whatever you serve will be good and the teachers will appreciate your efforts and your care. Optional: you may decide to serve the meal based on a theme. One class had a Valentine's brunch that was very pretty. The theme is not required and not very important. It's up to your class if you want to get into that. Some classes pass around a sheet at a parent meeting that says Main dish, Side dish, paper products, drinks, etc., and that seems to always work well.

How much to serve: There are 12 teachers, so round that up to **food for 15** to be safe.

Annual School Events

Square Dancing Community Potluck

We hope to make the Square Dancing Community Potluck an annual event. Our first Dance took place in October 2006. It was an event enjoyed by the entire Family School community. The square dancing teacher, Kris Jensen, teaches the children for two weeks prior to the event, and teaches one lesson to the adults. The FTO hires Ms. Jensen to teach and to call at the event. As it is an outdoor event, next year we plan to hold it in September. Along with the family, everyone brings a dish and a few dollars to donate to the FTO.

Art and Poetry Dessert Night & Silent Auction

Art and Poetry Dessert Night have been a long-standing, much-anticipated event and fundraiser at the Family School. It is scheduled for one night in mid-December, usually during the last week of school. Over several weeks, students create works of art and poetry to display for the event. Parents, teachers, and students all pitch in to transform their classrooms into museum-like settings as a backdrop to showcase the beautiful, often profound works of art. The Family School community tours the school for a festive, magical evening celebrating creative hard work and good will.

During the tour, individuals may bid on tagged works of art that students have donated to benefit the FTO through the Silent Auction. At the end of the evening, the bidding books are checked so that the winners of the

Silent Auction may pay for and take home their treasures. The holiday ambiance is augmented by the sale of homemade baked goods and cookies which are provided by the parents and have been assembled into boxed assortments during the day.

FTO Officers and volunteers organize the Dessert Sale, help with the Silent Auction, and collect the money. In one night, through the community effort, we have a substantial fundraiser based, not on selling from a catalog, but on the creative lessons learned and demonstrated by our children.

Inquiry Fair

The Inquiry Fair occurs on a day in April, in which students formally present an Inquiry to a different class audience. Teachers arrange for this exchange of presentations in a manner best suited for their students. Some years the entire school community participates, and some years, teachers arrange a smaller event involving fewer classes which is informally called a mini-Inquiry Fair

Glossary

A2L: Assess2Learn. Web based, District required survey tests for grades 1 – 8. A2L looks at levels of student understanding and compares student skills in reading, language arts and math to state and national standards. Students test on A2L three times a year. Grades 1 and 2 are tested on math only.

AIP: Academic Improvement Plan. Based on below-grade- level standardized testing results. Teacher, parent and student devise a plan to bring performance to grade level standards within a specified period of time.

Amnesia: A loss of memory, often temporary but known to affect large numbers of family school parents during recommitment night.

Anti-counting: An introduction to basic math concepts stressed during kindergarten and into first grade. Tools used include the number bone, the hand game, and base ten blocks. Skills include counting by 2s, 5s and 10s, mental number sense, odds and evens.

Art and Poetry Night: A celebration of student art and poetry held in mid-December. A school “open house” on a grand scale, Art and Poetry night includes self-guided tours of each class display, a silent auction of student art, a bake sale and extensive socializing.

Associate Team Teacher (ATT): An associate that works with a specific teacher in a specific classroom for two hours a week. These two hours allow the teacher time for professional and faculty development.

Attitude: In metacognitive theory, it is understood that attitude effects behavior and that people have some control over their attitude.

Attention: In metacognitive theory, an aspect of self-regulation is being aware of and controlling one’s attention level.

Base Ten Story: A tale used to examine the origin and meaning of base ten counting – of the concepts of zero, ten and place value.

Base Ten Blocks: Tactile and visual manipulatives used to reinforce and concretize important mathematic concepts. Base Ten blocks can be used in the teaching of number and place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals and measurement.

Brainteaser: A holistic class exercise meant to expose younger students to new concepts and to challenge older students into fresh ways of thinking and problem solving. Brainteasers provide conceptual context for math and writing skills.

Commitment: An aspect of metacognitive self-regulation, commitment is a major determinant of student success. Commitment is neither feeling nor inclination – but rather a conscious decision to work hard (or not).

Community Brain: It is said that two (or more) heads are often better than one. Used to describe the synergy that can occur in workshop or brainteaser groups, the community brain is also called upon when a student is “stuck” and requests input and fresh perspective from classmates.

Critical Reframers: 1) Approaching an issue from different aspects. 2) Another way of asking the same question. 3) Used as a basis to teach a wide variety of thinking skills to improve critical thinking.

Descriptive review: 1) 1st trimester “report card.” 2) A written analysis of the student’s academic attributes. Also known as the Student Profile.

Dog bone (see number bone)

Dictation: A holistic, integrated educational tool that teaches spelling, capitalization, grammar and punctuation in context and non-fiction reading. The essay/paragraph usually complements a current workshop theme. The students take both a pre -and post-test of the passage within a week’s time. How it looks: Teacher reads slowly. Student writes furiously.

Fit: Compatibility of approach, philosophy and temperament between teacher and parents and student.

FTO: 1) Family Teacher Organization (akin to PTA). Functions to raise school funds and provide teacher, student and school support. 2) Many hands make light work.

Goal Project: Typically, a four-week project geared toward improved performance in a particular subject area. Ideally student lead, often parent/teacher inflicted.

Habits of Mind: Core behaviors exhibited by successful learners. Behaviors include persistence, questioning, and accuracy.

Hand game: 1) A major component in anti-counting and in developing “number sense.” 2) Not to be confused with” hand jive.”

Homework Log: A record of home schooling activities and home schooling hours. In some classrooms, used as an avenue of parent-student/teacher communication and reflection.

IEP: Individualized Education Plan devised to service students with special needs.

Image Grammar: 1) Book upon which Family School writing curriculum is based.

Available by special order at any locally owned bookstore.

Inquiry: A hands on, integrated student- lead process in which students are able to ask, and answer their own question(s) through their own discovery and analysis of the process. Appropriate inquiry topics include anything a young mind might wonder about.

Inquiry Fair: Students share their Inquiry Projects with their own and other classes.

Integrated Project: A project that integrates multiple academic disciplines. The teacher determines the nature of the project.

Landscape Day: Armed with gardening implements, squads of students, teachers and parents descend upon unsuspecting profligate shrubs and rioting weeds to restore order and vegetative harmony to the Family School Campus. Landscape Days are scheduled throughout the year.

Learning Cycle: Process – Rehearsal – Performance – Reflection

Metacognition: 1) Being aware of your thinking as you perform specific tasks and then using this awareness to control/chose what you are doing. 2) Components of metacognition include commitment, attitude, effort and attention.

Metacognitive Review: see **Self Assessment**

Number Bone: A manipulative tool used in anti-counting. A small scroll with a blank grid that children progressively fill in as they stack blocks into groups of ten and then 100s on up to 1,000, the Number Bone is used to teach place value.

Number Sense: You know it when you see it.

Open House: Held twice a year for families prospecting for a new school or for a new teacher. Parents sign in at the office then go to different classes to observe.

Parent Classes (Gael’s Classes): Interesting, enlightening and tremendously encouraging classes offered at the beginning of each school year. The Math Series and the Reading Journal Series cover different grade level concepts. There is also a class on the Inquiry Process. Though classes are optional, attendance will save you from weeks (and, in some cases, months) of perplexing bafflement in your home schooling.

Performance Project Portfolio: 3rd Trimester “report card”. In the PPP, a student prepares a portfolio containing examples of her work in different subject areas.

Reading Journal: A reading, writing and thinking tool, the reading journal is a yearly progression of skills developed to ensure comprehension and critical thinking. Beginning with Retelling in the third grade, Reading Journal skills progress to Personal Comment, Writing Technique, Critical Thinking, and Structure and, in the 8th grade, Research.

Recommitment: A Family School Rite of spring. Teachers and families decide whether or not to return to Family School the following academic year. A time of reflection and evaluation, the process also facilitates enrollment planning for the next year.

Rubric: 1) Criteria for assessing achievement

2) A scoring guide for a test or other assessment task.

3) Stanley: Famous director of landmark films 2001 Space Odyssey and Dr. Strangelove

Standards -Based Assessment (SBA): A standards-based test, the New Mexico SBA measures specific skills defined for each grade by the state. Students in grades 3 – 9 are tested in reading, math and science and are then rated at one of four performance levels: beginning proficient, nearing proficient, proficient or advanced. The obvious goal is for all students to score at or above proficient on the test.

Self-assessment: 2nd Trimester “Report Card”. The student describes himself as a learner.

SLANT: An acronym describing, “what attention looks like.”? **S**it up + **L**ean towards it + **A**ct interested + **N**od to indicate interest + **T**rack the teacher.

Sophie Experience: The Sophie Experience is an integrated, multi- purpose learning tool. Depending on the classroom, the Sophie Experience varies in its depth of overlapping components. At the very least, the Sophie Experience includes the **dictation** of a passage that is connected to a classroom unit of study and the pen pal letters to a secret classroom parent. Letters may focus on the dictation topic or on another student project. The dictation studies and the yearlong exchange of letters encourage a real and personal writing experience and put writing mechanics in a meaningful context.

SSP: Student Success Plan: A plan of support for a student not meeting Family School requirements. Teacher, parent and student devise a plan to bring student up to a certain performance level within a specified period of time.

Workshop: Students work together in heterogeneous teams to explore issues related to the year’s theme.