



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Learning Framework

Mission



Mission Statement

ACS empowers students to solve problems with creativity and integrity, to lead well-balanced lives, and to serve Lebanon and the world community with understanding and compassion.



Identity Statement

ACS is an accredited, not-for-profit, independent and secular American College Preparatory School serving a multi-cultural international student body. ACS provides internationally-enriched, standard-based curricula, preparing students for the International Baccalaureate, the Lebanese Baccalaureate, and the American College Preparatory Diplomas.



Beliefs - We Believe:

- Students learn at different rates and in different ways.
- Students achieve success by being active participants in their learning.
- Students develop character through engagement with others from different backgrounds and through interaction within the community.



Objectives - We Achieve Our Mission By:

- Setting high expectations for ourselves and our students.
- Empowering students to be critical thinkers and independent learners.
- Working collaboratively with all members of our community.
- Understanding and utilizing innovative teaching and learning.
- Creating a safe environment for students to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

- Facilitating students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth.
- Engaging students in relevant and reflective learning.
- Encouraging students to explore different forms of personal expression.
- Providing opportunities for students to make choices, to lead, and to demonstrate responsibility.
- Supporting students to be caring, empathetic, respectful, and tolerant.
- Developing student awareness and communication skills through the study of languages.
- Involving students in local and international community service projects.
- Preparing students to seek admission to the most selective colleges and universities.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ACS Beirut is a diverse community of students and adults who share different cultural values and perspectives. Community-wide diversity offers learning opportunities for our students as well as opportunities to build relationships across cultures, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, and other aspects of identity.

ACS is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive environment and fostering a community of diverse perspectives to prepare our students for a global society. Faculty members work to ensure a safe and open-minded environment where understanding is central to all, where students' differences are respected and appreciated as an integral part of the educational experience, and where every ACS student feels included, cared for, and valued.

Core Values



Our school **Core Values** are cultivated in our Early Childhood classes through role modeling, contextual learning, books and SEL sessions.

Children are highly sensitive and perceptive, and they often model their behavior based on what they see and experience in their environment. Our EC Teachers model respectful behavior by using polite language, active listening, and valuing each child's ideas and opinions.

We believe that children's learning is best fostered through meaningful contexts. Contextualized learning refers to an approach that connects new knowledge and skills to life experiences and situations that are meaningful to children. It acknowledges that children learn best when they can relate new information to their existing knowledge and personal experiences. Values are promoted in a contextual manner. For instance, children develop a sense of responsibility by engaging in activities such as cleaning up after themselves, completing assigned tasks, tending to their belongings and needs, and maintaining a tidy classroom environment conducive to learning. Respect is

actively fostered throughout the day, nurturing a culture of mutual regard and understanding. Children are encouraged to cultivate respectful behaviors such as attentive listening, patiently waiting for their turn to speak, and refraining from interrupting others. They learn to express themselves using kind and considerate words, while also developing conflict resolution skills that prioritize respectful dialogue.

Books that tell stories can serve as powerful tools for teaching children important values. Through these stories, children have the opportunity to connect with the events and characters, enabling them to reflect on their own learning experiences and internalize the values being portrayed.

In addition to all the previously mentioned ways of promoting core values, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions are incorporated into each Upper EC (Grades 1-2) class schedule. These sessions are designed to offer children a variety of learning experiences that support their social and emotional development, including the cultivation of core values.

Reggio Inspired Program

Since 2003, our Early Childhood program has been inspired by the renowned **Reggio Emilia** philosophy, which is not a curriculum but a mindset, a way of thinking and being. Our work is rooted in the values and beliefs of the Reggio Emilia approach, recognizing the interconnectedness and significance of all areas of development. We place equal emphasis on fostering the growth of the whole child and embed 21st-century skills and learning dispositions into every aspect of our program.

In the Early Childhood Division, we firmly believe that all children are capable and competent learners. They possess innate curiosity and a natural inclination to explore the world around them. As educators, our role is to facilitate this learning process by creating joyful experiences and designing a curriculum that caters to each child's needs. Our practices and methodologies are deeply influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. "Nothing without Joy," a quote by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia Philosophy, encapsulates our vision in Early Childhood. We believe that learning should be a joyful experience for every child. We observe children closely, actively listen to them, gain insight into their prior knowledge and interests, and provide engaging experiences that challenge their thinking, allowing new connections to form. Social Constructivism reinforces our approach, as children explore and learn from one another, constructing their own knowledge and building relationships with peers, adults, and the environment.

We celebrate the hundred languages of children, which encompass various forms of expression such as art, music, dance,

construction, math, writing, etc. Through these languages, children can effectively communicate their thoughts, feelings, and learning, making their understanding and learning visible.

Relationship building lies at the heart of all our practices. We deeply value the individuality of each child and actively listen to them without judgment or criticism. Through this approach, children form connections with the adults and peers in their learning environment, fostering trust and gradually unveiling their true potential. These meaningful connections are vital for nurturing the emotional well-being of children, laying the foundation for all forms of learning.

Our Early Childhood Guiding Principles:

The following guiding principles underpin the Early Childhood practices at ACS.

- 1. The Image of the Child:** We believe each child is a unique individual with their own perspective, interests, learning style, and level of development. They have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. Bringing their stories, knowledge, and experiences into the classroom allows for meaningful connections to new learning experiences. Children are at the center of their own learning journey, driving their exploration through curiosity, experimentation, and social interaction. They are competent learners, capable of constructing knowledge and making sense of the world around them.
- 2. The Role of the Teacher:** Our teachers acknowledge and value each child, fostering trusting relationships. They act



as researchers, facilitators, and partners in learning. Creating a safe and enriching environment, they keenly listen to and observe children's thinking and learning. Through documentation, they deepen their understanding of children's prior knowledge, schema, development, interests, and engagement. Sharing this learning with the wider community, teachers collaborate with their colleagues, parents, and administrators.

Our daily interactions with children revolve around active listening, facilitation, and documentation. Active listening serves as a window into a child's perspective, leading to a deeper understanding. Facilitation is responsive and purposeful, empowering children to construct knowledge and take ownership of their learning. Documentation makes the learning process visible, recording and reflecting on children's interactions with the environment, furthering their understanding.

3. The Environment: Our intentionally designed environment is warm, welcoming, and adaptable to children's evolving identities. It encompasses our relationships to physical spaces indoors and outdoors, materials, and time. Nurturing social relationships at all levels, it provides ample opportunities for children to freely explore materials and ideas, while interacting and learning from one another in a psychologically safe environment.

Provocations: Thought-Provoking Lessons in Early Childhood

In Early Childhood, much time is spent speaking with children, listening to them, and planning open-ended lessons that stimulate the children's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and actions. This process is called Provocations.

Provocations can be the outgrowth of planned explorations or meaningful contexts, such as conversations, books, children's inquiries or shared interests. Teachers carefully listen to children and actively facilitate learning by offering tools and materials for further

exploration and by posing thought-provoking questions.

They document the experiences by recording children's engagement, comments, and questions. Reflecting on the documentation, teachers plan subsequent provocations that build upon previous learning. Through these provocations, children develop higher-order thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaborative skills.

Above and Beyond

The Above and Beyond Program, initiated in the 2023-2024 academic year within the Early Childhood Division for children from KG2 through grade 2, embodies a vibrant initiative aimed at enriching children's learning experiences.

This program aligns with the school's mission, vision, and philosophy, emphasizing the importance of offering children a variety of meaningful learning opportunities. It serves as a platform for children to flourish and simultaneously inspires adults to embrace their creative, innovative, and professional dimensions. By constantly seeking new ways to enrich children's lives with impactful experiences, Above and Beyond motivates all involved to step out of their comfort zones, thereby nurturing a culture of innovation and personal growth.

The program's core lies in fostering a strong community spirit and enhancing the social, emotional, creative, and intellectual development of children. Through small collaborative groups and diverse activities that extend beyond traditional classroom settings, Above and Beyond encourages active participation in learning, fostering empathy, integrity, and resilience among other essential life skills. Its focus on process-driven learning and self-reflection enables children to engage deeply with their learning journeys, thereby promoting exploration, innovation, and self-discovery.

As it evolves to meet the changing needs of children, Above and Beyond creates a dynamic environment where growth, creativity, and community intertwine, offering a holistic and transformative educational experience.

Project Work

Project Work involves deep investigations into concepts that allow children to construct their own knowledge and make sense of the world. These interdisciplinary projects integrate various subject areas, presenting learning to children in authentic and meaningful contexts. By engaging in project work, children experience learning as a holistic approach and establish connections beyond the classroom walls.

Project work entails:

- In-depth study of a specific area of inquiry, beginning with a provocation connected to a concept.
- Teachers research the concept to deepen their understanding and find connections with children's interests.
- Planning subsequent provocations based on previous ones, focused on the line of inquiry.
- Facilitating children's exchange of ideas and reflections.
- Documenting children's engagement, comments, and questions through photographs, videos, and anecdotal notes.
- Processing, analyzing and reflecting on documentation and planning next steps in the project.

Through project work, children:

- Deepen their understanding of the concept and their own relationship with it.
- Expand their knowledge and experiences.
- Make contributions and express their ideas while learning collaboratively.
- Develop social skills and dispositions in authentic contexts, such as communication and collaboration.
- Develop intellectual disposition and higher-order thinking skills, including critical and creative thinking.
- Make sense of the world around them and develop a sense of ownership over their learning.

In our approach, we recognize and honor the uniqueness and voices of children, aiming to cultivate their holistic development. Our ultimate goal is to instill a lifelong love of learning within each child, ensuring their thriving across all aspects of development. By fostering meaningful relationships and providing an engaging learning environment, we create a space where children's potential is celebrated, their voices are heard, and their natural curiosity is nurtured. Through this approach, we empower children to explore, discover, and embrace their journey of learning and growth.

Academic Program / Subject Areas

The Early Childhood years serve as the crucial building blocks for learning, establishing the foundation upon which future growth is built. The more we invest in this foundation, the stronger and more resilient the learner and their learning become. Meaningful and contextually relevant experiences hold the key to optimal learning in early childhood. By ensuring that learning experiences align with the children's developmental level, interests, backgrounds, and experiences, we create a solid framework for their educational journey.

Literacy

The Early Childhood English Language Arts Program follows developmentally appropriate practices within a Reggio-Emilia inspired environment. The program focuses on engaging children in meaningful learning experiences that foster the development of a robust language and conceptual knowledge base. Through these experiences, children expand their vocabulary, enhance their verbal reasoning abilities, and grasp the comprehension of messages conveyed through print. The ELA program offers numerous opportunities for children to think critically and creatively, engage in dialogue and questioning, reflect upon their learning, and construct knowledge about the world they inhabit.

At the foundation of our literacy program lies the development of children's oral language skills, background knowledge, vocabulary bank, and reasoning abilities. As they progress through the Early Childhood program, literacy instruction aligns with standards while considering developmentally appropriate milestones. Our teachers adopt a balanced literacy approach, employing a combination of strategies for teaching and learning.

To cultivate a love for reading and nurture children into becoming proficient readers and writers, it is essential to construct a strong foundation. This foundation comprises several key components that support their literacy development.

In Nursery, we prioritize the development of children's reasoning abilities and oral language skills. We aim to broaden their background knowledge and expand their vocabulary bank. Through diverse and engaging learning experiences, we provide opportunities for children to express themselves, effectively communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and make sense of the world around them.

As children progress to **KG1**, we continue building upon the work initiated in Nursery. We introduce phonological awareness, concepts of print, and alphabet letters in implicit ways through books, songs, transition activities, and group games. This holistic approach integrates all areas of learning, ensuring a comprehensive foundation. Additionally, literacy games are available for children who are ready and express interest,

as we believe that literacy learning is most effective when children actively participate and engage in developmentally appropriate activities that align with their readiness and brain development, rather than expecting it to be solely delivered to them.

In **KG2**, we sustain the fostering of foundational building blocks. We introduce some aspects and components of the Reading and Writing Workshop as a valuable addition to the children's daily routine. By allocating specific times on the daily schedule for reading and writing activities, we bring structure to these essential learning periods. The Workshop Model emphasizes the importance of routine, choice, and the application of reading and writing strategies in reading and writing contexts. It aims to create a supportive environment where kindergarten children feel valued as emerging readers and writers, developing not only their literacy skills but also their confidence and love for learning. To align with the Reggio Emilia

constructivist approach, we adapt and blend the components of the workshop, allowing children to enjoy their learning journey and progress at their own pace.

In **Grades 1 and 2**, literacy learning sessions become longer and more structured, allowing children to delve deeper into the Reading and Writing Workshop approach. Teachers aim to create a meaningful learning experience by incorporating the children's interests and utilizing project-based and provocation work time as a starting point for lessons, when suitable. This constructivist approach fosters active participation from the children, encouraging conversations and discussions with their teachers to enhance their learning.

By implementing these elements and combining them with our Reggio Emilia supportive and engaging approach, we lay a solid foundation that paves the way for children's literacy development, fostering a lifelong love for reading and writing.

Math

Children are naturally curious and possess an innate ability to think mathematically, even if they are unaware of it. As they engage with the world, play, and interact with their peers, they instinctively explore mathematical concepts. Recognizing that mathematical thinking involves problem-solving and establishing relationships, we encourage children to tackle a wide range of challenges, encompassing social, emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects.

This belief underlies the importance of numeracy, which lays the foundation for a solid mathematical understanding. Numeracy equips individuals with the skills and concepts necessary to comprehend numerical information and solve mathematical problems. At its core, numeracy is rooted in three fundamental principles: counting, number relationships, and problem-solving. These principles serve as the building blocks of numerical comprehension, providing the essential tools for navigating the world of mathematics.

In **Nursery**, we focus on establishing the foundation of mathematical thinking by nurturing reasoning skills and developing problem-solving abilities. We encourage number sense through concepts like the 'Ordered Sequence of Counting Numbers,' 'The One to One' principle, and 'The Cardinal' principle. Additionally, we emphasize comparing sets and learning about shapes by incorporating intentional and contextualized play-based activities that foster discovery and learning.

Building upon the work started in Nursery, **KG1** children continue to engage in math learning through play. Math provocations are

integrated into daily activities, where teachers carefully observe and highlight mathematical concepts in various classroom contexts. Children are provided with meaningful and contextualized challenges that stimulate their numeracy skills, higher-order thinking, and problem-solving abilities. They are encouraged to express their thoughts and share strategies with their peers, while math games are incorporated into their daily experiences.

In **KG2**, we continue to strengthen the foundational components of math education and work towards meeting the Math AERO Standards. Math Talks and Math Workshop are fixed components of the daily schedule. Math Talks provide opportunities for children to express and share their thoughts and strategies, while Math Workshop enables them to explore and enhance their understanding of mathematical concepts through guided practice and independent investigations. Children explore and solve problems within hands-on provocations, further solidifying their understanding of numbers in contexts. Teachers focus on cultivating each child's learning strategies, enabling children to construct their own understanding. Children take initiative and lead their learning, while teachers facilitate this process through questioning, encouraging children to make their thinking and learning visible. Math is integrated in project work and provocation work whenever possible.

In **Grades 1 and 2**, math learning follows a structured approach that is started in KG2 and incorporates Math Talks and the Workshop Model. This model is implemented throughout both grades, allowing children to actively

participate in hands-on activities, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative discussions.

Teachers act as facilitators, guiding children's learning, asking probing questions, and providing feedback to foster critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Our math curriculum is designed to align with the rigorous AERO Standards and follows a logical

and coherent progression of mathematical concepts. It aims to provide children with a deep understanding of mathematics through a focus on conceptual understanding and problem-solving. The curriculum covers various topics, including Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Numbers and Operations in Base Ten, and Measurement and Data. Math is integrated in project work and provocation

Science

The journey into **Science** begins with **Provocations**: these are thought-provoking, open-ended activities and projects that spark curiosity and wonder in young minds.

The topics and concepts investigated ignite a thirst for knowledge, fostering a climate where scientific thinking flourishes. Children engage deeply, hypothesizing, experimenting, and building their theories about the world around them. This method does more than just reflect the iterative, inquiry-driven essence of science itself—it actively involves children in the scientific method.

By asking questions, forming hypotheses, conducting experiments, observing results, and drawing conclusions, children experience firsthand the cyclical process that drives scientific discovery. This approach transforms learning into a vibrant, deeply individual adventure, arming our young learners with the necessary tools to think and behave like scientists. It lays the groundwork for a lifelong engagement with science, preparing them not just to understand scientific concepts but to apply the scientific method in all areas of inquiry throughout their lives.

Arabic

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

The Arabic MSA courses in **Nursery**, **KG1**, and **KG2** aim to introduce the children to the Arabic language. The program follows a communicative approach to teaching the language and introduces age-appropriate literacy skills. In the MSA classes, children engage in oral activities that develop their listening and speaking skills. They also participate in pre-reading and pre-writing activities that develop their literacy skills in standard Arabic.

In **Grades 1** and **2**, the Modern Standard Arabic program is designed for children who are native or near-native speakers of Arabic. The MSA courses in grades 1 and 2 aim at developing the students' Arabic literacy skills. Children in this course engage in reading and writing to build their phonological and print awareness and eventually begin to read

and write simple familiar texts. The focus on oral communication skills continues in these courses to promote the children's listening and speaking skills in standard Arabic. Integral to our daily schedule, the time dedicated to Arabic learning begins with 30-minute sessions in Nursery classes and gradually increases, reaching 60 minutes from Grade 1 onwards.

Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) in Grade 2

This course is designed for children who have no prior exposure to Arabic. The course introduces the children to the Arabic language and culture. The main emphasis of AFL is on communication in three modes: **interpersonal**, **interpretive**, and **presentational**. Basic vocabulary and grammar, as well as simple writing structures, are introduced.

French

French is introduced as a third language, starting from the Nursery class and continuing throughout the subsequent school years, with sessions scheduled for thirty minutes on alternate days. From their earliest encounters in Nursery, our children are immersed in French through interactive methods that include engagement with teachers, storytelling, singing, and hands-on activities. This immersive approach is designed to mimic the natural process of language acquisition, capitalizing on young children's innate ability to absorb new sounds, words, and phrases

through meaningful context and repetition.

The curriculum emphasizes communication in three key modes: **interpersonal** (engaging in conversations), **interpretive** (understanding spoken and written language), and **presentational** (sharing information and ideas in speech and writing).

By focusing on these modes, we cater to a holistic development of language skills, ensuring students not only learn to communicate but also to connect with French culture and speakers on a deeper level.

Visual Arts

In our EC program, we recognize the pivotal role of the arts in children's holistic development. We affirm the belief that every child possesses artistic potential, and our mission is to nurture and unfold each child's creative capacities to the fullest extent.

In **Nursery**, children explore various art forms with their Homeroom Teachers through provocations that address a range of topics and concepts. In **KG1** and **KG2**, our young learners are exposed to various arts during Homeroom time and participate in collaborative sessions with an Atelierista, an artist-in-residence. This partnership enhances the ongoing learning projects within the classrooms by delving deeper into the concepts introduced during class, thereby unveiling the children's artistic and creative potential.

During these collaborative sessions, children not only showcase their creativity but also explore a broad spectrum of artistic media, encompassing drawing (pencil, markers, pastels, chalk), painting (watercolor, tempera), printmaking (etching), and sculpting

(3-dimensional, clay, metal, mosaic). Through hands-on exploration and experimentation, children gain proficiency in these various artistic languages.

Beyond the acquisition of techniques, our children utilize diverse methods and applications to craft their artistic expressions. Engaging in thoughtful analysis of their work, they actively seek ways to convey powerful messages through their art. This holistic approach to artistic exploration fosters a rich and integrated learning experience for our students.

As children progress to **Grades 1** and **2**, they partake in 45-minute art sessions led by a dedicated art teacher twice every six-day cycle. In these sessions, they study diverse art techniques and apply them to projects initiated within the art class. These varied artistic media and techniques seamlessly extend into projects and provocations explored in the Homeroom class, reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of artistic expression throughout the curriculum.

Music

We firmly believe that engaging in a robust music education program fosters a lasting love for music, an understanding and appreciation of cultures worldwide, and empowers children to contribute meaningfully to the school community.

Early Childhood children are immersed in a comprehensive, hands-on, and enjoyable approach to music at ACS. Recognizing children as inherently creative and active learners of music, we integrate movement, singing, instrumental music, and exposure to high-quality music into their daily experiences.

In **Nursery, KG1, and KG2**, music is seamlessly woven into our daily schedule and is facilitated by the Homeroom Teachers. This early exposure also includes fundamental technical aspects of music. In **Grades 1 and 2**, children participate in dedicated music classes twice within a six-day cycle, led by a specialized music teacher. These classes delve into both the artistic and technical aspects of music, allowing children to develop a well-rounded understanding and proficiency in this universal language.

Physical Education

ACS believes that physical activity is critical to the development and maintenance of good health. The goal of ACS's Early Childhood Physical Education program is to develop physically educated individuals who have the knowledge, physical skills, confidence, and interpersonal skills to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity and fitness. Our program integrates research-based best practices and promotes collaboration within the department, resulting in an enhanced educational experience for ACS children.

Children in ACS's Early Childhood Physical Education program:

1. **Engage** in physical activities within a safe and supportive environment, fostering a sense of comfort to explore various physical

skills and take risks that contribute to their overall development and health.


2. **Experience** differentiated instruction tailored to their individual entry-level skills and fitness levels, ensuring that each child receives personalized guidance and support.
3. **Develop** sequentially learned skills and fitness, empowering them to make choices and actively participate in lifelong physical activities that contribute to their well-being.
4. **Exit** the ACS Early Childhood Physical Education program with the motivation to pursue and enjoy lifelong physical activities that cater to their unique needs and contribute to a healthy lifestyle.



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