

## Social and Emotional Learning

Within the third and fourth grade, the social and emotional curriculum is carefully designed to address the many ways in which daily interactions affect our ability to live and work together productively. Our goal is to create a collaborative and cooperative community, while supporting the individual growth of each member of the class. These goals are mutually supportive, for we understand that we are made stronger as a group when each member of our community is confident, independent and aware of the ways in which their choices affect the group. Discrete lessons are 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.

Through consistent classroom routines, students are able to take ownership over personal and classroom organization. Third and fourth grade students are increasingly capable of taking responsibility for and reflecting on their learning. As they become more aware and independent, they are asked to actively engage in setting personal and academic goals. This culminates in running their own student-led conferences, presenting work from the year to their family with the support of teachers.

Throughout the curriculum, we seek to offer windows and mirrors for every student. We provide opportunities and use resources that allow students to both see themselves reflected in our learning and to gain insight into experiences that are different from their own. We work toward this goal in our community development as well as in our curricular choices. Engaging in conflict resolution and identifying shared interests and differences among peers are important ways that we begin to understand subjective experiences and multiple perspectives. We invite families in at various stages throughout the year to share family history and traditions as a way to build bridges for students between home and school and to provide insight into cultural differences. We are also mindful in our selection of classroom materials and



readings that we are representing a diverse range of people and perspectives. We take part in social justice conversations which are shaped around both current events and historical narratives. Over the course of the year we move from understanding equity and justice in the classroom to understanding our role in creating a more just global community. We understand that dealing with the human condition is complex and sometimes challenging. Our classroom and conversations are designed to be a safe haven for students to engage in those conversations at a developmentally appropriate level.

## Social Studies

Our social studies exploration, Native Americans in the Eastern Woodlands, is designed to address the big questions that third and fourth graders are attempting to understand. We encourage children to view the world with wonder and curiosity and provide them with the tools needed for appropriate inquiry in a variety of disciplines. The students have many questions about how people live and work together and what is needed to support daily life in their culture. Early in the year our focus remains very close to home. We study our own classroom community, move beyond to our larger school community and eventually study a local environment and social structure. Once a solid understanding of the key components of present day community life is established, we venture back in time and research unique communities of the past.

In addition to the many questions posed by the children we hope to investigate the following: What natural resources did the early inhabitants use to survive in the Eastern Woodlands? How did the Native Americans treat the plants and animals that surrounded them? What is so special about forests and woodlands that makes people want to preserve it for the future? What was the impact of European settlers? Our curriculum provides an exploration of cultural and scientific concepts through an interdisciplinary approach across the curriculum. For example, social studies may include mapmaking, projects in the style of a particular community's tradition, research through reading books, interviewing others and dramatizing stories about historical events. Literature, cooking projects, composing songs, movement, pottery and other resources and activities are used to explore these topics in depth.

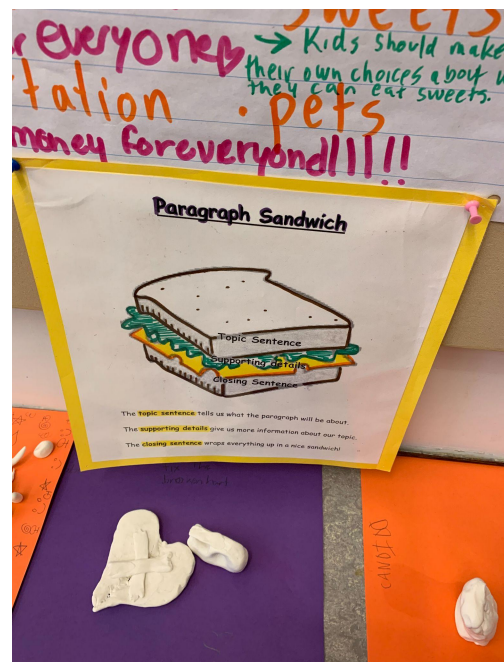


## Language Arts

Within language arts, third and fourth graders study, learn, and grow within a workshop model. Reader's and writer's workshops aim to create independent and reflective readers and writers. We pursue that goal while honoring the unique needs of each student.

An essential goal of reader's workshop is for students to develop an appreciation of reading as both an interest and a tool. Students are encouraged to foster a love of reading through engagement with independent reading books that speak to each child's interests. At the beginning of the year we focus on empowering students to identify books that provide an appropriate challenge and spark their imagination. Students are asked to summarize, analyze, and reflect on what they are reading through written responses and conferences with teachers. Through partner reading, interactive read-alouds, guided reading groups, and student-led literature circles comprehension is deepened through conversation. Furthermore, this allows us to engage in thematic units such as genre studies or author studies. Through this balanced-literacy approach students strengthen targeted reading strategies, compare authors, and enhance their abilities to synthesize and communicate what they have read.

In writer's workshop students have the opportunity to explore their own interests and voice with an emphasis on learning how to "live as a writer." Writers have the opportunity to collect ideas in writer's notebooks, add structure through a variety of graphic organizers, and craft, revise and publish works of writing. Students are asked to write in different genres or styles of writing within both fiction and nonfiction. As they work on both independent writing as well as class projects, we use a workshop model. Typically this means that a writing period begins with an instructional mini-lesson to introduce the goals of a unit or a mentor text that brings those goals to life. This is followed by writing time, where further individualized instruction, peer conferences, or teacher conferences may also occur. We often end writing with time for students to share their work in





order to honor the growth and learning of others and demonstrate pride in our own work.

Word work and language usage are often addressed in small group or individual settings based on the individual learner. Patterns, structures, and relationships are used to develop an understanding of how words are constructed so that learners can then apply their new knowledge to unfamiliar words. Vocabulary development is addressed across subject areas as we gain an understanding of new words that are critical to understanding larger concepts within science, social studies, math and language arts.

## Mathematics

Within our math program, we value a balance between math content and math processes. In an effort to facilitate deep learning, students construct knowledge using a model that moves them from the concrete to the abstract and on to application. This means our work in a given area often begins with the use of math manipulatives, which allows students to see math concepts presented in a physical manner, and end with a larger project that provides a relevant context for when and how a math concept might be used outside the walls of our classroom.

### Math Content

Number Sense  
Numbers & Operations  
Geometry, Measurement & Data  
Probability & Algebraic Thinking

### Math Processes

Problem-solving  
Reasoning  
Connections  
Communication & Representation

Math chats, games, and problem-solving activities address these in a collaborative and stimulating setting. We often identify and correct misconceptions, build conceptual understandings of processes we may be familiar with, analyze the thinking of others, evaluate the efficiency of processes, and grow in our ability to communicate mathematically. It is also important for third and fourth graders to build their computational fluency, so that we can explore more complex mathematical applications. Throughout the year, families are provided with specific resources to support this practice at home.



In math we pull from a range of resources in order to engage all types of learners. We will incorporate aspects of the *TERC Investigations in Number, Data and Space* program into the varied menu we use to help students develop mathematical thinking.

## 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. We explore the woodlands and surrounding forest biome through our forest ecology program. We complement this with educational resources, such as programs at Bowdoin Park, and other sites in Dutchess county. Our science studies are deeply integrated with social studies and include broad investigations of forestry, woodland ecosystems, technologies of Native Americans and other topics generated by student interests. Students engage in literature-based and hands-on activities designed to awaken their senses to the world around them. The forest study prepares them with the essential skills

needed to make useful scientific inquiry: observation, prediction, and recording data. These skills are further developed in work later on during other science units of study. Students record their findings in journal entries which provide a record of their work throughout the year.

## Choice Time

At scheduled times throughout the week, children have a choice period during which they pick their own constructive activities. Blocks, drawing, reading, card games, crafts and activities that extend from curricular areas are often favorite choices. A typical choice time in the third and fourth grade 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



collages from scrap paper or working to sculpt an object. 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.