

AFS

Grade Level Overviews

AFS

Kindergarten



Kindergarten students are encouraged to joyfully explore the world around them, and their teachers are attuned to discover where each student's greatest interests lie. Kindergarten is comprised of an abundance of outdoor play as well as time to work individually and in small groups.

Language Arts

Students engage in numerous writing activities including journal writing, letter writing, and making class books. Kid-writing strengthens students' ability to connect letters and sounds. Kindergarten students speak in front of the class during morning meeting, class discussions, and book sharing.

Music & Movement

Music is grounded in exploration and exposure to sound, rhythm and movement through activities such as rhythmic speech, singing and instrument playing as well as learning songs from around the world. Kindergarten students deepen their connection to music by experiencing musical ideas with the body.

Science

Kindergarten students explore topics such as life cycles, chemistry, magnets and sensory awareness. The students become familiar with science terminology and take advantage of science equipment such as microscopes and beakers.

Physical Education

The kindergarten physical education program focuses on spatial awareness, locomotor and non-locomotor movements and manipulative skills. Students explore their own sense of space and develop their body movement skills, manipulative skills and eye-hand-foot coordination.

Mathematics

Kindergarten math engages students in hands-on activities designed to develop problem solving, logical thinking, and a foundational understanding of numbers and their composition. Skills like estimation, computational strategies, and number sense are also fostered.

Spanish

Students learn español by identifying basic feeling words, colors, naming and describing shapes, and reading the calendar. Through practice, puppets, reading bilingual books, videos, music, movement and games, students develop correct pronunciation, rhythm and intonation.

Library & Technology

Students are introduced to library concepts such as genre, proper shelving, and how to care for and return communal books promptly. They are also asked to share their reflections on books read in class and are encouraged to stretch their thinking.

Visual Arts

Kindergarten artists explore new art vocabulary and concepts, such as line, shape and color mixing. Students' ability to clearly communicate concepts in a visual manner increases as they are able to articulate their thoughts about their work. Projects are designed to enrich the emergent curriculum from their classrooms.

Explore More Online:



First Grade



First graders define themselves as “big kids” and they are ready to take on new academic challenges and learning. Through studies of Monarch butterflies, students explore themes of change and transformation, which is a perfect way to begin a year that is truly transformational.

Language Arts

Active engagement in reading and writing, in phonics work, sight-word acquisition, handwriting, and sentence formation are foundational in first grade. Students participate in class lessons and small group work to read, write and discuss stories and nonfiction texts.

Music & Movement

Classes present hands-on experiences for students to engage with musical concepts like rhythmic notation, pitch matching, and beat via songs, games, poetry, and instrumental music. Students engage in deep exploration of musical traditions from around the world and begin a study of hand chimes.

Science

Students engage in a study of Monarch butterflies in the fall and continue to study insects, their life cycles and migration patterns. Later in the year they study the extraordinary properties of air, which leads to a general study of weather and water. First graders learn to make hypotheses, observations, and conduct experiments.

Physical Education

Students develop a sense of space with games involving hoops, scarves, and balloons. Students practice their locomotor movement by running, jumping, and dodging during activities such as tag, and jump rope.

Mathematics

Children expand on their understanding of numbers and number sense and learn to work with numbers in new and varied ways. As students explore numbers, they develop a baseline understanding of place value and the importance of digit placement in relation to the hundreds, tens or ones places.

Spanish

Class activities are contextual in nature, encouraging the use of language in authentic situations, such as greetings and stating emotions, and following basic classroom instructions. Topics reinforced include colors, shapes, numerals through 100, the calendar, and basic parts of the body.

Social Studies

First graders focus on the character traits of heroes, and look for them within themselves, others in their communities, and in the larger world. The study of community continues with learning about the postal system and creating and running a school-wide post office where students design and sell stamps to the school.

Visual Arts

First grade students strengthen their understanding of art concepts such as symmetry, pattern, repetition, and visual unity. First graders learn about influential figures from art history, such as Frida Kahlo, and have the opportunity to try new art techniques, such as weaving.

Explore More Online:



Second Grade



Second graders embrace challenges with new levels of independence and willingness to take risks, allowing students to view themselves as capable and confident. Students are expected to listen to and respect the perspectives and ideas of their peers and to thoughtfully share their own insights.

Language Arts

Second graders explore a variety of genres and learn how to choose a “just-right” text. Close examination of text, illustrations and the visual structure of a book leads to discussions that explore setting, character development, story, message, and cultural understanding.

Music & Movement

Students study music from around the world. They also explore beat vs. rhythm, isolation of Sol-Mi melodies, and reading music, including a three-line staff and the pentatonic scale.

Science

A unit on birds explores concepts of flight, feathers, bones and other adaptations. Additionally, students learn about algorithms and how to code, and run many other hands-on experiments.

Physical Education

The development of spatial awareness, locomotor and non-locomotor movements, and manipulative skills are key this year. The development of these skills occurs through cooperative and competitive game play, as students participate in variations of tee-ball, kickball, newcomb ball and soccer.

Library & Technology

Throughout the year, students become more facile with typing, create podcasts, strengthen their skills in PowerPoint, and begin to explore media literacy.

Mathematics

Students practice problem-solving strategies and communicate mathematical knowledge through daily work on topics such as representing and solving problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, money, telling time, patterns, and mental math.

Spanish

Students become increasingly familiar and comfortable using español to communicate. Classroom activities enhance listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Students acquire an understanding and appreciation of the cultures of the Spanish speaking world and are exposed to a variety of folktales from Spanish-speaking countries.

Social Studies

Students study states, countries, continents, and oceans, establishing a geographic understanding of the world. Second graders study Ancient Egypt, and attend a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, culminating in a presentation to family and friends.

Visual Arts

Second graders learn to use new art tools, such as the straight saw, and utilize new art concepts, such as mixing tints and shades in their artwork. Art curriculum focuses on art from nature, including trees and birds, and projects inspired by Ancient Egypt and figures from art history.

Explore More Online:



Third Grade



Third graders work on their listening and speaking skills and learn to take greater responsibility for their words and actions. As students mature in their thinking, they are also expected to grow their skills around working independently and organizing their materials.

Language Arts

Third grade students explore narrative, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction writing. Students continue to build research skills and practice writing descriptively to communicate their thoughts effectively. Third graders also build decoding skills in conjunction with their fluency and learn to read more expressively.

Music & Movement

Students build their hand chime skills and begin learning the soprano recorder, while also delving into singing, movement, and cross-cultural instrumental traditions. They continue to develop music reading capabilities.

Science

Engineering is the highlight of third grade science, where students learn about the principles of structurally sound construction and bridge design. Additionally students will have the opportunity to devise and build a prototype of an invention.

Physical Education

Students learn about and engage in good sportsmanship, fair play, and supporting teammates. Students develop individual skills like throwing, catching, dribbling, and running.

Library & Technology

Video and content creation are introduced to students as they gain confidence using technology to assist their learning and explore new genres.

Mathematics

Students develop a solid understanding of numerical concepts, computational fluency, and number sense. Third graders deepen their understanding of time, money, place value, multi-digit addition and subtraction, and multiplication and division strategies.

Spanish

Spanish language skills continue to develop through listening, speaking, reading and writing across a variety of activities. The students' ability to understand written and spoken language increasingly develops as demonstrated when they present the "report of the day," which gives important daily information, entirely in español.

Social Studies

Students learn about the history and culture of Ancient China through lessons and activities. They focus on understanding important themes, values, and vocabulary through their exploration of China in literature, art, science, and research. Third graders become adept in expressing their learning in a variety of formats and presentations.

Visual Art

This is a year for students to explore the connection between culture and art. The students are introduced to complex ideas about creating a balanced composition, visual harmony and using contrast to emphasize ideas in their work.

Explore More Online:



Fourth Grade



The interdisciplinary curriculum of fourth grade encourages students to engage in lively exploration of the world through story, literature, art, mathematical investigations, science experiences, trips, discussions, music, and ongoing questioning, while preparing them for Middle School.

Language Arts

Students learn research as a means of developing ideas, and practice writing descriptively. They build decoding skills in conjunction with their fluency and learn to read more expressively. Students explore genres including nonfiction, realistic fiction, and historical fiction in small teacher-led book groups to build comprehension and discussion skills.

Music & Movement

Fourth graders participate in an introductory strings program where they begin to learn violin, viola, or cello. Students gain experience working within an ensemble, increase their music literacy and also continue their study of soprano recorder and hand chimes.

Science

Science begins outside with an exploration of fungi. Students learn more about themselves as they explore cells, DNA and other genetic variables that help identify who they are. A late winter study of the shore includes a study of sand, watersheds, tide pools and ocean environments.

Physical Education

Fourth graders learn handball, softball, tennis and the "omnikin ball" for cooperative activities. Individual skills like dribbling, passing, shooting and goal-tending continue to develop. Cooperative games continue to be emphasized.

Mathematics

Throughout all of fourth grade math, there is a focus on practicing computation, problem-solving and communication of mathematical thinking. Students become more adept with utilizing estimation, number theory and analyzing data.

Spanish

Students further refine their Spanish skills through presentations, skits, crossword puzzles, role-playing, YouTube videos and games. Fourth graders research Spanish-speaking countries and convey what they learn at Lower School assemblies through the game of ¿Dónde vamos hoy? - Where are we going today?

Social Studies

Work this year includes studying the Lenape way of life, the origins of Quakerism, and William Penn's founding of Pennsylvania. Students study slavery and the Abolition Movement with a focus on the leadership that emerged in Philadelphia.

Visual Art

Students learn more sophisticated and complex artistic techniques, such as building clay vessels and carving linoleum blocks for printmaking. There is also a study of artists from Pennsylvania.

Library & Technology

Students use and identify helpful technological tools and work to develop stories through research using books, interviews, and the internet. They also practice identifying accurate information.

Explore More Online:

