



LOWER SCHOOL

2025/26

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Grades PreK–4



Lower School CURRICULUM GUIDE

Academic Program Overview

The Lower School at Sidwell Friends is a joyful, learning-filled experience for children. The teachers are skilled at teaching the whole child, fostering not only their academic skills, but their physical development, social-emotional learning, and spiritual lives. The Lower School's end goal is for children to be happy, grounded, independent young people with the ideas, curiosity, and skills to let their lives speak—both at School and in the broader community.



To best serve children, the Sidwell Friends Lower School program:

- Honors the Light in every child.
- Embraces the whole child and attends to their social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual development.
- Teaches for goodness, justice, and having a positive impact on the larger world.
- Nurtures the “teacher within” each child.
- Strives for deep personal understanding and meaning—and encourages that reflection to extend beyond the classroom.
- Values learning as a process of continuing revelation and empowers student ownership of learning.
- Cultivates a disposition to learning that includes risk-taking, perseverance, curiosity, self-knowledge, reflection, and joy.
- Educates for critical thinking and logic as well as for imagination, playfulness, and intuition.
- Holds high academic expectations for all students, while respecting the pace of each child's development.
- Builds a community of learners, including families, teachers, staff, and children.
- Teaches children to challenge bias and prejudice, embrace diversity, and view issues from multiple perspectives.

Quaker Education

As a Quaker School, Sidwell Friends is committed to the social, emotional, and spiritual development and well-being of children. The goal is to help children develop into kind, ethical, compassionate people. Based on the idea that there is “that of God in everyone,” children are taught to joyfully embrace differences while also seeking to understand the common bonds that unite us. Sidwell Friends teaches the Quaker testimonies of peace, kindness, empathy, stewardship, equality, community, simplicity, and integrity throughout the curriculum, challenging students to live these values in their everyday lives. Additionally, a Quaker education inspires students to let their lives speak and to embrace the shared responsibility of working toward a more just, equitable, and sustainable world (see the Equity, Justice, and Community section below). Quakerism is open to families of all faiths, and the School's Quaker education clerks work hard to incorporate opportunities for interfaith celebrations and dialogue.

EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND COMMUNITY

Equity work is a central tenet of Quakerism, and the School is committed to creating a just and equitable learning environment for all students. At the core, Sidwell Friends ensures that every child feels known, loved, and affirmed for who they are as people and as learners. Students discover that their voices matter and that they are equal partners in the learning process. They set goals, self-reflect, see feedback as essential to growth, and feel a sense of agency and ownership over their learning.

The curriculum is designed with the idea of windows and mirrors in mind; students should see themselves reflected in the curriculum and should find joy, meaning, and connection in learning deeply about the experiences of others. In addition, Sidwell Friends is committed to embedding antiracist and anti-bias practices into School programs, helping students to both develop a strong set of skills to combat racism, prejudice, and bias in their

everyday lives and to learn to be effective advocates and agents of change. These skills grow and develop over time in the Lower School, culminating in the 4th Grade Ethical Leadership Experience.

SERVICE LEARNING

The Lower School has a vibrant service-learning program, and service to others is an integral part of Quaker practice. The goals of the service-learning program are to develop a sense of care, responsibility, and civic duty in students, as well as to allow students the opportunity to experience the joy and personal fulfillment in serving others. Sidwell Friends has long-standing partnerships with three local organizations: A Wider Circle, Bethesda Cares, and Martha's Table—which the Lower School supports with division-wide projects. Students and families bolster these efforts through volunteering and donation drives. In addition, each grade level joins other service-learning initiatives that are embedded within their curriculum.

MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Meeting for Worship is an important part of the Lower School's Quaker practice. Each week, the School gathers in various configurations for Meeting for Worship. Meetings are about 20 minutes long in the Lower School, and each meeting begins with a query developed by one of the Lower School classes. Queries, which are typically tied to one or more of the Quaker testimonies, are a way to center students' thinking and to reflect on concerns relevant to their lives. Following the reading of the query, children have time for silent worship. Silent worship builds community and gives children a chance to pause, breathe, and reflect. During this time, students listen to their inner teacher: that still, small voice inside each of us. During silent worship, students listen for messages that might come to them, and children learn to discriminate between those messages that are for personal self-reflection and those that they may choose to share aloud in order to provide the full community an opportunity for further reflection and growth. Meetings end with a heart-to-hand handshake, and there is time at the end of the Meeting for Worship for joy and fellowship in being together.

Throughout preK–4th grades, teachers explicitly teach students the history of Quakerism and share stories that bring to life Quaker faith and practices. Students learn the Quaker process as a way of making decisions; they learn to write queries and practice ways to listen in expectant silence.

Social-Emotional Curriculum

Rooted in Quaker values and testimonies, our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum guides students in becoming compassionate, self-aware, and community-minded individuals. The program is built around four core pillars:

- **Being Centered:** Students learn to tune into their bodies, thoughts, and emotions through mindfulness practices and self-reflection. They build emotional vocabulary, learn to scale the size of problems, and practice calming strategies that help regulate their inner world.
- **Friendship and Community:** Children develop the skills to build healthy relationships and thrive within a diverse community. Through discussions and activities, students explore identity, honor differences in family structure, culture, and faith, and cultivate mutual respect and inclusion.
- **Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking:** Grounded in the belief that a more just and kind world is possible, students learn to take perspectives, engage in fair play, and resolve conflicts with increasing independence and empathy. They build skills in active listening, expressing needs respectfully, and seeking collaborative solutions.
- **Identity, Values, and Ethical Action:** Students are empowered to develop a strong, positive sense of self, understand their personal values, and act as ethical leaders and upstanders in their community and the wider world.

Throughout the curriculum, students explore the neuroscience behind behavior and emotion, strengthening their understanding of the brain-body connection. With the Quaker testimonies as their compass, students are encouraged to develop a strong ethical “north star” and to take action—big and small—toward creating a more peaceful and equitable world.

Lower School teachers integrate this learning throughout the day, whether it's teaching perseverance in a math class or modeling collaboration skills in reading partnerships. Each day begins with a Morning Gathering and ends with a Closing Gathering. These two bookends to the day are powerful tools for building community, setting intentions for the day, reflecting and practicing important social and academic skills. During Morning Gathering, students typically begin with a brief moment of silence that allows each child to transition to the space and center themselves, followed by a greeting in which each child is welcomed and affirmed. Students also have the opportunity to share important events in their lives, to practice listening and speaking skills, and to learn about the academic work of the day. Many gatherings also involve elements of fun and team building that allow children to practice academic and social skills and, most importantly, to start their day with joy and camaraderie. Classrooms end the day with a Closing Gathering. This meeting offers students an important opportunity to re-center themselves, reflect on the work of the day, share gratitude, and reconnect as a community of learners.

PreK PROGRAM

The preK program is a play-based program, and the Lower School encourages its youngest learners to explore their worlds with greater independence, observe what they see, ask big questions, and investigate their environment. The program builds self-knowledge, self-regulation, empathy, problem-solving skills, and a joyful approach to learning. The preK curriculum is flexible, with projects emerging from the needs and interests of each particular cohort of learners, and it is highly structured, with well-defined routines and expectations.

Learning experiences include dramatic play, painting, drawing, and building. Children have opportunities each day to use tools that strengthen their fine and gross motor skills, including scissors, paintbrushes, shovels, etc. During indoor exploration time, the focus is on the process, rather than the product, and the teachers act as coaches and facilitators, helping each child learn and grow. Outdoor learning and play are vibrant parts of the preK program. The classroom opens into an outdoor space and students have ready access to play equipment, building materials, balls, jump ropes, etc.

Social-emotional learning is a key part of the preK program, and the Lower School weaves it into each part of the day. Children learn to center themselves and to balance their individual needs with being part of a group. Throughout the year, they learn to work and play independently and with peers, respect and appreciate differences, share ideas, listen attentively to others, respond flexibly to transition and change, and identify and manage feelings.





Social Studies in PreK

PreK students start the year with a unit called “All About Me.” They learn to talk about differences, share about their families, and value the diversity within the classroom. They then branch out to learn about Sidwell Friends and the people and natural world that make up the Bethesda campus. The second focus is on being members of the global community. The preK students learn about communities around the world and about the vast, great big world waiting to be explored. The third focus is the Quaker curriculum. Children learn about testimonies, experience Meeting for Worship, and learn the stories and practices that bind the community together. And most importantly, the youngest learners think about how they can let their lives speak and model the values of kindness, peace, friendship, stewardship, and care throughout their daily lives.

Literacy in PreK

The preK classroom is a literacy-rich environment in which children are encouraged to explore language, books, and writing throughout their day. Read-alouds, access to interesting texts, and an exploration of environmental print offer children opportunities to propel their emergent reading and writing skills, and to foster a love and curiosity of books. Through informal and teacher-directed literacy activities, students receive a strong foundation in phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, oral language, and early literacy and writing skills; sharing their ideas with others; and thinking deeply about books.

Math in PreK

The Lower School weaves math throughout the preK curriculum, and children explore concepts such as numbers, equivalence, symmetry, similarity/difference, and measurement. Through play and guided learning, they grapple with real problems, such as creating tall block buildings, designing patterns, and sorting, counting, and comparing materials. Teachers watch students play and “collect” what the children are thinking about so they can plan activities that challenge or extend that thinking. Children are invited to wonder, explore, and use math in authentic ways throughout their day.



A photograph of two young girls sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom. The girl on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a white shirt with a blue and yellow graphic. The girl on the right has short dark hair with bangs and is wearing a white shirt with a floral pattern. They are both smiling and holding markers over a piece of paper on the desk. In the background, there is a wooden bookshelf filled with books and a calendar on the wall.

K-4 Program **LANGUAGE ARTS**

The goal of the Lower School language arts program is to help students become engaged, responsible, imaginative, and critical readers, writers, speakers, and listeners. The curriculum is based on the evidence-based understanding that children need explicit, systematic instruction in word recognition (decoding, spelling) and oral language comprehension (vocabulary, genre structures) in order to be fluent readers and writers. The Sidwell Friends program offers opportunities for students to apply these skills and strategies in authentic literacy tasks that are contextualized, engaging, and push them to think and produce at high levels.

Oral Language Comprehension

Listening and speaking are important components of the language arts program. Strong reading comprehension starts with strong oral language comprehension. When reading, students use their mental storehouse of sounds and vocabulary to match what they see in print to what they know about the English language. Through sharing in Morning Gathering, classroom presentations, writing shares, and class plays, students develop awareness of sounds and spoken language, and add to their mental lexicon. They also learn to express their ideas confidently, concisely, and clearly. In the spirit of Quakerism, students are taught to be active listeners who listen expectantly to their classmates, ask thoughtful questions, and offer insightful points to move toward greater understanding.

Reading Comprehension

The Lower School curriculum is built on the idea that students need both strong word-recognition skills and strong language comprehension in order to be skillful, engaged readers. Throughout their time in the Lower School, students have opportunities to “crack the code” of the English language, including the conventions of how words, sentences, and genres are structured. The program also focuses on building students’ analytical skills, helping them to discern layers of meaning in grade-level texts.

The teachers use a variety of approaches to support their readers, and students explore a wide range of authors and genres, including a balance of fiction and nonfiction. Ultimately, the goal is for students to discover new ideas, discern deeper truths, build empathy, make connections, and explore new perspectives through the texts they read. In the Quaker tradition of learning in community, teachers and students have opportunities to work in partnerships and small groups to discuss texts in order to expand and deepen their understanding.

Reading: Kindergarten

In kindergarten, children begin to form their identities as readers. Kindergarten teachers foster a sense of wonder and curiosity for words—spoken and in print—and the messages they carry. Using *Foundations*, children dive into a study of words, studying the relationship between sounds and letters—both orally (phonemic awareness) and in print (phonics). As they move through the year, students use these skills in context, practicing decoding strategies, working on fluency, and reading for literal and implied meaning.



K–4 Program

LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading: 1st Grade

For young readers, 1st grade is a year of big growth, and students' reading skills take off as the year progresses. Using *Foundations*, students continue their exploration of how words are formed, learning to decode and encode words with more complex sound and meaning patterns. They practice using their knowledge and skills to tackle increasingly complex texts.

In fiction reading, the spotlight is on deepening students' understanding of story elements (plot, character, and setting). In nonfiction, children explore the structure of nonfiction texts, learning how to identify the main topics the author is sharing. Throughout, they build fluency, vocabulary and an understanding of how texts are structured.

Reading: 2nd Grade

In 2nd grade, children focus on building their fluency by using efficient decoding strategies. Using *Foundations*, students study increasingly complex sounds, as well as orthographic and meaning patterns in multisyllabic words. Students also build their vocabulary, learning more nuanced definitions of words and studying the rhythm and moods they evoke.

In fiction, students take a deep dive into characters: their traits, how they respond to challenges and events, and the central lessons the author is sharing. Students investigate a range of genres, including poetry, folktales, and realistic fiction. In nonfiction reading, students become experts on new topics, while working on vocabulary, development, and comparing and contrasting information across texts.

Reading: 3rd Grade

The 3rd grade marks an important phase in students' reading development. The 3rd graders consolidate knowledge of the English code to decode and encode new and unfamiliar words; they use their strong word-recognition skills to read with greater fluency and comprehension.

In 3rd grade, the focus is on in-the-text comprehension. Students learn the structures and conventions of a wide range of genres, and use that knowledge to deepen their comprehension.

In fiction reading, 3rd graders sharpen their inferencing skills by closely observing characters and their



motivations, examining the arc of a character's journey, and beginning to study the big ideas or themes that run through texts. In nonfiction, students learn to ascertain big ideas by using predictable text features. By the end of the year, students engage in research projects that require them to synthesize across texts, organize information, and share their learning. They are introduced to the idea of perspective and bias in the books they read.

Reading: 4th Grade

In 4th grade, students are ready to dive into a complex study of the English language. They look at root words, suffixes and affixes, and the nuance of meaning. In fiction reading, 4th graders study the complexity of characters and themes, and delve into books that explore a range of social and environmental justice issues. In nonfiction reading, students engage in multiple opportunities for cross-curricular research and deep learning on a variety of topics. They practice synthesizing information, close reading of texts, and evaluation of bias and perspective in the authors they read.



K–4 Program

LANGUAGE ARTS

Writing

At the Lower School, reading and writing go hand-in-hand. Taking cues from their favorite authors, speakers, and poets, students learn how to use spoken and written language to share their stories, insights, and ideas with others. From year to year, students explore a range of different kinds of writing—opinion and argumentative, informational, poetry, and narrative—gradually deepening their understanding of how to write with clarity and creativity. As with the reading program, Sidwell Friends understands that to be a skillful writer, children need strong transcription skills (fluent handwriting, typing, mechanics), as well as a vast storehouse of vocabulary and content knowledge to support ideation. Through direct instruction, one-on-one conferring, and small group work, they learn to express and substantiate their ideas, to systematically organize their ideas into sentences and paragraphs, and to communicate effectively with different audiences.

Writing: Kindergarten

In kindergarten, children begin to explore writing as a means for communicating. Using *Foundations*, students practice letter formation, spacing, and directionality in their writing. As they begin to connect speech sounds to letters and letter combinations, they are encouraged to attempt spelling words independently, using their growing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence.

Writing composition instruction is both formal and informal and is integrated throughout the day. Children write notes

to one another, label the classroom, write messages in their dramatic play, and leave detailed notes in the block center. As the year progresses, children learn to communicate ideas and stories through drawings and labels. By the end of the year, students are able to craft simple sentences.

Writing: 1st Grade

First graders' budding reading skills empower them to approach writing with a greater sense of possibility. Using *Foundations*, children continue to develop proper print letter formation, shifting from writing uppercase to lowercase letters. They also practice spacing words, beginning sentences with a capital letter, and ending with appropriate punctuation.

Students take inspiration from the books they read, learning to add detail, dialogue, and thoughts and feelings to their stories. During all phases of the writing process, students focus on organizing ideas; in fiction writing, students learn to craft a strong beginning, middle, and end; in nonfiction writing, students learn to use headings, captions, and images to support their main topic.

By the end of the year, students are able to craft an expanded simple sentence.

Writing: 2nd Grade

In 2nd grade, students are ready for a challenge in writing. Across the board, 2nd graders work to improve their sentence fluency and to organize their writing clearly in different genres. Second graders continue to build writing fluency, engaging in deliberate handwriting and editing practice.



Ideation is a primary focus of the 2nd grade writing curriculum. Students work on adding vivid and illustrative details to both fiction and nonfiction writing. Teachers engage students in close examination of how authors build on their ideas and coach students to apply those same strategies in their own writing. In fiction, students focus on creating relatable characters through the addition of thought and feelings. Students also explore the narrative structure by collaborating together to write a class play. After doing a deep dive of folktales in their reading, students use their growing understanding of character, setting and dialogue to bring their own stories to life. This creative process allows them to express big ideas about the world, collaborate with peers and gain confidence as authors and performers. Through this experience, they think deeply about voice, sequence and audience and work to share important messages with our larger community. In nonfiction work, students delve into informational writing and use all they've learned about the structure and craft of nonfiction texts to create engaging educational texts and persuasive arguments.

Writing: 3rd Grade

The 3rd grade represents a marked jump in terms of the quantity and complexity of students' writing. During the year, students revisit narrative, informational, and persuasive writing, as well as poetry. They conduct cross-curricular research projects and work to communicate information clearly and succinctly. They extend work done in prior years and focus on writing for meaning, considering purpose and audience, and revising work based on peer and teacher feedback.

Across modes and genres, the spotlight is on the relationship between organization and meaning; students work to create strong, cohesive paragraphs with a clear focus and related details. Students study and apply complex sentence structures, and are expected to apply knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and capitalization with greater fluency. Cursive is introduced in 3rd grade, and students may also begin practicing keyboarding skills.

Writing: 4th Grade

In 4th grade, students are ready to craft more complex stories and arguments. Building on the work they do in reading, students develop strategies for adding depth and nuance to their ideas, all the while assuming a "responsible writer" stance to facilitate the reader's (or listener's) comprehension. Fourth grade writers intentionally use structure (e.g., rhythm, nonfiction text structures) and craft techniques (e.g., figurative language) to convey central ideas and themes. Research and nonfiction writing are a particular focus of 4th grade; students learn to identify credible sources, evaluate author's bias, paraphrase information, synthesize information across texts, and substantiate ideas with evidence.



Fourth grade writers truly write across the curriculum, transferring their writing knowledge and skills to a range of assignments, from reading response journals to the Ethical Leadership Experience. Fourth grade students are expected to organize their writing into paragraphs and edit for conventions (e.g., punctuation, capitalization), grammar, and spelling. Cursive writing and keyboarding practices are also ongoing in 4th grade.

In the winter, students dive into the Blues as both a powerful form of poetry and as a vehicle for learning about the Black/African American experience in the United States. They begin by listening to a variety of Blues songs—old and new—to develop a working definition of the genre and explore how musicians use rhythm, repetition, and emotion to tell meaningful stories. As historians, students trace the origins of the Blues, learning how it grew out of the songs and spirituals of enslaved people, evolved in the Mississippi Delta, and spread across the country during the Great Migration. In this integrated unit, they do a close study of Langston Hughes' poetry and discover how blues/poetry is used to capture personal experiences and respond to injustice. By the end of the unit, each student creates an original poem and Blues song, drawing from their own life and experiences in the world to tell a story in this rich and expressive tradition.

K–4 Program

MATHEMATICS

Sidwell Friends' math program is designed to build fluent mathematicians, skilled problem solvers, and creative thinkers. The goal of the program is to help students construct their own mathematical knowledge. In the Lower School, students learn not only how to use algorithms, but how to think mathematically and tackle authentic, real-world math problems. The math classrooms encourage risk-taking, sense-making, curiosity, and wonder. Teachers and students alike explicitly cultivate growth mind-sets. Teachers introduce new concepts in ways that allow children to move from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract. In addition to building skills and fluency, the program focuses on developing mathematical habits of mind: perseverance, precision, reasoning, and logic. All grades (K–6) use the *Illustrative Mathematics* program, and teachers use ongoing assessments to differentiate and drive instruction.

Mathematics: Kindergarten

Beginning with Morning Gathering, teachers create a fluid atmosphere of wonder and exploration around math. Children practice important counting and place-value skills by looking at attendance, studying the calendar, tracking the weather, and analyzing data from the question of the day. As kindergartners, students learn to write and recognize numerals, develop a sense of 10, and count and sequence numbers to 10. Through *Illustrative Mathematics'* whole-class activities, stations, and small group work, teachers guide and facilitate mathematical learning and problem-solving.

Mathematics: 1st Grade

In 1st grade, students learn to be fluid and flexible in their understanding of how numbers work. Students focus on learning numbers one through 100, skip-counting by various patterns, and understanding place value through the hundreds. They become skilled at composing and decomposing numbers and work toward fluency in addition and subtraction facts to 10. Also, students explore geometry, patterns, time, and measurement. Using *Illustrative Mathematics'* whole-class activities, stations, and small group work, teachers guide students toward conceptual and procedural understandings and beginning fact fluency.





Mathematics: 2nd Grade

The 2nd grade program continues to develop number sense with a focus on fact fluency (addition and subtraction), as well as building a deep conceptual understanding of place value. In 2nd grade, students develop fluency in their addition and subtraction facts to 100. Students also explore math in real-life situations and build a tool kit of strategies for solving mathematical problems. In addition, 2nd graders explore place value through 1,000, dive into geometry, manipulate bills and coins, grapple with measurement, and collect and display data. A big focus in 2nd grade is building a mathematical mind-set by persevering through difficult problems and finding multiple pathways to solve problems. Using *Illustrative Mathematics'* whole-class activities, stations, and small group work, teachers work to meet each child's needs and to help them grow into confident, competent mathematicians.

Mathematics: 3rd Grade

The 3rd grade is another important year in math, as students continue to build conceptual and computational foundations for all four operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Throughout the year, they explore the concepts behind these operations and learn strategies to build fluency with single-digit multiplication and division. In addition, the curriculum focuses on

problem-solving, and teachers challenge students to solve real-world, multi-step problems using a variety of different strategies. The 3rd grade curriculum also delves into fractions and geometric measurement, using both metric and standard units to find perimeter and area.

Mathematics: 4th Grade

The 4th grade math program consolidates students' conceptual and computational foundations while further strengthening problem-solving skills and positive identities as mathematicians. Through *Illustrative Mathematics*, students have ample opportunities to engage in mathematical discourse. They work on expanding their math vocabulary and explaining their ideas clearly and concisely, using words, models, and diagrams. Students solidify procedural fluency with all four operations and can apply each operation when working with multi-digit numbers. The 4th grade program continues to develop students' understanding of place value, adds to students' repertoire of problem-solving strategies, continues to develop students' understanding of whole-part relationships by comparing fractions and decimals, and introduces students to types of angles. Throughout the year, students have the opportunity to delve into project-based learning that requires them to integrate skills, content, and comprehension across units and then apply them in real-life settings.

K–4 Program

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies in the Lower School focuses on developing a deep appreciation for and understanding of the interconnectedness of the world. Throughout the Lower School experience, students reflect on their own lives and the lives of others in their communities and in the world at large, examining both the diversity of the world and the common threads that run through different time periods and cultures. The aim is to create engaged citizens with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact on the world both locally and globally. Students begin with a study of self and their own community, gradually branching out in larger circles to include the greater global community. The social studies program is project-based and challenges students to look at issues—historical and contemporary—from various viewpoints and perspectives. The Lower School weaves service learning throughout the social studies program, and environmental stewardship serves as a thematic throughline from kindergarten to 4th grade.

Social Studies: Kindergarten

The kindergarten social studies program focuses on three core concepts: identity and culture, community, and peace. Throughout the year, families participate in the yearlong Roots program, in which they share their unique family cultural stories. Through these personal experiences, kindergartners learn about diverse cultures and family structures. They develop pride, confidence, and healthy self-esteem in their identity, and they learn to talk about difference with respect and curiosity. Teachers also weave beginning map skills throughout the presentations. The kindergarten program also focuses on building community within the classroom and within the Lower School. Concepts like peace, teamwork, responsibility, and gratitude are integrated throughout. In addition, kindergartners focus on identifying and understanding feelings, using their words and actions to show care and concern, regulating strong emotions, and effectively solving problems.

Social Studies: 1st Grade

Through field trips, projects, research, and discussions, 1st grade children explore the theme of community. They begin the year by learning about one another, building a strong classroom community, and learning how to be good stewards of the environment. The 1st graders then broaden their lenses to analyze the School, their neighborhood, and the city, studying how people

work together to meet their basic needs. Embedded throughout the year are service-learning opportunities as students explore how they can be contributing members of the larger community. Students also practice research and geography skills.





Social Studies: 2nd Grade

In 2nd grade, students explore why people create governing structures. Starting with their own classrooms, they examine how and why people come together to create systems and structures that influence how they live, work, and interact. As the year progresses, students expand their inquiry to the Sidwell Friends Lower School and, finally, to the United States federal government. Threaded throughout their investigation of government and governing structures are the concepts of power and perspectives. Children learn to examine topics from multiple perspectives and infer their impact on others.

Social Studies: 3rd Grade

The School's 3rd graders become historical anthropologists by considering three questions: Why study history? How does the past affect today? Whose story is being told? The year begins with an understanding of how each unique identity contributes to a strong class community. These early learning experiences equip students to ask questions, consider perspectives, and learn about other time periods and the useful lessons from the past. Students learn about historians' work by collecting information about their own history, analyzing primary and secondary sources, and studying the curation of the School Archives. They consider how historical events

influence human behavior and culture today. The year ends with a study of the people and places that make up the United States of America, which culminates in individual research projects on the 50 states. A study of Quakerism runs throughout the year, as the 3rd graders explore the beliefs of Quakers to write schoolwide queries, looking for inspiration and connections to their own lives.

Social Studies: 4th Grade

In 4th grade, students flex their ethical leadership skills through the year-long Honorable Ann Winkelman Brown '55 Ethical Leadership Experience. Specifically, students work to strengthen and apply key trans-disciplinary knowledge, skills, and habits to "let their lives speak." Content-wise, students grapple with a range of climate, environmental, and social injustice issues, before pursuing a topic for personal inquiry. To hone their research skills, students learn to navigate a variety of sources, including databases, reputable websites, and primary sources to gain knowledge on their topic. They learn to document research from multiple, reputable sources using *Cornell Notes* and to synthesize their findings into actionable plans. The students' Ethical Leadership Experience capstone projects culminate in a showcase for the Lower School community.

K–4 Program SPECIALS

Science

The Lower School science program is designed to help students connect with, make sense of, and care for the natural world. The program builds on the students' inherent curiosity about the world around them and helps them develop an appreciation for the beauty and wonder of science.

Students explore earth, physical, and life sciences, and learn to ask and consider big questions, such as: "How does the world work? How do we know what we claim to know? How are we connected to and dependent on the world around us? And, how can science and engineering help us imagine a more sustainable and just future?"

To the extent possible, the program focuses on doing science; students engage in real-life, authentic experimentation and investigation to build their understanding of disciplinary core ideas and science and engineering practices. Students learn to make careful observations, ask important questions, test their thinking, and follow the evidence, as they attempt to construct an accurate understanding of how the world works. Students are taught to think critically, examine preconceived ideas, build models, develop well-argued explanations, and engage in critique and evaluation as they assess possible solutions and ideas.

The School's ultimate goal is for students to leave the program equipped with the knowledge, skills, understandings, and habits of mind to confront the challenges ahead, make informed and ethical decisions, and be responsible stewards of the natural world.

Science: PreK and Kindergarten

In preK and kindergarten, science is taught in the Exploratorium. The School's youngest students become naturalists and learn to connect to the natural world through hands-on, outdoor experiences in which they discover and observe living things in their immediate surroundings. Embedded in the program are ongoing opportunities to practice and learn the essential social skills of empathy, questioning, perspective-taking, compromise, listening, problem-solving, and collaboration. The Exploratorium offers a balance between play and guided discovery. Throughout the year, students explore composting, building, gardening, and studies of local flora and fauna. They practice scientific skills such as observing, asking questions, collecting data, conducting experiments, and making hypotheses. In addition, there are opportunities to explore and play with a wide variety of materials, including large blocks,

small building materials, and natural materials that offer opportunities for discovery through playful collaboration.

Science: 1st Grade

In 1st grade, students practice observing, predicting, inferring, and collecting data. They explore physical, life, and earth sciences each year by studying topics such as trees, flowers, birds, animal adaptations, habitats, patterns, and symmetry. Children create and build visual models that help hone their observational skills and inspire them to share their science learning with others. The once-a-week, hands-on science class is a stepping stone to further exploration at home or in the classroom.

Science: 2nd Grade

In 2nd grade, students dive more deeply into the scientific process, strengthening their abilities to observe, predict, infer, collect, and look critically at data. Children explore physical, life, and earth sciences through a variety of topics. The 2nd graders study insect life cycles, simple machines, weather and weather-reporting tools, and the local habitat and food chains. Constructing and building models continues in the once-a-week science class as a way for students to synthesize information.

Science: 3rd Grade

In 3rd grade, science themes often include watersheds and the water cycles, the solar system, simple machines and electricity, and the human body. Students often work in collaboration with one another to engineer projects and experiment with design ideas that require more time than the once-a-week science session. The model for learning involves experimentation and sharing so that students become teachers for one another.

Science: 4th Grade

The 4th graders learn about recycling, rocks and minerals, plate tectonics, simple chemistry, electricity, the skeleton, and human growth. In the spring, the science teacher and the Lower School counselor collaborate to introduce topics on human development. Students learn to use evidence and data to support their statements as they add to the group's understanding of a topic.

Spanish

The Lower School Spanish program is designed to instill a love of language, develop an appreciation for the larger world, and build cultural competencies that will help students thrive in a globalized world. The goal is to help students reach beginning levels of oral proficiency in Spanish through music, role-playing, dance, arts and crafts, and storytelling. The Spanish program encourages a risk-taking environment and joyful use of the language with friends and teachers.

Spanish: PreK and Kindergarten

In preK and kindergarten, students build knowledge of high-frequency vocabulary and useful expressions through thematic stories. These stories provide repetition and encourage learners to use natural strategies, such as guessing words from context and inferring meaning.

Students explore Latin American and Spanish traditions, folklore, and vocabulary related to family life and community, celebrations around the world, and animals. They also learn vocabulary to describe their favorite food and clothing according to the seasons.

Students will have many opportunities to speak and listen to the target language and will gradually incorporate American Sign Language to assist them in acquiring and remembering Spanish vocabulary and everyday phrases. Spanish class content is presented and explored through conversation, music, art, and movement to address each student's diverse learning modalities.

Spanish: 1st and 2nd Grade

In 1st grade, students learn about Mexico and study the monarch butterfly life cycle. They follow the monarch's journey by looking at real-time migration maps and videos and learn about the importance of these butterflies in celebrations such as the Day of the Dead. Students also review and learn new vocabulary and useful expressions through role-playing and retelling comprehensible stories. They participate in different games to learn and review phrases relating to the Spanish calendar, farm animals, significant people in the Spanish-speaking world, and vocabulary about family, community helpers, clothing, food, colors, commands, body parts, feelings, numbers, Hispanic celebrations, and traditions.

In 2nd grade, students also read and role-play several stories about Hispanic traditional foods and forest animals. They further develop language proficiency by engaging in different activities and projects that allow visual, productive, and receptive opportunities to gain and improve their written and oral language skills. Second graders practice high-frequency structures and vocabulary from other thematic units through games, watching short videos, producing descriptive phrases,

labeling, memory, matching, and syllabic tasks. They also participate in interactive games and engage actively in skits and classroom presentations.

Spanish: 3rd and 4th Grade

The 3rd and 4th grade programs are designed to bolster students' receptive and expressive language skills through units that explore the cultures, geographies, and histories of Spanish-speaking communities. The program includes the use of short stories, authentic resources, and audiovisual materials to present and reinforce vocabulary and grammar structures in a meaningful context.

In 3rd grade, students continue building their Spanish vocabulary while improving their communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through authentic practice. Students learn about Spanish-speaking countries across Central America and the Caribbean, including their celebrations. Later, the students expand their ability to share about themselves, practicing key vocabulary around hobbies, interests, clothing, color, and seasons.

The 4th graders built on their solid foundation of Spanish skills to push themselves across all four communicative functions (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Students take a deep dive into culture by learning, comparing, and contrasting the 21 Spanish-speaking countries across the world.



A group of students in a school setting, with three students in the foreground playing xylophones. The background shows a large group of students sitting on the floor, looking towards the camera. The foreground students are focused on their instruments.

K–4 Program SPECIALS: THE ARTS

Students are immersed in art and music each week. Through these programs, students have the opportunity to express themselves artistically—whether in painting, drawing, singing, or playing instruments. The Lower School’s goals include fostering a love of the arts, helping children find joy in the creative process, and opening students’ eyes to the diversity of artistic experiences.

Music

The Lower School’s music program encompasses all aspects of music: singing, playing instruments, creative movement, and dancing, all of which contribute to musical literacy and a deeper understanding of history and culture.

Music: Kindergarten

Kindergartners are explorers, and this yearning for knowledge can be showcased through music. Essential learning outcomes include:

- Rhythm: feeling and demonstrating a steady beat.
- Melody: demonstrating knowledge of sol-mi and learning the four voices (whisper, singing, speaking, and calling).
- Texture: recognizing the role bodies and voices can play in music.
- Harmony: exploring in unison.
- Form: recognizing same and different.
- Movement: basic body awareness both alone and in relation to others.

Music: 1st Grade

In 1st grade, students continue this exploration and build on basic concepts of music through singing, speaking, dancing, and playing in class settings and storybook performances. Essential learning outcomes include:

- Rhythm: recognizing one and two sounds through basic rhythmic building bricks.
- Melody: creating simple sol-mi-la patterns and singing in various pentatonic modes.
- Texture: adding unpitched and pitched percussion instruments through rhythmic and melodic activities, improvisation, and simple patterns.
- Harmony: exploring harmony created through xylophone and singing relationships.
- Form: identifying AB and other basic form structures.
- Movement: learning folk dances and play parties in whole-class and partner settings, and exploring creative movement through isolating body parts, starting and stopping activities, and creating simple movement sentences.

Music: 2nd Grade

In 2nd grade, students expand their understanding of previously learned musical concepts and deepen their explorations in various forms: use of text, visual art, props, and more. Essential learning outcomes include:

- Rhythm: expanding use of rhythmic building bricks.
- Melody: connecting solfège symbols to hand signs, and singing more complex melodies in various pentatonic modes.
- Texture: layering unpitched and pitched percussion instruments through various ostinatos, bourdons, and color parts.
- Harmony: creating harmony through layered xylophone parts and canonic exploration through body percussion, sung or spoken word, and instrumentation.
- Form: exploring elemental form structures and other song forms, including verse-and-refrain and call-and-response.
- Movement: learning folk dances in more complex formations, creating movement sentences, identifying locomotor/non-locomotor/stopping words, and composing pieces using basic elements of dance.

Music: 3rd Grade

In 3rd grade, students deepen their connection with these musical concepts through notation, improvisation, expanded rhythmic and melodic patterns, and playing the soprano recorder. Essential learning outcomes include:

- Rhythm: synthesis of all six rhythmic building bricks through improvisation and composition.
- Melody: simple melodic pieces on the recorder, more advanced melodies using different pentatonic modes on the xylophone, and diatonic sung melodies.
- Texture: three-part xylophone pieces combining singing, recorder, xylophone, and unpitched percussion instruments through Orff instrumentations.
- Harmony: more complex bourdons, ostinatos, and color parts, and two- and three-part sung canon.
- Form: composing and improvising in various elemental forms, understanding and playing in rondo.
- Movement: expanded use of folk dance; creative movement pieces alone, with a partner, and in small groups; and deeper awareness of the elements of dance.

In the spring, the 3rd graders dive into our annual Global Citizenship Project: an integrated music, art and library experience inspired by the life and Light of Kieran Shafritz de Zoysa. Through this project, students forge deep connections with communities around the world through music, dance, art and inquiry-based learning. They learn about a different culture through the arts, directly from the voices within that community.

Music: 4th Grade

In 4th grade, students continue all the concepts learned in previous years and expand their understanding through world music traditions, expanded recorder use, and exploration of jazz. Students also participate in chorus, and the culmination of their Lower School musical journey is a Celebration Concert in April. Essential learning outcomes include:

- Rhythm: exploring 16th notes, uneven meter, complex metric structures, and Keith Terry body percussion.
- Melody: singing in major and minor diatonic scales, playing the blues scale, and exploring other complex melodic structures.
- Texture: improvising and composing various Orff instrumentations using concepts learned previously, including using four or more parts.
- Harmony: exploring tonal degrees, relationships, and patterns.
- Form: creating in previously learned forms and exploring composed and narrative structures for performance-based pieces.
- Movement: exploring world music through dance, creating improvisatory pieces through complex dance elements, and working in larger groups to choreograph movement pieces.

K–4 Program

SPECIALS: THE ARTS

Visual Arts

Visual art is a vibrant part of the Lower School experience. Both in the classroom and in weekly art classes, students use art as a way to learn about new concepts and ideas and to communicate their own big ideas about the world.

The visual arts program at the Lower School provides children an opportunity to experience their creative selves by experimenting with foundational elements of art such as line, shape, color, pattern, composition, form, texture, and scale. Students explore these concepts while using a wide array of materials and techniques, such as papier-mâché, painting, drawing, construction and assemblage, fiber arts, printmaking, collage, and ceramics.

Students are exposed to a diverse set of artists, movements, and cultures throughout history in the art room. The art curriculum incorporates social and environmental justice themes, as well as classroom studies in social studies and math. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students feel a sense of connection and accomplishment as they grow in skill while fully embracing the notion that “practice makes progress.”



Visual Arts: PreK and Kindergarten

Visual art is a daily focus in the preK and kindergarten classrooms. The teachers create opportunities for the youngest learners to observe art, reflect on what they see, and express themselves through a variety of materials and techniques that are connected to classroom themes and studies. Student artwork is joyously displayed on classroom walls and in the hallways.

Visual Arts: 1st Grade

In 1st grade, the art program focuses on exploration of basic art concepts and skills. Projects are designed to develop fine and gross motor skills. Art elements (line, shape, color, form, pattern, and texture) are introduced through artistic processes like painting, drawing, collage, and sculptural activities that utilize a variety of materials. Examples of such activities are printmaking, family portrait drawings, diya sculptures, warm and cool color paintings, and clay sculptures. Through contact with these materials and by exploring these processes, students begin to develop art skills that enhance competency in other areas—such as language arts, social studies, math, and science. Connections with the work of renowned masters and contemporary artists are also used as inspiration for students' artistic endeavors.

Visual Arts: 2nd Grade

The 2nd graders focus on identifying and applying beginning concepts and skills. They have the opportunity to refine listening and discussion skills and to develop proper use and control of tools and materials. Fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination are further developed by using a wide range of media and techniques. The elements of art (line, shape, color, form, pattern, and texture) continue to play a role in establishing notions about composition, as well as paying greater attention to refining and demonstrating higher levels of craftsmanship. Some examples of art activities in 2nd grade include observational drawings of nature, favorite memory collages, fall tree watercolor landscapes, and kinetic sculptures. At this stage, students are encouraged to begin assessing their personal works, as well as that of their peers, in order to determine aesthetic characteristics.

Visual Arts: 3rd Grade

In 3rd grade, students further enhance fine and gross motor skills and hand-eye coordination. By using a variety of media and techniques, students discover a developing ability to execute more conscious planning of artwork. Some the students' favorite projects include Panamanian *mola* designs, pumpkin still-life drawings, straw sculptures, self-portrait paintings, and mask-making. Additionally, multimedia and collaborative projects capitalize on these growing skills. For example,



each year during the 3rd Grade Global Citizenship Project, the art, music, and library teachers collaborate with the 3rd grade classes to choose a global community to focus on. Through an immersive, interdisciplinary study of that culture, students have opportunities to build cultural competency, develop empathy and understanding, and learn artistic skills directly from artisans within that community. Aesthetic self-judgment and evaluation continue to develop and play an important role for 3rd graders. Students develop problem-solving techniques as more individualistic work emerges. Students also look at the work of renowned artists, as well as contemporary artists, work to draw comparison, personal meaning, and inspiration for innovative works of art.

Visual Arts: 4th Grade

The 4th grade students incorporate much of what they have previously learned into a new year of exploration, experimentation, and creation. The 4th grade activities become more specific and product-oriented, while continuing the practice of refinement and critiquing work. Awareness of the self and the world are more keenly developed and incorporated into the students' work; for example, students begin the semester exploring, discussing, and applying ideas that support intersectionality and being allies within the community. This understanding is demonstrated through the planning of collaborative self-portraits. Other favorite art projects include tissue-paper mono-printing, contour line transfer drawings, Navajo weavings, 12-color color wheels, and plaster gauze animal sculptures. Students spend the second semester focused on the application of color mixing and theory while being inspired by the work of one prominent artist. As a gift of gratitude, 4th graders participate in a long-standing culminating art tradition, self-portrait silhouettes, which are created toward the end of the semester and capture the growth and learning of each child's journey through their time in the Lower School.

K–4 Program SPECIALS

Physical Education

The Lower School physical education (PE) program is designed to encourage a lifelong enjoyment of physical pursuits; foster connections between mind, body, and spirit; build children's motor-development skills; and bring to life the Quaker values of collaboration, teamwork, and sportsmanship. The PE program fuses skill-building methodology with adventure education, and the PE teachers create lessons that are designed to build each child's fitness and skill level. Through engaging and playful age-appropriate activities, the PE curriculum develops motor and movement skills in three areas: locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative skills. The PE curriculum also develops spatial awareness, alignment and flexibility, knowledge of movement patterns, and awareness of form and function. Students develop these skills through carefully scaffolded team-building activities, cooperative games, and sport-themed units. PE teachers routinely use reflection and post-activity debriefs to cultivate students' self-awareness and mind-body-spirit connection.

Physical Education: PreK–2nd Grades

The physical education program for preK, kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd graders is designed with early elementary students in mind. The focus is on building healthy habits and a love of physical activity from the beginning. Children learn locomotor fundamentals (running, skipping, galloping, sliding, leaping, and hopping) and practice controlling their bodies in space. Teachers add rhythmic elements and integrate concepts such as directionality and speed. In addition, students work on their stability and balance, and play games that teach the basics of throwing, catching, and kicking. There is also a large focus on developing students' social and emotional skills, such as staying on the group plan, taking turns, regulating feelings, sharing materials, resolving conflicts productively, and demonstrating good sportsmanship. As the children move into 1st and 2nd grade, they learn about the impact of physical activity on the body, including heart rate, breathing, and perspiration.

Physical Education: 3rd and 4th Grade

In 3rd and 4th grades, the PE program continues to focus on building healthy habits and a love of physical activity. By 3rd grade, children have developed solid locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative skills, and are ready for the next level of challenge. In 3rd and 4th grades, the focus shifts from skill development to application of skills, and students have the opportunity to practice these skills in sport-specific activities such as soccer,



football, basketball, and baseball or softball. By 4th grade, students participate in cooperative games and team-building activities that require high levels of strategic thinking and teamwork. Through games, drills, and activities, students increase their flexibility, strength, and overall endurance. The 4th graders also begin to take an active role in assessing and monitoring their fitness and overall physical, social, and emotional health. In addition, the upper-elementary program is centered around core Quaker values: perseverance, self-discipline, respect, integrity, patience, teamwork, and collaboration. The 4th grade students are expected to be leaders on the fields and courts, work effectively in small and large group settings, and demonstrate inclusive and respectful play.

Library

The library is the hub for information and technology for the Lower School. Curating a vibrant collection of books and online resources that are accessible to both students and their families, the collection focuses on normalizing diversity through materials and texts that represent global perspectives and Quaker values. Students visit the library weekly to listen to read-alouds, to engage in research and technology projects, and to check out new books. Issues of global and digital citizenship are integrated throughout the curriculum. The librarian collaborates with teachers and students to teach the research process and to support inquiry projects by curating print and online resources for students to explore as well as teaching information literacy, creative credit, and source evaluation. In addition, the librarian is the Lower School director of academic technology and works with the technology team and other teachers to infuse the curriculum with project-based learning through coding, virtual reality, robotics, and more.

Instructional Technology

The Lower School has a one-to-one iPad program for kindergarten through 4th grade. The iPads are available as tools in the classroom so that students have opportunities to express themselves in a variety of creative ways. For younger students, the iPads offer the opportunity to record a story or to describe the meaning of their writing. Students can practice literacy and math skills through visual cues and interactive activities. The older students are able to collaborate in Google Docs and are encouraged to find a variety of ways to express their thinking. Digital ethics are taught throughout the year, either in the classroom or in the library program. Lessons include:

- Consent with photos: Classes create an agreement at the start of the year to ask permission to take and share one another's photos.
- Appropriate use of technology: Students learn to understand, respect, and observe teacher expectations for use of technology in class.
- Integrity with technology: Classes discuss personal choices with technology and how those choices reflect who they are in the real world.
- Finding balance with technology: Students reflect on the role technology plays in their lives and how they choose to spend time with others.
- The research process and digital literacy: Students learn effective search techniques; how to evaluate the quality, credibility, and validity of websites and online resources; and how to give proper credit.

Coding is also a growing part of the Lower School curriculum, and teachers work with the instructional technologist to integrate coding into the math curriculum in meaningful ways. In addition, teachers collaborate across the curriculum to provide spaces and opportunities for maker-centered learning.



Sidwell Friends

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