



Lower School at PDS: PreK-Grade 4

For current and new families, 2025-26

Transdisciplinary instruction using the International Baccalaureate framework

PreK & K farm curriculum focused on sustainability

Differentiated Spanish instruction for every student

Singapore Math curriculum

Drama lessons linked to class themes

Social and emotional learning woven into every day

Inquiry-based learning

Star2B Performing Arts theater enrichments

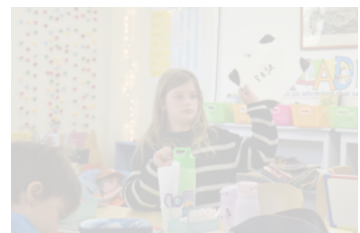
Interdisciplinary reading and writing instruction

Lessons and cooking with the Culinary Institute

Historical and scientific studies of the Hudson Valley

Teaching rooted in inclusivity and individualization

Be connected. Be engaged. Be known. Be at PDS.





IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.



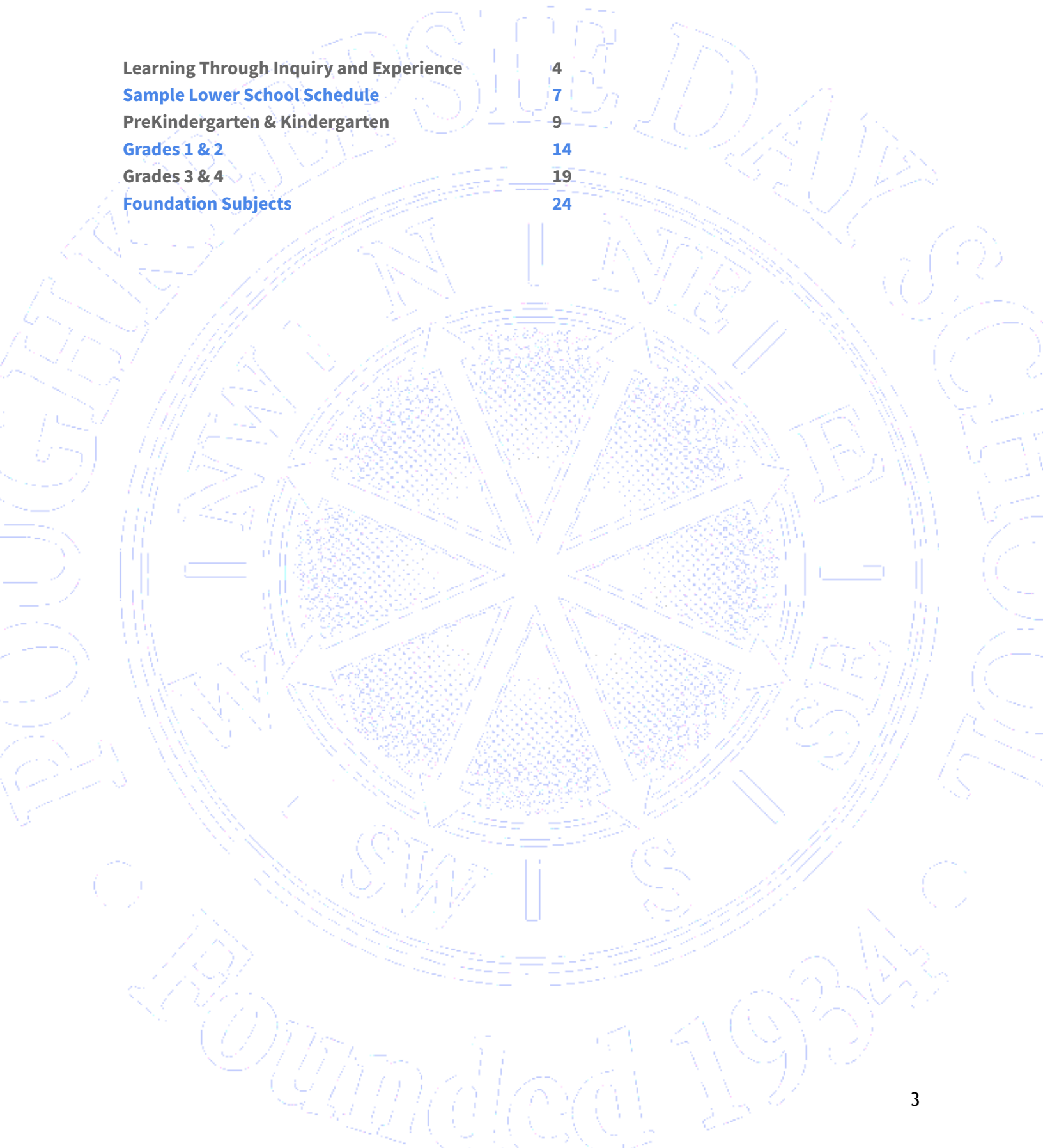
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A Lower School Where Children Learn Through Inquiry and Experience

The power of inquiry

Guided by the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile, the Lower School program at Poughkeepsie Day School is inquiry-based, child-centered, and interdisciplinary. It emphasizes hands-on learning and meaningful experiences rooted in children's interests and developmental stages. Teachers collaborate to design curricula and set goals tailored to the needs of each class. A year-long thematic study in every classroom encourages students to explore, question, research, and analyze, laying the foundation for deeper learning. Core subjects include literacy, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, problem-solving, and artistic expression. Students also engage with specialists in “foundation subjects”, including art, drama, Spanish, library, music, and physical education, enriching their interdisciplinary learning experience.

At PDS, students become part of a community of learners. Through individual, group, and school-wide projects, they develop a love of learning and learn to connect new ideas to what they already know through the power of inquiry.

Grouping and class sizes that work for each individual learner

Recognizing the academic and social benefits of mixed-age classrooms, as well as the developmental needs of young learners, our Lower School currently includes a PreK-Kindergarten class, a Grade 1-2 class, and a Grade 3-4 class.

Students benefit from small group instruction throughout the day in every subject, while also enjoying time for socialization through mixed-group activities, multiple recesses, physical education, and choice time. Teachers closely monitor each child's progress, providing support and challenges tailored to individual strengths and needs.

Informed by the International Baccalaureate Approaches to Learning and the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) framework, our teaching emphasizes engagement, flexible learning styles, and meaningful expression. This integrated approach blends academic rigor with social-emotional growth, supporting each child's success across disciplines.

A themed approach with many dimensions

Class themes are designed to change every year within each mixed-age grouping. For example, the theme for Grades 1 & 2 follows an “A and B” cycle, where year A has a Hudson River focus, and year B has a Poughkeepsie community focus. As you can see later in this guide, the A and B cycles are intentionally aligned so that students' learning is linked to age-appropriate social justice and sustainability themes. Our mission-aligned curriculum ensures that children encounter several distinct themes in their lower school years. Each one has its own trips, projects, and activities that constantly evolve along with the needs of our students and the world outside our campus.

We come together in many ways

Learning how to participate in the larger Poughkeepsie Day School community is also emphasized. Indeed, cooperative group endeavors are a hallmark of the learning process at PDS. Sharing information and ways of approaching problems helps students and teachers alike to respect and learn from one another. At regularly scheduled lower school assemblies, children have an opportunity to present work that they have been doing in their classes to the rest of the lower school. We also sing songs together, and individual students occasionally perform if they are studying instruments.

Each month, the entire student body participates in an all-school activity. Throughout the year, students also belong to mixed-age buddy groups which engage in educational and community-minded projects.

Choice time, during which children are encouraged to explore various areas of particular interest, is an essential part of the weekly schedule, and helps foster initiative, creativity and collaboration. Choices, depending on grade level, might include art experiences, playing games of strategy such as chess or Stratego, dramatic play, weaving, writing, construction, or working on a research project.

Learning on and off campus

Students take numerous field trips each year related to academic themes. The PreK and Kindergarten children visit local farms to learn more about life on a working farm. Back in the classroom, they write stories and draw pictures about their experiences. Other students might explore a local park in order to learn about woodland plants as part of a Native American social studies theme, or visit the Clearwater sloop in conjunction with their study of the Hudson River.



Our campus and surroundings also offer plenty of opportunities for experiential learning. Teachers frequently take children to engage in outdoor learning in one of our gazebos, into the woods to explore nature, or across the street to the Boardman Road library to practice research skills. PDS also has partnerships with [Stony Kill Foundation](#), providing each homeroom with several curated farm visits linked to each place-based curriculum, [Ramapo for Children](#), for the building of life skills, including resilience and problem solving.

Technology, in balance

Even our youngest learners need to be technologically literate to succeed in today's world. Using a balanced approach, students use computers to research, play educational games that support their learning, and explore the basic elements of coding. In the lower school, we use technology to enhance the learning experience and reinforce the skills that we learn through other media. To support this, Chromebook carts are available for classroom use. Our technology curriculum emphasizes how to use the internet safely, and students only access the internet under supervision.

With that in mind, we are committed to fostering an exceptional environment for learning, personal growth, and vibrant community-building. In light of that commitment, we discourage excessive use of technology at school, focusing on the skills needed to succeed in school activities, like coding, typing skills, and research. We recognize that school is not an isolated entity; rather, it exists within the broader world and has a responsibility to keep students connected to each other and the world. Our intention is to construct a purposeful space - an intentional community where individuals can truly understand themselves and others.

Evaluation and assessment at PDS

Each fall, families are invited to Curriculum Night, where teachers outline the year's program. Beforehand, parents receive a written overview, daily schedule, and goals for the year. Family conferences are held in the fall and spring to discuss student progress. Beginning in Kindergarten, students join these conferences to set goals and share their work!

Detailed written reports, including curriculum summaries and narrative assessments, are sent home mid-year and at year-end. Teachers use various tools—observations, portfolios, student self-evaluations, and more—to track progress. Ongoing check-ins keep families informed, and teachers and the Head of School are always available for additional support.

PDS prioritizes open communication and a strong partnership between home and school to ensure each child's success.

Lower school schedule and bilingual Spanish-English after care

The school day runs from 8:30 am - 3:00 pm. An optional before-school program is offered at no cost for lower school students, supervised by PDS staff. This operates each day from 7:30 until 8:15 am, when children are permitted to enter their classrooms. For an additional fee, students in PreK through Grade 6 may sign up for the bilingual After School Program, which operates from 3:00 pm - 5:30 pm on full days that school is in session. The PDS After School Program (the "After") offers structured and unstructured activities in both English and Spanish – children can participate in arts and crafts and baking projects, play board games, build block structures, make new friends, or just relax and enjoy the playground.

Thanks to our [Star 2B Performing Arts](#) partnership, enrichments like dance, improv, and musical theater productions are also on the roster. The full after care schedule is made available at the end of each summer.

The importance of the additional language; Spanish starts in PreK

As an International Baccalaureate candidate school, PDS begins Spanish instruction in Pre-Kindergarten with multiple lessons per week. We weave these into the schedule and give all students the experience of language learning through drama, music, and discrete language instruction. The sound of PDS includes the sound of children sharing their Spanish language skills freely.

A Typical Lower School Schedule

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8:15-8:45	Choice Time	Choice Time	Choice Time	Choice Time	Choice Time
8:45-9:15	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	LS Meeting/ Sharing Assembly
9:15 - 9:45	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop
9:45 - 10:00		Word Study			Word Study
10:00 - 10:15	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack
10:15 - 10:30	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
10:30-11:00	Spanish	Reading Workshop	Drama	Reading Workshop	Spanish
11:00 - 11:15	Reading Workshop		Reading Workshop		Reading Workshop
11:15 - 11:30		Math		Math	
11:30- 12:00	Math		Math		Math
12:00 - 12:45	Recess Lunch	Recess Lunch	Recess Lunch	Recess Lunch	Recess Lunch
12:45 - 1:00	Mindfulness Time	Art	Interdisciplinary Technology	Mindfulness Time	Art
1:00-1:15	Music			Music	
1:15 - 1:30			Library		
1:30 - 1:45	PE	PE	PE	PE	PE
1:45 - 2:00					
2:00-2:15	Social Studies/ Science	Social Studies/ Science	Spanish	Social Studies/ Science	Read Aloud
2:15-2:30				Read Aloud	LS Clubs
2:30-2:45	Read Aloud	Read Aloud		Read Aloud	Read Aloud
2:45 - 3:00	Meeting	Meeting	Meeting	Meeting	Meeting

IB Approaches to Learning & Teaching: Primary Years



PreKindergarten & Kindergarten



Social and emotional learning

The PreK and Kindergarten program respects and reflects the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of young children. Its intent is to allow children the opportunity to grow and learn from experiences that are meaningful and relevant to them. Daily classroom routines, as well as a balance of structured and open-ended activities, are integrated throughout the day.

The day is designed to allow for periods of active hands-on learning, quiet independent learning, group gatherings and discussions, and one-on-one time with a teacher. The curriculum is designed to provide rich learning opportunities and challenges for all children, while respecting the individuality of each child's development. Each child works at the pace and level that best suits them.

Social and emotional learning is critical at this young age. Some of the competencies the class explores are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, problem solving, and responsible decision making. Students read books, engage in age-appropriate discussions, and role-play scenarios with the goal of developing these skills. Learning materials provide experiences to help children see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Language arts

The goal for all students in language arts is to instill a love of reading, writing, and language. With that in mind, we concentrate on developing verbal expression and listening, letter-sound correspondence, formation of letters, rhyming and phonics, and book knowledge. Our goal is to meet the needs of each individual child and help them develop these essential reading skills. Experiences of our PreK and Kindergarten students will vary based on their readiness.

The program consists of several key components: the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing; the use of quality literature; the interaction and involvement of the children; and well-planned and purposeful instruction. Both informal and formal approaches are used to facilitate learning. The classroom walls are covered with print. Signs, charts, letters, words, and books are abundant. This enables children to find resources themselves and reinforce sight vocabulary while helping them develop literacy in meaningful ways. The children learn from each other as well as from the teachers; teacher modeling facilitates learning. They also learn to set their own goals, which leads to growing independence. The language arts program is shaped according to the strengths and needs of the children.

Reading, in many forms, is an integral part of the program. Instruction occurs in a variety of ways, including full-class shared reading of poems, charts, songs, big books, small group work

focusing on specific skills, and individual work with a teacher. Children are read to daily, and opportunities for them to read their own stories to the class are available as they are ready to do so. The group is introduced to literary genres such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and more.

As emerging writers, there are numerous opportunities to develop writing skills with PreK and Kindergarteners. Children are introduced to letters, sounds, and letter formation through playful, multi-sensory activities which reinforce letter recognition and sound associations. Efficient ways of forming letters are introduced using the *Handwriting Without Tears* program, and the students incorporate these methods into their writing as they are ready to do so. In addition, each child has frequent opportunities to “write” (draw, write, or dictate), both during Writer’s Workshop and throughout the day; children also write their own books, individually and collectively. Titles and topics emerge spontaneously or evolve from the curriculum. For instance, one writer might create their own version of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle or an alphabet book of their own. As their skills develop, children move from dictating their thoughts to “developmental spelling” (word building from a knowledge of letter sounds; for example “dog” may be written as “dg”), working toward an eventual ability to use standard spelling. Moving through this progression is an essential component of gaining literacy, and each reader and writer moves through it at their own pace.

Mathematics

Math, like language arts, is integrated throughout our PreK/Kindergarten curriculum; our physical environment and daily routines feed the mathematics curriculum. Counting, calculating, sequencing, and finding patterns are all included in the day’s activities. Early morning routines provide practice in recognizing quantities and discovering relationships between the numbers that are gleaned from our daily attendance and calendar. In our block center, unit blocks are purposely arranged to accentuate the mathematical relationships between the blocks and to provide the children with a built-in classification system.

Whether in small or large group lessons, children are given daily opportunities to bring mathematics to life as they make connections with math topics and other content areas. Games and projects help students develop problem-solving skills. Our Singapore Math curriculum encourages learners to explain their mathematical thinking and explore different ways of solving the same problem. All children use both concrete and symbolic materials to support mathematical investigations (e.g. Cuisenaire rods, blocks, counters, unifix cubes, geo-blocks, number lines, graphs, and charts).

Throughout the year, we investigate patterns, geometry and spatial reasoning, number sense, computation, measurement, categories, estimation, equivalency, and recording and analyzing



data. Every topic of study is adjusted to meet the specific needs of each child. While we meet daily to discuss certain math topics as a group, each child receives differentiation and individualized instruction through small group or one-on-one work with a teacher.

Our visits to local farms weave beautifully into math work. We count, predict, measure, and chart a variety of experiences. Throughout our curriculum, we frequently use a variety of graphing techniques to help us organize information we collect. The children compare and plot data on topics such as hair and eye color, number of pets, what they've brought for lunch, or their favorite ice cream flavors.

A word about the two-year cycle and PreK and Kindergarten

PreK and Kindergartners at Poughkeepsie Day School engage in a two-year study that is focused on food and farming. The study includes the essential questions "Where does our food come from?" and "How does food make it to my plate?" The central themes that guide curriculum are sustainability and community. Since both PreK and Kindergarten are such formative years, and also common entry points, topics are evenly distributed between two years.

Social Studies

Our social studies curriculum addresses the big questions that PreK and Kindergarten children are attempting to understand. Our goal is to create a sense of community within our classroom. Together, we develop rules, routines, and shared responsibility. Closely connected to this process is learning about ourselves and studying how each member of the class is connected to a unique family unit. We address how each of our families plays an integral part in making our local community thrive.

Once our classroom community is firmly established, we begin to explore our broader social studies theme of *Farm Life Within Our Community*, which guides us through the year as we contrast life in the family and classroom with life beyond our doors at farms in our community. We think about where our food and clothing comes from, how farmers work to provide us with essential products, and how farms help the communities that they are in. Children have the opportunity to gain first-hand experience through multiple visits to local farms, like The Poughkeepsie Farm Project and Stony Kill Farm. We collaborate with the farmers at each of these farms to learn about many aspects of animal and vegetable farming. We follow the cycle of vegetable gardens through the seasons, learn about the tools and techniques that farmers use, and look closely at how farmers interact with the land that they care for, in a way that is respectful and mutually beneficial.



In our partnership with the Culinary Institute, children work with culinary students and chefs to prepare food for themselves and others using local ingredients. This farming study, as a

whole, captures the essence of what social studies is all about: the relationships among people and their interactions with the environment. Through this long-term investigation, children also learn to communicate clearly with words, to listen, to take turns, and to think about the needs and feelings of others. These are important steps in a child's growth in becoming part of a social community. Throughout the year, the children are immersed in the comparative exploration of the systems of family, school, farm, and local community, heightening their level of understanding by discovering the differences and similarities of each.

Science

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. How do different machines work? What do animals eat? How do plants grow? Why does the weather change? Our science curriculum builds on this natural interest, and provides tools for children to begin to make sense of the world around them, including observation, prediction, experimentation, classification, and recording data.

Our hands-on program is supplemented by outdoor discoveries, such as the insects, rocks, bark, and leaves found by the children all around the school. Close attention is paid to weather patterns. As the year progresses, comparisons are made between monthly and seasonal weather conditions.

Trips to farms and exploration of our campus lead to further scientific thinking and activity. We observe the effects of changing weather upon the land and animals. What is the cycle of the seasons, and what changes do we notice? We also compare natural habitats to domestic habitats. What animals and insects live nearby? Will we find the same insects and birds in our schoolyard that reside at the farm? We pay special attention to problem solving and how this relates to life cycles and seasons. How do farmers deal with pests in a way that respects the land and its natural inhabitants? How do farmers cope with weather events like frosts and floods? How will we apply that learning as we grow vegetables here at school?

We actively take steps to preserve our environment and instill in the children a respect for the natural world. We create our own garden bed, and tend the garden through each step of the process: preparing the soil, planting the seeds, watering, weeding, and finally enjoying the bounty of our work.

In the midst of the wonder and exploration, we record our questions, our predictions, our experiments, and finally our conclusions with each project, thus enabling each child to understand the sequence of thinking that can lead to the power of discovery.

Play and Choice Time

Children learn through play. It is rich in creativity, trial and error experiences, and social negotiations. Sometimes, their dramatic play reflects elements of the curriculum: farm workers, animals at the farm, and workers in the city. Quite often, they “become” parents, babies, pets, and fantasy characters as they continue to make sense of their world. Indoors

and outdoors, dramatic and physical play are a vital part of each day.

Throughout the day, the students are encouraged to make their own choices. During independent work times, children select activities that will engage them. They may choose from quiet solitary activities such as reading, drawing, and writing, or from more active work like group games. These choices address each child's level of ability, interest, and learning style. In addition, when given choices, children gain a sense of control over their lives, and become aware of our respect and trust in their choices. Activities offered at our scheduled choice times include playing board games, building with blocks, playing with sand or water at the texture table, reading and writing, working on art projects, and exploring math through a variety of manipulatives.

Grades 1 & 2

Social-emotional learning (SEL)

The program for Grades 1 & 2 respects and reflects the enthusiasm and growing self-awareness of this particular age group. In addition to guidance from the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile, Social-Emotional Learning is informed by the [CASEL 5 Framework](#) and the [Responsive Classroom](#) approach, which teaches young children to adapt to circumstances while using empathy and cooperation. From the earliest days of the school year, we work on establishing important daily routines and building a strong community of learners. We begin each day with a morning meeting, and end the day with a closing circle where students have the opportunity to build relationships with their peers.

Throughout the school day, we offer students a balance of individual, small-group, and whole-group learning experiences. In addition, opportunities arise for the children to make decisions and solve problems that affect the whole group. We celebrate moments of individual accomplishment as well as the satisfaction that comes from working together toward a common goal. On a regular basis, we structure both formal and informal activities for cross-age interaction in and out of the classroom.

Language arts

The primary goal of the Grades 1 & 2 language arts program is to instill a lifelong love of language, reading, and writing. We teach a literacy curriculum based on units from the Columbia University's Teachers College program that is infused with phonics instruction using the [Orton-Gillingham](#) multisensory approach. Teaching and learning consists 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 which children may be engaged in individual or group experiences, or meeting in conference with their teacher or a peer.

Reading, in many forms, is an integral part of our language arts curriculum. Children are read to daily, and 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. The classroom is a print-rich environment in which books, signs, charts, letters, words, and examples of children's writing are abundant. We provide ample opportunity for children to learn to choose a book that feels "just right." Students also have many opportunities to visit the school library to find a treasured book or to do research on a topic of their choosing.

In Writer's Workshop, students work on writing projects of their own or projects initiated by their classroom teacher, with the primary goal of enabling each child to communicate clearly by writing. The writing process—think, write, revise, edit, publish—is used within the

classroom to help children learn to create their own books, poems, and stories. Class books and charts relating to the theme or interests of the students are another form of writing found within the classroom. These collective writing projects are often revisited by the class and shared with a larger audience during our lower school assemblies, or simply shared with another class. Writing is also integrated within our thematic social studies and science experiences in the form of a journal kept by each member of our class. In these journals, children record observations from science experiences relating to the theme, sketch places visited during field trips, or write about the questions, impressions, and ideas our theme has engendered.



Each day, students are exposed to some form of “word work” within their language arts experiences. While these experiences vary widely given the differing developmental levels of the students, 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 if they are using 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. Regular use of the *Words Their Way* spelling inventory provides us with the evidence we need to ensure that our word work is meeting the needs of each child.

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

Mathematics

Math, at its most fundamental level, offers children the structure necessary to find patterns in their world. Using real life problems, we investigate curricular topics that include number sense, geometry, time, money, measurement, data analysis, addition, subtraction, and place value. Throughout the year, these topics are integrated in projects that blossom from our explorations in the classroom. Classroom stores, restaurants, post offices, and quilts are just a few of the projects that may emerge from exploring particular math topics. Literature provides another avenue for the integration of important mathematical concepts with other curricular areas.

Students use base-ten materials, counters, unifix cubes, Cuisenaire rods, dice, and other manipulatives to see and feel representations of numbers and explore the relationship between one quantity and another. As a base for our curriculum, we utilize [*Dimensions Math*](#), a Singapore Math approach. This highly effective teaching approach helps students meet and

exceed grade level expectations. The method follows three steps, moving from hands-on math to picture models, to abstract mathematical equations.

Children are encouraged to make estimates and think about the types of answers they might expect to find for a problem before they begin to solve it. We also emphasize the communication of mathematical thinking, an ongoing expectation that is guided and modeled throughout the year. Children are expected to use words, pictures, and models to describe their ideas and explain their strategies for solving problems. Class discussion is always important during our math times as children share their insights.

In addition to deepening conceptual math thinking, we work on understanding and memorizing math facts. The use of computational shortcuts and strategies, such as making tens and skip counting, can help children discover number patterns and become more efficient problem-solvers. Weekly home practice provides regular opportunities for children to strengthen their mathematical skills, and allow the family to participate in the work. Experiences that develop computational fluency are integrated into all aspects of our work.



Social Studies (Year A): Town and City, A Year Long Study of Poughkeepsie

Town and City: A Year-Long Study of Poughkeepsie helps students explore big questions about people, community, and the world. Rooted in curiosity and inquiry, the study begins in the classroom, expands to the school, and then to the broader Poughkeepsie community.

Students investigate how people live and work together and what supports daily life. Learning materials and experiences reflect students' lives and encourage connections to their surroundings. The study also introduces themes of diversity and inclusion, fostering understanding and appreciation of human differences within and beyond the PDS community.

While studying Poughkeepsie, students explore what makes a community through hands-on lessons, field trips, and site-based learning. Visits to places like the library, post office, farm, or civic center allow students to observe, ask questions, and gather information through interviews and direct experience.

In the classroom, they record their findings through writing, art, graphs, and building. They learn about geography, public services, and interconnected systems like transportation, communication, and utilities.

Throughout, students engage in map-making, literature, storytelling, art, cooking, music, and more—developing appreciation for the people and places that shape their local and global communities.

Science (Year A): What lives in our backyard?

In *Town and City: A Year-Long Study of Poughkeepsie*, students use their local environment as a living laboratory to explore natural and physical science. They investigate cycles like seasons, plant growth, and animal life, and examine materials used in construction through hands-on experiments and inquiry.

Supported by local experts and community resources, students engage in literature-based and sensory-rich activities that build skills in observation, prediction, and recording. Studies include the butterfly life cycle, local flora and fauna, and physical science projects like constructing models of community landmarks—fostering curiosity and a deeper appreciation for the science in their everyday surroundings.

2025-26: Social Studies (Year B): Our Hudson River

Like our Poughkeepsie study, the *Hudson River* study invites students to explore big questions about how people live, work, and share resources. We begin with local observations, such as walks over the Walkway Over the Hudson, asking: Who uses the river? How is it cared for? What lives in and around it?

As the year progresses, students engage in a broader regional study through integrated science and social studies. Field trips, guest experts, and hands-on projects help answer essential questions like: Who were the first people of the river? How have humans affected the river? How can we protect it?

Through interdisciplinary learning—art, research, storytelling, and model-making—students gain a deep appreciation of the Hudson River and are encouraged to become its stewards.

2025-26: Science (Year B): What lives in the Hudson River?

The *Hudson River* study in Grades 1 & 2 offers rich opportunities for scientific inquiry. Students begin by asking, “What lives in the Hudson River?” and investigate the needs of local plants and animals through observation, research, and fieldwork such as seining for fish, beachcombing, and water sampling.

Guiding questions include: What is the water cycle? How was the Hudson River formed? What is an estuary? What happens when new species arrive? Students track their discoveries in science journals throughout the year.

Partnerships with organizations like the DEC and Scenic Hudson enrich the study, while site visits along the river inspire new questions. The year concludes with a focus on conservation, including a changemaker study of environmental leaders like Rachel Carson and Pete Seeger.

Technology

Technology is used to support all areas of our hands-on curriculum. We use a variety of technological tools to support and expand learning experiences. Children in Grades 1 & 2 are introduced to basic coding skills. We also use a variety of websites to analyze maps of our local area and changes over time in conjunction with theme studies. In Grades 1 & 2, children

also explore the keyboard to begin to build a foundation in typing skills.

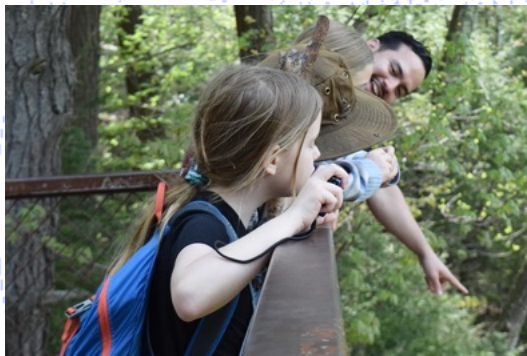
Play and Choice Time

Each morning, the children have a choice period during which they pick their own constructive activities. Math tools, blocks, drawing, reading, card games, crafts, and activities that extend curricular areas are often favorite choices. They may also use choice time to take a music lesson or work on a project that relates to a given year's theme. Choice time is a valuable time within our day when our learners 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. A common choice time with Grades 3 & 4 allows children to pursue opportunities in the other classroom, eventually leading to activities with middle school students as well.

Grades 3 & 4

Social and emotional learning (SEL)

Within the Grades 3 & 4 classroom, social and emotional learning 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, informed by the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile, 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. We recognize that children at this age are keen to take more ownership of their ideas, and need opportunities to demonstrate their independence while also being encouraged to cooperate. Our curriculum is based on the [CASEL 5 Framework](#), and focuses on five main areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. *Responsive Classroom* provides an additional layer for the establishment of a community that places empathy and cooperation at the forefront.



Through consistent routines, students in Grades 3 & 4 develop independence, take responsibility for their learning, and actively set personal and academic goals—reflected in their participation in family conferences.

Our curriculum offers “windows and mirrors,” allowing students to see themselves and others in the material. We emphasize community-building, conflict resolution, and recognizing both shared and

diverse experiences.

Students also engage in age-appropriate social justice conversations informed by current events and history. Over time, they move from understanding fairness in the classroom to considering their role in a more just global community, all within a safe and supportive space.

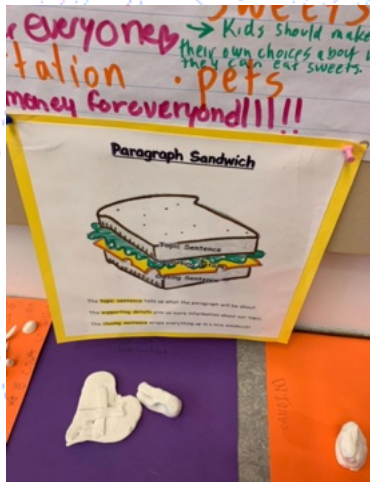
Language arts

Within language arts, students in Grades 3 & 4 study, learn, and grow within a workshop model. Reader’s and Writer’s Workshops, based on units from Columbia University’s Teachers College Reading and Writing units, aim to create independent and reflective readers and writers.

An essential goal of the 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, children are taught how to identify books that provide an appropriate challenge and spark their imagination. Through discrete skills-building lessons,

students are taught how to summarize, analyze, and reflect on what they are reading through written responses, conferences with teachers, and partner reading. We also read in guided reading groups and student-led literature circles around a range of authors and genres as a way to deepen comprehension through conversation. Through this 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 a writer's notebook, add structure through a variety of graphic organizers, and craft, revise and publish works of writing. To build on writing skills both in Writer's Workshop and in interdisciplinary projects, many mini lessons and activities are based on [The Writing Revolution](#), a scaffolded approach that takes Grade 3 & 4 children from paragraph-building and complex sentence structure all the way to middle school essay-writing skills.



Students write in different genres within both fiction and nonfiction. In a Writer's Workshop model, a writing period typically 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 to demonstrate pride in our own work.

Guided by the [Orton-Gillingham multisensory method](#), word work and language usage are addressed as a whole class. Patterns, structures, and relationships, including etymology, 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 will be 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

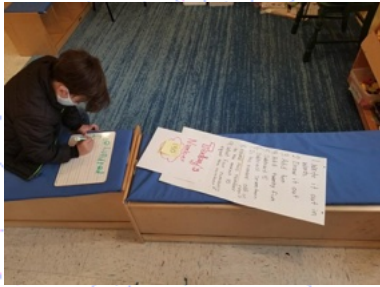
Within our math program, we value a balance between math content and math processes. In an effort to facilitate deep learning, students construct knowledge using a model that moves them from the concrete, to the abstract, and on to application. This means that our work in a given area will often begin 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 students in Grades 3 & 4 to build their computational fluency, so that we can explore more complex

mathematical applications.

In math, we pull from a range of resources in order to engage all types of learners. We incorporate [*Dimensions Math*](#), a Singapore Math approach, into the varied menu we use to help students develop mathematical thinking.

Social Studies (Year A): Before We Came - the Origins of our Hudson Valley Community

Before We Came explores the lives of people who lived in the Hudson Valley before us—from the Lenape to early European settlers. Building on the Hudson River study, students consider: *Why do people keep settling in the Hudson Valley?* This inquiry encourages curiosity about how communities form, survive, and evolve.



Students examine geography, culture, and daily life through books, materials, and hands-on experiences.

Field trips to sites like Mohonk Preserve and Historic Huguenot Street deepen their understanding of early inhabitants and their relationship to the land.

Guiding questions include: What resources did Native Americans rely on? How did they interact with nature? Why did settlers come, and what was their impact? What traces remain today?

Science (Year A): A life science study based on our local habitat

In Year A, to launch into a deep study of local flora and fauna, students in Grades 3 & 4 take a trip to the Hudson River to experience “A Day in The Life,” an annual event that involves thousands of people analyzing the river at the same time. They explore the Hudson River and

the fish species living in it, and gather data on the turbidity, temperature, and salinity of the river. We then expand our studies of the Hudson to include biomes around the world. Each student chooses a biome to research, and creates a presentation to share with their classmates. Later in the year, students study circuits and simple machines, with a trip to Locust Grove to learn about this technology in a historical context.

Throughout the science curriculum in Year A, emphasis is placed on the scientific process of inquiry, hypothesis, lab procedure, observation, data collection, and analysis. Students dissect a fish, explore forces and motion, and learn the principles of electricity. They explore the design of the process and scientific thinking as a class. As responsible scientists, they implement instructions, manage materials responsibly, and synthesize ideas from informational text, class discussions, and the observed results of their experiments.

2025-26: Social Studies (Year B): Migration

Our journey in Year B starts off from the point that First Nations had contact with early European settlers. We begin by studying early European settlements in the Hudson Valley, extending the study to the development of the thirteen colonies. As we look into westward expansion and the nation's population growth, we study the forces that helped shape the nation that we know. Essential questions shape our mini studies of the causes and outcomes of the Civil War, Industrialization, the Constitution, and Civil Rights. Linking to these themes, the class delves into answering the essential question: What forces created the country we live in?

Students in Grade 3 & 4 engage in a study of migration with a focus on the turn of the 20th century, looking at the movement of a few different groups to the US and within the US. Our study of people coming to this country focuses on migration from Asia and Europe through the immigration stations of Ellis Island in New York and Angel Island in California. Within the US, we investigate the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to northern industrial cities. We learn about the cultural movements that arose as a result of this mass migration, such as the Harlem Renaissance. As we look at each group, we ask essential questions about the cause and effect of each group's movement. Students are asked to think about what pushes people to leave their homes and what pulls them to settle in a specific area. As a group, we explore the traditions that people bring with them to a new home, and the ways in which they shape the world with their arrival. We learn about the challenges that each group has encountered, as well as the hopes and dreams that keep them going.

We select materials and provide experiences that help the children see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Having space for this personal connection within the curriculum allows students to connect deeply with the theme of migration, which can be seen throughout history. We also seek to understand connections to present-day situations around the world. This core social studies topic informs our work in other areas of the curriculum, as we seek to integrate literacy, math, science, and the arts to ensure that all types of learners have meaningful avenues into our year-long study.

2025-26: Science (Year B): Migration in nature

In Year B, the science curriculum is integrated with the social studies theme of migration. One of the first connections many students make to this topic is that animals and people both migrate. The school year is well-timed for observation of monarch migration. Students in Grades 3 & 4 participate as citizen scientists by reporting monarch sightings. They build on their knowledge of the monarch life cycle, and develop an understanding of the annual cycle of migration that occurs over four generations of monarch. A seed study helps to link together the plant and animal world as we focus on seed dispersal. In addition to exploring the structure of a seed, students will be asked to think about how and why seeds travel. Our geology study allows us to look more closely at the map of the world, as we investigate and build models of the layers of the earth, the tectonic plates, and the rock cycle.

Meanwhile, a study of electricity and magnetism will be an opportunity to think about discovery and invention. As we learn to understand and build circuits, we also consider how life was different before the prevalence of electricity. We incorporate chemistry through a study of states of matter and properties of water, and students will design experiments based on what they have learned. As with the life cycle theme, there is a major focus on scientific thinking and sharing of information as we seek to answer complex questions.

Technology

In Grades 3 & 4, all students participate in a 1:1 Chromebook learning program. They receive support and experiences in managing their own Google accounts, and begin the journey of creating a positive digital footprint for themselves. Every week, time is allotted in the students' schedule for developing computer literacy. This time is spent on a range of activities, including introducing new programs and resources, coding skills, online research, practicing typing, and discussing how to be a good digital citizen. The focus is on purposeful technology. *With email and online research being introduced in this homeroom, students complete a digital literacy unit with family support. This creates the parameters for internet use that is safe and beneficial to learning.*

Play and Choice Time

To begin each day, children have choice time, 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 Grades 3 & 4 might find a few children drawing, others curled up in a cozy spot reading, and another small group working together to race cars down a track. 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 themes. 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, they become mentors to others in the room, as well as eager explorers.

Foundation Subjects

Movement education

The movement 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.

Music education

Our overall aim with the music program 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 our 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.

Self confidence grows as children 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.

World language: Spanish

Beginning in PreKindergarten, students in the lower school develop foundational language skills, including listening, speaking, and phonics in Spanish. Over time, students develop the

capacity to acquire more sophisticated skills such as reading and writing, which help them to become more confident communicators. Lessons incorporate activities and experiences that are theatrical, highly active, and sensory—strategies proven to be highly effective in language acquisition at an early age. With a focus on teaching Spanish fluency with everyday language, the lessons incorporate the context of everyday activities, play, songs, and storytelling. From PreKindergarten, Spanish is taught twice per week. Most of the lessons are conducted in Spanish, while visual cues, movement, and gestures are used to convey meaning, so that children can acquire the language in an immersive environment.

Initially, children demonstrate comprehension with non-verbal responses, such as following directions. Next, they are asked to speak in response, first echoing and then creating original answers using their growing vocabulary. Spanish lessons also incorporate songs, literature, poetry, art, games, and cuisine from Spanish-speaking countries, giving students a valuable perspective on those countries' various cultures and those who speak it. Cultural awareness is at the heart of our Spanish program. This puts language in its true context, while also educating students about cultures whose influences they experience in their everyday lives.

Visual arts

The lower school visual arts program is designed to offer students experiences in exploring, evaluating, analyzing, and creating art. Poughkeepsie Day School believes that participation in and appreciation of the artistic process are integral to a complete education, and that engagement with the arts is essential to the human experience. The curriculum enables students to progress in a developmentally appropriate manner, to realize their personal voice, and to learn a visual language through dedication, experiment, and practice. We believe that competency in art can be taught, and is not limited to inherent talent; all students are artists at their own level of development.

Our school's approach to art teaching develops technical skills, understanding, and appreciation of the unlimited possibilities of self expression and visual communication. In the lower school art room, students will be exposed to a diverse range of contemporary and historical artists' work to see how these artists specifically used the fundamentals of creative expression. Mindful use of materials and engagement in the studio will be an integral theme to foster a safe place for experimentation, discovery, and joy of the artistic process

The Poughkeepsie Day School Child

A central aim of the lower school experience at Poughkeepsie Day School is to offer an inquiry-based learning experience that incorporates all of the essential subjects while preparing the child, in developmentally appropriate ways, for the world that they will help to change. Between PreKindergarten and Grade 4, a child in our school will have explored almost every reading and writing genre, learned how to use the power of words to write powerful essays, engaged in scientific thinking while interacting with the flora and fauna of the Hudson Valley, brainstormed countless ways to protect our local habitat, learned about what is fair and unfair in the area around Poughkeepsie, and will have likely worked with many local non-profit organizations. Our mission statement asks us to prepare students that will be able “to envision and create a more just world.” We teach with that intention as our central aim.

Welcome to PDS.

admissions@poughkeepsieday.org

