



WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

# Lower School

2024 - 2025

## Curriculum Guide

GRADES 4-6

## Philosophy

Our work is grounded in valuing young girls' nuanced thinking and encouraging them to have a voice in their world. In fourth grade, a girl's sense of self is taking root, shaped by her intellectual pursuits, friendships, and emerging passions and talents. It is a critical time in her development, and a time when a girls' school environment, designed with her in mind, will allow her to come into her own in powerful ways.

The Westridge Lower School offers a curriculum that fosters independence and an enthusiasm for learning within a structured classroom environment. Using a developmentally-appropriate approach to educating girls ensures continued intellectual and emotional growth as they apply their learning consciously, creatively, and collaboratively.

# Lower School

## CURRICULUM GUIDE

### Language Arts

The Westridge integrated language arts program emphasizes the development of expository and creative writing, in addition to instruction in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Students develop their voices through their own daily writing and conscious engagement with the writing of others. Small group discussions and Socratic discourse of a variety of literary forms are key elements to the curriculum.

### Mathematics

In the Lower School math program, students learn to explain their reasoning in solving problems and discuss multiple methods for finding solutions. They master basic skills and knowledge so they are comfortable computing with abstract and complex concepts. Through the study of economics, girls learn about consumerism, finance, and the global marketplace. Students grow comfortable in making mistakes, develop their own positive mathematical identities, and take as much joy in delving into a challenging problem or puzzle as they do in the epiphany of solving it.

### Science

Through an engaging, hands-on, lab-based curriculum, students learn what it means to think as a scientist. By making observations, collecting data, and practicing the scientific and engineering processes, they become strategic thinkers and problem solvers. Science in 4th grade is an interdisciplinary STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) course, in which students also learn to leverage technology that is most appropriate for the tasks at hand.

### History

Girls study California history in 4th grade, the Western Hemisphere in 5th grade, and ancient civilizations in 6th grade. They gain knowledge and an understanding of how peoples of the past and present have been shaped by geography, history, belief systems, economics, socio-political systems, and culture. Note-taking and research skills, in addition to how to extrapolate information from various sources, are taught and applied through interdisciplinary lessons and creative projects.

### Spanish Language and Culture

Beginning in 5th grade, students study Spanish. Girls are immersed in a language-rich environment that encourages speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. In 7th grade, students can choose to continue with Spanish or opt to take Mandarin Chinese or Latin.

### Performing Arts

The Lower School emphasizes a dynamic study of music as an introduction to a performing arts education. Westridge is unique, as girls study choral music and music theory in 4th grade every other day. String instruments are added in grades 5 and 6. Students can choose either the violin, viola, cello, or double bass.

### Visual Art

Art classes in drawing, painting, and mixed media are featured in grades 4-6, and a semester of ceramics is added in 6th grade. Visual art classes occur every other day. Lower School Visual Art is foundational, establishing the basic concepts, skills, and knowledge for artistic expression and appreciation. Art history, architecture, and the exploration and study of artists are also included.

**17** AVERAGE  
LOWER SCHOOL  
CLASS SIZE



More detailed curriculum  
information can be found at  
[www.westridge.org/lowerschool](http://www.westridge.org/lowerschool)





## Physical Education

P.E. class occurs every day because, in addition to being good for the body, physical activity boosts brain power and improves learning. The program is designed to develop skills and coordination, as well as to introduce traditional sports, cooperative games, and activities and emphasize the importance of health and fitness.

## Computer Science and Technology

Beginning in 4th grade students explore a range of fundamental concepts including coding, robotics, the internet, and digital citizenship. In addition, students learn to use technology as a tool to support their own learning—a crucial skill in a connected, digital world. Each Lower School student is provided with a Lenovo Yoga laptop computer as part of our 1:1 laptop program, the cost of which is included in tuition and program fees.

## Council

Our Lower School Council and Flex programs support social and emotional learning (SEL) and other essential skill building. Sixth grade Flex groups meet every rotation, covering topics such as study skills, leadership, DEIJ, SEL, and future financial mindset. Fourth and fifth graders participate in Council monthly, focusing on SEL competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and healthy decision-making. These competencies are reinforced through our Transformative Social Learning pillars: empowerment, mental emotional and social health, acceptance and belonging, future financial mindset, and digital literacy.

### Student Leadership

The Student Activities and Leadership Council (SALC) is a service learning group that also serves as the student government leadership of the Lower School. SALC arranges and hosts activities that serve the larger community, such as Petridge, an annual event that benefits animal rescue organizations.



When I reflect on our daughters' Lower School experience, two details stand out: ease of self-expression and joy at school. During our time, I've seen girls solve math problems while dancing and laughing after school, enjoying the library as a second home, and revering Chef Brandon's delicious meals. There is a masterful balance of high expectations and room for growth; daily preparation, expanded thinking, and intentional rigor are part of life on campus. This is the most important first step we can offer our girls in preparation for a lifetime of learning and opinions confidently shared.

— LEILA J. MCCARREY,  
mother of Roya '32 and Tahra '30

## Think, Care, Act Project (TCAP)

This year-long project in 5th grade celebrates our students' compassionate participation in the world with student-led service projects. Beginning with self-discovery, students look outside of themselves into their communities, the country, and the world to identify and research a problem they can help solve, using both their strengths and interests. They are challenged with generating innovative ideas that raise awareness and lead to concrete action.

## Water Rockets & Robots

The culminating projects of our 5th and 6th grade science programs are rocketry and robotics, respectively. Students design, build (and decorate!), and launch rockets, with iterative design changes to improve launch performance. The 6th graders practice the engineering design process through physical computing and expand their experience with robotics and sensors to solidify their mathematical numbers sense.

## Eco-Homes

In the interdisciplinary Eco-Homes project, 6th graders investigate their passion for sustainable engineering and exploring other cultures. Working in mini "consulting" groups, students design and build a prototype of an environmentally sustainable house addressing the needs and conditions of specific cities around the world.



# Lower School Schedule

The daily schedule for all grades at Westridge operates on a six-day cycle. Days are designated as 1-6 and referred to as odd or even days.

## 4th Grade

Fourth grade students have math, language arts, and physical education every day, while science, history, visual arts, and chorus are every other day.

SAMPLE 4TH GRADE SCHEDULE

											2:45-2:55
8:00		8:10-9:10		9:30-10:30		10:35-11:25		12:15-1:00		1:05-1:35	1:40-2:40
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Homeroom	Math	Recess	Language Arts	Chorus	Lunch & Recess	Physical Education	STEM	STEM	Homeroom	
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Homeroom	Language Arts	Recess	Math	Enrichment	Lunch & Recess	Physical Education	Library Time	Art	Homeroom	

## 5th Grade

Fifth grade students have math, language arts, and physical education every day, while science, history, visual arts, and chorus occur every other day. Every fifth grader begins our strings music program and Spanish, with both classes offered every other day.

SAMPLE 5TH GRADE SCHEDULE

											2:45-2:55
	8:00	8:10-9:10		9:30-10:30	10:35-11:25		12:15-1:05	1:10-2:00	2:05-2:45		
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Homeroom	Math	Recess	Language Arts	Enrichment	Lunch & Recess	Spanish	Strings	Physical Education	Homeroom	
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Homeroom	Language Arts	Recess	Math	Science	Lunch & Recess	Art	Chorus	Physical Education	Homeroom	

## 6th Grade

Sixth grade students have math, humanities (an integrated language arts and history program), and physical education every day, while science, visual arts, strings, and Spanish are every other day.

SAMPLE 6TH GRADE SCHEDULE

	8:00	8:10-9:10	9:30-10:30	10:35-11:35	12:15-1:00	1:05-1:50	2:05-2:55		
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Homeroom	Math	Recess	Humanities	Art	Lunch & Recess	Chorus/Flex	Physical Education	Spanish
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Homeroom	Humanities	Recess	Strings	Math	Lunch & Recess	Chorus/Flex	Physical Education	Science



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