



Social and Emotional Learning

The first and second grade program respects and reflects the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of this age group. From the earliest days of the school year we work at becoming a community of learners. We offer students a balance of individual, small group, and whole group learning experiences. Most days begin with a morning choice time which serves as an opportunity for children to explore social relationships, build community in a self directed manner, read a book of their own choosing, or revisit a fun math game. The class gathers twice daily for meeting times when important daily routines are established. Additionally, this is a time we use to support conversations that arise or to solve problems and make decisions which affect the whole group. We celebrate moments of individual accomplishment and the satisfaction that comes from working as a group toward a common goal.

This year, the entire lower school has embarked on implementing a social-emotional learning curriculum based on national standards. The lessons will be focused around five specific areas of social-emotional skills, with clear goals in each area. Those areas are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

We will use literature, discussion and role playing to engage students in these topics. We structure both formal and informal activities for cross-age interaction in and out of the classroom on a regular basis. All-school activities, middle school buddy groups, lower school assembly, and choice times all provide opportunities for students of various ages to connect, share, and enrich each other's lives.



Social Studies



Our social studies curriculum is designed to address the big questions that children are attempting to understand. They have many questions about how people live and work together and question what is needed to support daily life in a culture. Early in the year our focus remains close to home. We get to know and respect ourselves, our classroom community, and move beyond to our larger school community. We select learning materials and provide experiences to help children see themselves

reflected in the curriculum and encourage them to consider multiple perspectives.

In addition to this important work, we immerse ourselves into our broader regional Hudson River study. Our integrated and thematic science and social studies concentration this year offer students a variety of investigative formats. We take field trips to educational centers and welcome into our classroom experts in the field that complement and enhance our studies. In addition to the many questions posed by the children, we structure the curriculum based on the following essential questions: Where do you live in the Hudson River Valley? How do people use the Hudson River? Who were the first people of the River? How have humans impacted the ecology of the Hudson? How can people work to clean and preserve the Hudson River?

Through an interdisciplinary approach we explore the natural resources, scientific concept, jobs, art, and culture relevant to the Hudson River. An overarching goal is to present opportunities for students to engage deeply with the Hudson River and become passionate stewards. Examples of learning activities may include boat and bridge constructions, art projects in the style of the Hudson River painters and writers, research of a favorite marine mammal or fish, singing river songs or creating puppet shows, and interviewing people relevant to our studies. A year-long creation of a 3D model of the river will coalesce our understanding of the different aspects of our study.



Language Arts

The primary goal of language arts in our first and second grade classroom is to instill a lifelong love of language, reading, and writing. It is a balanced literacy program consisting of several key components: the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; the use of quality literature; the interaction and involvement of children; and well-planned and purposeful instruction. Within our classroom, careful attention is given to creating a language arts program that responds to the specific needs of individual students. We use a workshop approach in which children participate in a wide variety of language arts experiences within a solid block of time. During this time children may be engaged in individual, small group, and whole group experiences.

Reading in many forms is an integral part of our language arts curriculum. Reading occurs throughout the day and is integrated into many subject areas. Great care is taken to choose a wide range of genres that relate to the concerns, interests, and themes of the class. Children read independently at their own level of proficiency and are often asked to respond to their reading in interesting ways. Reading instruction occurs in many ways: within small book groups; during full class shared reading of poems, charts, songs, and in one-on-one conferences with teachers. Class read alouds allow us to share stories as a class. Children look forward to these times together and enjoy being active participants in a community of readers. Our classrooms are print-rich environments in which books, signs, charts, letters, words, and examples of children's writing are abundant. Our classroom libraries are organized in many ways: by topic area, by genre, and by reading level. They provide ample opportunities for children to learn to choose a book that feels "just right."

Writer's workshop is another vital component of the first and second grade language arts program. During this time, students work on writing projects of their own design or projects initiated by their classroom teacher, with the primary goal of enabling each child to communicate clearly through writing. The writing process (think, write, revise, edit, publish) is used within our classrooms to help children learn to create their own books, poems and stories. Class books and charts relating to a theme or interests of the students are another form of writing found within our classrooms. Writing is also integrated within our social studies and science curriculum.



Additionally, the students write freely about topics of their own choosing or those generated by the group in their Writing Journals.

Each day our literacy program includes some form of “word work” that is differentiated by level. While these experiences vary widely, we believe that children require extensive experiences in looking at phonics, word structure and irregularly spelled words to move from their approximated or “invented” spellings to standard spellings. Ideally, children retain these standard spellings when they use them actively in their writing. At all times, standard spelling is presented as an important tool in the clear communication of the writer’s ideas to a broader audience.

Listening and speaking skills are critically important in the language arts development of our students. The classroom has a large meeting area in which the group meets daily to discuss issues of importance within the class, to share ideas and experiences, and to formulate plans. In a cooperative and supportive environment, students learn to listen carefully to each person’s point of view and to give voice to their own questions and beliefs.

Language arts is also the time for handwriting instruction. First and second graders continue to practice their letter formation weekly partaking in a variety of guided and supportive experiences.

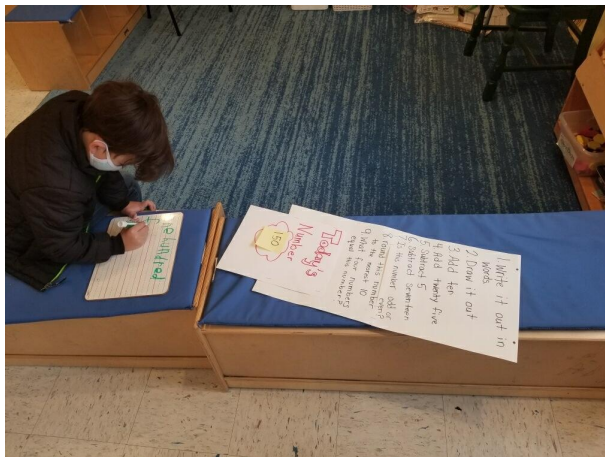
Mathematics

Math, at its most fundamental level, offers children the structure necessary to find patterns in their world. Using real life situations, we investigate curricular topics that include number sense, geometry, time, money, measurement, data analysis, place value, addition and subtraction, and fractions. Throughout the year, these topics are integrated into projects that originate from explorations in the classroom and on field trips. Projects may include geologic timelines or collecting and charting weather and/or fish data. Literature provides yet another venue for the integration of important mathematical concepts.

Children use base ten materials, chips, connecting cubes, cards, dice, and other manipulatives to see and feel representations of numbers and explore the relationship between one quantity and another. Students are also encouraged to make estimates and to think about the types of answers they might expect to find for a problem



before they begin to solve it. We will incorporate aspects of a program called *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* into the varied menu we use to help students develop mathematical thinking. In our multi-age class this year, we will follow the progression of this curriculum and differentiate instruction by grade for particular units and studies. Additionally, we will provide experiences for sharing knowledge and building skills within the whole group. The communication of mathematical thinking is emphasized, guided, and modeled throughout the year. We encourage the use of words, pictures, and models to describe ideas and to explain strategies while problem solving independently. Class discussion is always important during our math times as children share their insights before and after they have considered their work.



In addition to deepening conceptual math thinking, we work on understanding, memorizing and using math facts. Computational shortcuts and strategies, such as making tens, using doubles, and skip counting help children discover number patterns and become more efficient problem-solvers. Activities such as number sense games provide regular opportunities for children to enjoy fun and interactive ways to strengthen and use their number facts.

Science

Our science program is designed to encourage children to view the natural world with wonder and curiosity and to provide them with the tools needed for age-appropriate scientific inquiry. Using the Hudson River as a central focus students engage in literature-based, site-based, and hands-on activities designed to awaken their senses to the world around them. The river study prepares them with the essential skills needed to make useful scientific inquiry: observation, prediction, and recording data.

Educational programs offered by a variety of state and local centers, such as N.Y.S.-D.E.C. and Scenic Hudson, complement and enhance our studies. Visits to the Hudson at different points in our community offer opportunities to gather data and to develop



questions based on personal experience. We seine the river for fish identification, beachcomb for telling artifacts, and take water samples to further our understanding on a variety of issues. Essential questions that guide our science program include: What is the water cycle? How did the Hudson River get formed? What is an Estuary? Which animals live in or along the River? What are the impacts of a new species establishing itself in the river? Students record their questions and reflections in a journal that provides a record of their work throughout the year.



Choice Time

Several mornings each week, children have a choice period during which they engage in an activity of their choosing. A typical choice time might find a few children engaged in a board game; others curled up in a cozy spot reading; another small group working together to build an elaborate block structure. Some children might be creating sculptures with wooden pieces, or working with yarn weaving. Children may also use choice time to complete unfinished work, visit the science area, take a music lesson, check a book out from the library, or work on a project that relates to our year's theme. Choice time is an exciting and valuable time when children have opportunities, collectively, and independently, to choose a sustained activity. We find that during this time children become mentors to others in the room, as well as eager explorers.

Technology

Technology is used to support our hands-on curriculum. iPads will be periodically given to the children to help them capture the world around them, record scientific observations, or create a narrative or play with peers. Teachers use a variety of technological tools to support and expand learning experiences. Technology also plays an important part in our communication with you. Our school portal, MyPDS, serves as a platform for you to see glimpses of the work we do in class, access important documents, and learn about the curriculum as we progress through the year.



Art

The Lower School Visual Arts program is designed to offer students experiences in exploring, evaluating, analyzing, and creating art. Critical to the program is the notion that the arts provide students with opportunities to communicate about, respond to, and experience the world around them. The curriculum draws on the philosophy of Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB), a nationally-recognized choice-based art education approach to teaching art. TAB regards students as artists and offers them real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through the making of art. This concept supports multiple modes of learning and teaching for the diverse needs of students. The visual art experiences students encounter will broaden their cultural awareness, develop their critical thinking skills, self-expression, and art appreciation.

Lower school artists will learn the eight principles and practice the Studio Habits of Mind: Develop Craft, Envision, Engage and Persist, Observe, Stretch and Explore, Understand Arts Community, Express and Reflect, as they engage in creating in the fundamental visual art forms of: painting, drawing, ceramics, sculpture. In a choice-based art studio, students will be developing a personal plan to guide their art making. The building blocks of color, shape, form, value, texture, and space allow students to expand their ability to create art and effectively communicate through it. Students will also create partnerships in collaboration with homeroom learning; these collaborations will guide students in developing their understanding of how art permeates the world in which they live. In addition, learning in the Art Studio adapts to the needs and interests of the students. Artists are also exposed to various contemporary, historical, and multicultural artists' work to see how these artists used the fundamentals of creative expression.

This year, in collaboration with the classroom teachers' implementation of our Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum (SEL), lower school artists will be focusing on the same skill development in our studio.



Music

Our overall aim is to have children develop a lifelong capacity for the enjoyment of music and the ability to expand that capacity independently as they grow. We begin with connecting music with their everyday experiences emotionally, mentally, and physically. Rhythm, melody, timbre, and text are explored through movement, song, and video footage of performances. More complex materials are used as the students grow and mature. Notation, improvisation, sight singing, ear training, composition, listening, and music history are all a part of becoming musically literate. Older students experience part singing in a chorus. Self confidence grows as students develop competence. Cross-curricular topics are carried into the music classroom on a consistent basis. We integrate dance, drama, and visual arts whenever feasible. Artists visit the school to inspire the students and demonstrate real life applications of musical skills. At selected times throughout the year, performances are a culmination of all of the skills the children have developed, giving them the experience of the joy of sharing music with others.

Movement Education

The curriculum is designed to give students the opportunity to discover and improve their physical abilities, to expose them to the sheer joy of being active, and to help them learn sportsmanship and cooperative team play. Students are introduced to a variety of sports through games and activities. It is our goal to provide experiences and activities that help students make informed choices in order to maintain an active, healthy level of fitness.

Movement awareness activities help to develop fundamental movement skills. These skills are integrated into all aspects of sport, games, dance, as well as movements through everyday life. These themes are further divided into sub-themes which provide a wide variety of movement experiences and are sequentially arranged. Beginning with basic locomotor movements, activities progress to manipulation of equipment and from individual tasks to partner and group activities. Sub-themes include: exploring personal and general space; identifying boundaries, directions, pathways, and patterns; using equipment; exploring large muscle group movement,



right/left and cross lateral movement; exploring body shapes; balance, creative movement, rhythm, and dance; and elements of health and fitness. We also have a very cool climbing wall!

The Movement program further seeks to help students to understand social and emotional dynamics in an active environment, through class discussions, and activities designed to teach kindness, respect, and tolerance. Along with lower school classroom teachers, we help students develop the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.