

OVERVIEW OF THE NEW YORK STATE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

The following is a general overview of content most commonly found in the elementary curriculum. Its purpose is to describe some of the major concepts and skills addressed and is by no means a comprehensive description of the curriculum. The best resource for curriculum information is the curriculum coordinator or elementary school principal in the home district.

English/Language Arts

The English/Language Arts Curriculum integrates the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Spelling is usually addressed within the context of writing or composition. At the elementary level much attention is focused on developing reading skills using both fiction and non-fiction materials. A variety of genres are utilized as resources. Listening skills are practiced through story time and other activities that require focused listening to obtain information. Writing skills are developed by having children keep journals of their experiences, write stories, letters, and reports. Speaking skills are developed by giving short presentations and oral reports.

Mathematical

A major goal of mathematical education is to develop the ability to utilize math concepts and skills to solve everyday problems. The content areas of math are logic, number sense and numeration, operations on numbers, geometry, measurement, probability and statistics, algebra, and trigonometry. During the elementary years, fundamental concepts in all these areas are introduced while the skills to apply them are gradually developed throughout the entire school experience. Having children create and solve their own problems, display numerical data in different ways, or play mental math games are examples of activities that develop specific math skills.

Science

Elementary science includes both life sciences and physical sciences. Health can easily be integrated as a part of life sciences. A major goal is for children to understand and experience the scientific process of inquiry where hypotheses are formulated and tested. Therefore, science learning should be a hands-on experience. Observing, classifying, measuring, predicting, and interpreting data are all skills associated with the scientific process. Content at the elementary level generally includes the study of plants and animals, energy and matter, the environment, and body systems.

Social Studies

Social studies includes the study of history, geography, economics, and citizenship. In the primary grades, instruction focuses on the interdependency of family and community. Concepts such as roles, services, needs and wants are introduced. Pedestrian, bicycle, and fire safety can be integrated here as well.

As children progress to the intermediate grades, the concept of community is extended to states and countries. In New York State, fourth grade focuses on local history, fifth grade on western expansion in the U.S., and sixth grade on other continents and countries in the world. At each level the content addresses culture, government systems, economics, and major historical figures and events. Skills include map reading and making, getting and reporting information from a variety of sources, and interpreting written reports and documents.

Health

In the primary grades health instruction emphasizes developing good health habits that include grooming, nutrition, and the prevention of disease and accidents. The Commissioner's Regulations were recently amended to include instruction specific to HIV/AIDS, alcohol/drug/tobacco abuse, and child abuse. HIV/AIDS instruction focuses on prevention, emphasizing the communicable nature of the disease and the drug abuse connection. Safety education is easily integrated into health instruction.

In the upper elementary grades more time is spent in studying human growth and development and the function of various body systems. The importance of developing a healthy life style is emphasized at this level also.

Visual Arts and Music

Study in the arts provides children throughout the K-12 grades with experiences that enable them to develop skill in expressing ideas through an artistic medium. By performing and analyzing the work of others, children can understand that individual styles are created by using artistic elements in different ways.

Physical Education

Physical fitness and teamwork are emphasized in the physical education curriculum throughout the K-12 experience. Activities involving rhythms, dances, exercise, and games for both individual and group participation are included.

Library/Media Skills

The ability to find and access information is an important skill for all learners. These skills are best learned within the context of instruction and should be incorporated into, appropriate projects and assignments.

Computer skills are most effectively developed in this fashion also. Students can set up their own databases to organize their research, use simple word processing programs to write stories and reports, and print out their copies using desk top publishing.

GRADES 1-6

Subject/Requirements

(public/registered non-public schools)

Instructional Requirements

(yearly total = 900 hours)

English/Language Arts

180 minutes per week

- Reading
- Writing
- Spelling
- Speaking/listening

Mathematical

180 minutes per week

Science

180 minutes per week

- life sciences
- physical science

Social Studies

180 minutes per week

(includes citizenship and patriotism)

- geography
- NYS history and constitution
- US history and constitution
- local history
- economics

Health

Regularly

(includes HIV/AIDS, alcohol/ drug/tobacco abuse,
fire/highway/ bicycle safety education, child abuse)

Music

45 minutes per week

Visual Arts

45 minutes per week

Physical Education

120 minutes per week

Notes: 1) Library Skills should be taught within the context of subject areas.

2) Bilingual education or English as a second language should be provided where a need is indicated.

3) Although some subjects may be taught in integrated fashion (e.g., science/health), the IHIP must show content taught in each subject.