

OVERVIEW

The Kindergarten program is designed to promote the development of the whole child. Equal importance is placed on the child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual well-being. Because children develop at different rates, growth and progress are unique for each child. Our primary goal is to help each child build confidence and discover the excitement and joy of learning.

Our full-day kindergarten program strongly supports and nurtures the developmental needs of the kindergarten child. With an abundance of age-appropriate and enjoyable activities provided throughout each day, children gain reading, writing, math, science, physical and social skills. The kindergarten experience is further enhanced with woodshop, library, science, computer, PE, music and STEAM classes. iPads are also used as an extension and enrichment of our curriculum.

Play is essential in the life of a kindergartener, and work and play are intertwined. Choice time and recess are regarded as vital educational experiences in building social, emotional and physical skills. Our kindergarten classrooms and playground areas are beautifully designed and equipped to provide maximum opportunities for children to socialize, explore, develop motor skills and learn by discovery.

Experienced teachers carefully design and skillfully implement an engaging kindergarten curriculum. We foster self-esteem and social competency skills, build early literacy skills, enhance language development, and develop problem-solving skills. In a loving and nurturing environment, we lay the foundation for a positive school experience. In June, we are certain that our kindergartners have had a rich kindergarten experience filled with love, learning, and fun.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading

The kindergarten curriculum focuses on the foundational skills necessary for reading. Children with similar needs and abilities work in teacher-led small groups each day. These reading groups, referred to as PALS (Phonological Awareness and Literacy Skills), support and extend the kindergarten students in their development of phonetic knowledge, print concepts, and early literacy skills.

Engaging and explicit instruction is given to build each student's letter knowledge and phonemic skills through the use of *Lively Letters*, a multisensory mnemonic program and the *Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum*. Students are exposed to and practice recognizing high-frequency words that they are likely to see again and again, such as *the*. Children also learn to identify and produce rhymes, count syllables in words, segment words, recognize alliterations, and begin to blend sounds together to decode. Kindergartners experience

“hands-on” multisensory practice through the use of *Lively Letter* cards, letter tiles, magnetic letters, picture and word sorts, and games.

In addition to PALS groups, literacy activities are embedded throughout the school day. For example, kindergartners begin each day by answering the “question of the day” on the sign-in graph. They learn to recognize their classmates’ names, read the daily schedule, and the good morning letter. Each time they come in the classroom door, they can give a “high-five” to the sight word of the day displayed on a handprint.

Literacy experiences are encouraged within each classroom library, which is filled with engaging picture books, thematic books, early readers, and nonfiction texts. Children develop their interest in a variety of books during “book look” time, as well as during daily read-aloud. Kindergartners learn about beloved authors during *Author Studies* and engage in literature discussions and cross-curricular activities that involve art, science, cooking, writing, and math. Other literacy activities include taking home Early Reader books or Story Cases, and having mystery readers come to read a story to the class.

Writing

Kindergartners are often brimming with stories to share, and they eagerly become writers as they develop their storytelling, drawing, and writing skills during our Writing Workshop. They begin their lifelong learning of writing as they practice coming up with ideas for stories, drawing pictures, and adding labels, and words. Kindergartners learn how to engage in the writing process as they build an understanding of different kinds of writing, including true stories from their lives and “how-to” information books. Much of the learning that takes place during PALS groups is put to practice when children “stretch out” words and approximate spelling. Writing celebrations are a wonderful opportunity for kindergartners to proudly share their stories and drawings.

In addition to the Writing Workshop, kindergartners write weekly in their journals, as a way to capture moments from their lives and share their interests. They also have opportunities to make lists and write letters throughout the year.

Handwriting is developed through explicit instruction and modeling of proper pencil grip, good printing posture, and correct letter formations. Kindergartners practice with many kinesthetic activities, such as sky writing and making letters in finger paint, sand, shaving cream, and textured surfaces. With the use of *Learning Without Tears*, students are introduced to groups of letters that are similarly formed. They begin practicing capital letters and numerals first and then transition to lowercase letters. Handwriting instruction occurs daily, in addition to practice that is incorporated in PALS groups.

MATH

The Kindergarten math program uses a hands-on approach to teaching math. We use *The Investigations Math Curriculum* as a springboard. Math lessons are designed to provide students with experiences to help build a solid foundation. Children are encouraged to make connections to the many ways they use numbers in their everyday lives. Math concepts are integrated throughout the entire day. They will investigate, explore and discover using various tools and manipulatives provided to them. In kindergarten the learning experiences incorporate the following skills:

Patterns

Students are able to recognize, distinguish and predict patterns. They sort objects into groups and are able to identify attributes. They begin to recognize similarities and differences.

Number Concepts

Students recognize numerals 1-20 and beyond. They will also add and subtract to 10 using manipulatives. Printing and one to one correspondence is practiced and integrated into daily lessons. Students will count to 100 by tens, fives and by twos to 20s. Daily reinforcement is provided at morning meetings with calendar and number awareness as well as daily reasoning and prediction.

Comparing

Students compare data and graph results during math lessons and across the curriculum. They estimate in morning meetings and throughout the day. The 100th day of school provides numerous activities to sort, graph and record data results.

Measurement

Students explore standard and non-standard units of measurement.

Geometry

Students analyze, compare, create, and decompose two and three dimensional shapes.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Kindergarten Social Studies curriculum focuses on helping students develop a better awareness of themselves and others. Diversity, inclusiveness, and an awareness of the world are taught. The children will learn to appreciate their individuality and their responsibilities to a larger group in the community. Important bonds are built with our kindergarten peers as we name our class family. Our Family Chant is "We work together! We play together! We learn together!" We map our families, classroom and school to learn the connection among all.

The following highlights our Social Studies Curriculum:

My Family Map Project

The children will make a representation of their homes highlighting the people who live there. We talk about our at home family, and our kindergarten family, and our DCD family as a whole and how all intertwine.

Let's Map DCD Project

The children divide into small groups, and each group constructs a map of a portion of our school. We bring them together as a large DCD map at the end of the unit.

Cultural Tradition and Holidays

Kindergarten parents are invited to come to the class and teach us about their family's celebrations and traditions. At curriculum night, parents will be able to sign up to speak to students about heritage months and holidays. In the past, grandparents have shared their experiences as well. Parent presentations have included Hanukkah, Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, and May Day in Hawaii. It is important that children know why we have "no school" on certain days. The significance of holidays such as Veteran's Day and Martin Luther King Day are also taught.

Class Meetings and Closing Circles

Class meetings and Closing Circles are open discussions of social issues and interactions that are important in the lives of a kindergartner. Feelings, likes and dislikes, problems, and possible solutions to conflicts, are discussed together during these class meetings. Individual growth and achievements are acknowledged and applauded. Through role playing and modeling, children are better able to see others' points of view. Each school day ends with a closing circle that wraps up the day in a way that leaves students feeling calm, competent and upbeat about their learning and friendships.

Respect

Teachers observe how the children play and how they treat one another. We model and guide children to behave respectfully towards classmates and teachers. Children are encouraged to sit in a "peace circle", face one another, and work towards solving conflicts and playing cooperatively together.

Kindness counts! We have a special gem jar in the classroom. The teacher looks for 'random acts of kindness' and rewards the kind behavior by announcing it. The class thanks the child who was witnessed doing the kind act, and a gem is added to the jar.

Star of the Week

Each kindergartner has a designated week during the school year to be "Star of the Week." The Star has a special "All About Me" poster. All week the child brings in special mementos from home to show the class such as a favorite book, stuffed animal and photos. This special week

concludes with a family visit to the class to share special stories, memories, and family customs and traditions. Our Star of the Week program makes each child feel extra special that week, and it promotes a respect for the uniqueness of each child within the diverse group.

Big Buddy/Little Buddy Program

At the beginning of the school year, each kindergartener is paired randomly with an eighth grade big buddy. The buddies spend the year getting to know each other by participating in frequent activities together that include playing inside and outside, reading books, scavenger hunts, and a field trip. Each little buddy forms a special bond with an eighth grade big buddy! For some young children, this is the first experience to meet, and socialize with a young teenager, boy or girl. Because we see our buddies so often, and our activities are highly interactive, the children really get to know all about one another, their families, their interests, and their likenesses and differences.

Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day

Kindergarten participates in a school wide Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day in which they work with their classmates to contribute to a local cause in their community. For example, we have made special birthday and arrival bags for children who live in a nearby residential school.

Multicultural Books and Materials

In kindergarten, there is an impressive selection of picture books and Read-Aloud books that speak to diversity. For every theme that we study, books are incorporated into the lessons. The books, both fiction and nonfiction, are the springboards for our literature discussions. For example, during our Penguin theme, we read *And Tango Makes Three*, a true story of two male penguins who loved each other and were given a baby penguin to love and care for together. We are also building a wonderful collection of picture books in both Spanish and English.

SCIENCE

In science class, some of the themes explored are weather, seasons, forces, and wildlife. The students learn about these topics in various ways, from listening to books, having discussions, watching short videos, and constructing models. For example, when studying magnetic forces, students tested several different materials for attraction to magnets, and when learning about rain and the water cycle, they created rain clouds out of shaving cream and food coloring. There is also ample time for the children to partake in engineering design projects. Students hypothesize, carry out experiments, and reflect on outcomes. Outdoor education is incorporated into science class with explorations and activities taking place in the many different habitats on campus. While learning about trees, students hike on the trails, making observations and asking questions about the native pine, maple, oak, and cedar trees. Students bring nets to the stream to learn about the life cycles of insects and frogs swimming in the water and the mud.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The primary focus of kindergarten PE class is movement education and skill development. Students' varied skill levels are built upon through noncompetitive activities that stress cooperation and creativity. Students perform tasks that involve different degrees of eye-hand and eye-foot coordination. The skills and challenges that are presented to students increase in difficulty as the year progresses. Manipulative skills include throwing, catching, kicking, collecting, striking, punting, dribbling, and volleying. Gymnastic and rhythmic activities include balancing, tumbling, vaulting, creative movement, and swinging on ropes. Fitness activities can include jumping, running, push-ups, sit-ups, and stretching. Students are also exposed to fitness components concerning the muscles, bones, heart, and circulatory system.

MUSIC

In Music & Movement, young learners are introduced to the basic fundamentals of musical composition and given a safe space to explore using their voice, instruments and movement as a way to express themselves. Students are taught about the Solfège Family early on in the class so that they may begin to understand the concept of music theory and how the notes they are hearing are written down and relate to one another on a musical scale. We listen to different genres of music, discuss how each is different or similar, and learn about different types of instruments that are used in each. We then work together to learn various songs and musical games that encourage students to use their voice, express themselves with movement, and work collaboratively to enhance their shared experiences as a musical group.

WOODWORKING

The kindergarten year in the woodshop is one that is full of exploration and fun collaborations among students and the teacher, and the beginning steps of what is known as “hand-craft” within the DCD woodshop studio. One goal of this specific year is to become comfortable and skilled at utilizing the coping saw. This basic tool is truly a cornerstone tool within the program and one that a student will use throughout their entire DCD Woodshop career. Additional goals and objectives are to gradually learn how to sustain focus and efforts, establish an ongoing sense of curiosity for woodworking, and start to develop a sense of ownership for one's project. Students learn how to work in a slow and methodical approach while at the benches. Working in a safe and thoughtful manner is stressed throughout the year, as well as being kind, supportive and thoughtful toward classmates. Projects are simple in design, with the emphasis placed on discovering and learning both the wonderment of wood as a material, and the basic skills needed to manipulate the wood in order to achieve the desired form. A special project or two are made during the course of the school year.

DRAMA

The drama teacher writes the kindergarten play especially for that particular group of students. Attention is given to every child and they will all have equal speaking roles. The kindergarten class teachers assist the students on stage as narrators or extra characters in the plays.

Students in kindergarten are asked the question: “How do I become an actor?” and “How can I use my face and voice when I am acting?” Building on the developmental approach to putting on a play, they now learn five or six lines from memory with a focus on speaking loudly and clearly. They develop confidence to face the audience when delivering lines and listen to the narrator’s cue lines in order to deliver their own lines at the appropriate time. They will also learn three or four stage positions to create different settings for each scene in the play.

The kindergarten class play focuses on process as well as final product. Students will rehearse in the performance space for fifteen days before performing the play for their parents and the whole school community. By rehearsing on the stage for fifteen days, students are given the opportunity to feel comfortable in their surroundings and will develop spatial awareness by moving around the stage in different scenes. The goal of the kindergarten play is for the students (whether they have been in pre-kindergarten or are new to DCD) to develop confidence and public speaking skills and develop team building skills with their classmates. They also learn how to replicate what they have practiced in rehearsals when performing for an audience.

LIBRARY

Kindergarteners are growing as readers. We support their love of books and reading by continuing to build their book borrowing independence. They become master storytellers in a wordless picture book project where they learn how to read pictures as part of telling a story. Students continue developing their love of reading by being exposed to a wide range of genres through thematic units that connect to other disciplines.

STEAM

The primary focus of the kindergarten STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) curriculum is hands-on problem-solving and discovery through play. Students begin using the design thinking process (i.e., think, plan, do, review) through their explorations. They have opportunities to work through an idea and adjust the plan through collaboration with peers and teacher-guided questions. Students explore, make, create, and build with a variety of materials and tools. Kindergarten students are also developing skills to understand technology as a learning tool. They acquire digital literacy skills through exploration with DCD’s technology

tools, including iPads and robots. Students are also introduced to computational thinking with an emphasis on sequencing and patterns.