

# Program of Studies

Berkshire Country Day School

**Lower School**  
2019-2020

# LOWER SCHOOL

## KINDERGARTEN

*BCD's kindergarten program is designed to facilitate and nurture the growth and development of the whole child. As children move through the various phases of social, emotional, and intellectual development, their classroom becomes an active learning environment where they feel comfortable trying new things, taking risks, and learning from their mistakes. Allowing them many opportunities to succeed helps build self-confidence and self-esteem.*

**Ms. Andrea Patel**

Many social and academic learning goals are addressed using the *Responsive Classroom*® approach. The *Responsive Classroom*® techniques allow for the creation of a classroom where all students are welcomed, respected, and empowered to make choices. Some of these practices include morning meeting, guided discovery, rules and logical consequences, and academic choice. Throughout the year, we work together to help develop a sense of respect for one another, take care of our environment, and learn to take responsibility for our actions.

The kindergarten English language arts program includes the four components of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It builds on what the children already know about language to help them develop increased skills and confidence as effective communicators. Phonemic awareness, reading and writing skills (including the proper formation of numerals and uppercase and lowercase letters) form the basis of the program. Several strategies, including the *Orton-Gillingham* method and the *Nellie Edge* program, are used to achieve these goals. In addition, daily practice with each of the four components of language contributes to the children's language development. Examples include:

- **listening and speaking**—hearing and memorizing poetry, chants, and fingerplays, listening to picture books and chapter books, conversation at group time, sharing time, snack and lunch, and working with peer readers. Our annual Kindergarten Poetry Assembly highlights the work done in these areas.
- **reading**—letter/sound association, morning messages, poem and song charts, big books, daily schedule, classroom books, library books, stories composed by the children themselves.
- **writing**—Weekend News, curriculum-based writings, individual and group stories, Writing Workshop, creative writing projects, poetry. Kindergartners are encouraged to write independently and to approximate spelling as best they can. As they acquire more mastery of sound-symbol relationship, standard spelling will gradually replace invented spelling.

Conveying the pleasure and excitement of literacy - in all its various forms - is our goal!

The kindergarten math curriculum is designed to help children appreciate the usefulness of mathematical ideas and skills in everyday life. Counting and numeration are emphasized, not only because children are naturally curious and motivated in these areas, but also because they form the basis for much mathematical understanding. Math experiences include rote counting, patterning, sorting, and classifying, comparing, logical thinking, and graphing. The children freely explore different math manipulatives to determine each material's unique possibilities and limitations, and to discover and experiment with pattern, spatial relationships, balance, and classification. Materials will then be used selectively for learning and practicing math concepts. Among the materials frequently used are pattern blocks, Unifix cubes, geoboards, Cuisenaire rods, dominoes, dice, and various kinds of counters, links and collections. Exposure to these skills, coupled with daily time to practice and explore, contribute to a broad base of mathematical understanding.

The children study a variety of different topics in the kindergarten science and social studies programs. These topics help cultivate a sense of wonder about the natural world and spark children's natural curiosity. Children are empowered to ask questions and are encouraged to look for answers using a variety of resources. We take field trips to enrich learning experiences and to put them into real life context. Some of the topics we will explore this year are caterpillars and butterflies, the human body, Native Americans, honey bees, penguins in Antarctica, the ocean and farms.

In addition to our scheduled specialty classes in art, our classroom provides kindergarten students with a wide variety of art experiences. Drawing with colored pencils, crayons, cray-pas and markers, painting, making play dough, modeling with clay, and creating collages using tissue paper, recycled objects, and other materials are some of the materials we use. Opportunities exist for both individual and group projects, which stimulate creativity and encourage personal expression - aside from just being fun!

## **art**

**Ms. Sasha Sicurella, Mr. Ben Evans and Ms. Ari Cameron**

Berkshire Country Day School's visual arts program is an innovative and dynamic module that is rooted, both conceptually and structurally, in the practices and processes of the art studio. Located on the second floor of **Furey Hall**, a fully-equipped ceramics studio, a drawing & painting studio, and a mixed media studio function as laboratories for cumulative learning of specific art disciplines. To enhance depth of knowledge, students spend one trimester in each studio and participate in art-making workshops twice per week. Studios are led by teaching artists who are committed to investigative learning and critical thinking with a focus on understanding the importance of both process and aesthetic value. Connecting with the outside environment in the form of visits to museums, artists' studios, galleries, and other venues provides context, community involvement, and alternative perspectives.

The kindergarten art curriculum is a hands-on extension of the classroom, as studio art teachers work directly with themes and topics occurring in our world and allow for child-centered projects with undetermined outcomes, ongoing collaborations, and experimentation. Larger themes of the curriculum include exploring the self (identity), understanding others

(relationships), and being part of a larger community (collaboration). As students are introduced to a variety of tools, techniques, and media, they begin to understand how to transfer ideas into tangible works of art. Reflecting upon, sharing, and displaying artwork provides opportunities for students to talk about their process, develop new vocabulary, and think critically.

- ***mixed media studio*** (one trimester):  
A variety of traditional and non-traditional materials are used to explore sculpture, installation, assemblage, collage, and fiber-based art. Movement, dance, music, and play are integrated into the studio. Students work on both individual and collaborative projects that use contemporary art, artists, and ideas as inspiration.
- ***drawing & painting*** (one trimester):  
Emphasis on large-scale, collaborative work using a variety of two-dimensional tools and techniques including graphite, charcoal, ink, watercolors, tempera paint, natural pigments, and mixed papers. Stand-up easels, large floor spaces, and drawing benches allow for choice and help to create a comprehensive working environment.
- ***ceramics*** (one trimester):  
Introduction to hand-building techniques and the properties and origins of clay. Students develop fine motor skills as they learn how to manipulate and form functional and decorative works of art.

## **world language**

**Sr. Miguel Silva**

Kindergarten children will be exposed to Spanish throughout the year. Our goal is to introduce a world language in a comfortable, child-friendly environment. The program is based on children's natural curiosity and their instinctive learning abilities. Children will learn to hear and imitate sounds, develop some comprehension skills, learn basic vocabulary, and have fun with songs and games and movement.

Connections will be made to homeroom units such as butterflies, food, and animals as often as possible.

## **library**

**Mrs. Elise Cashen**

The library program at BCD seeks to support the overall mission of the school through providing an atmosphere which promotes inquiry, discovery, and academic excellence while realizing each student's unique potential.

The library serves as a resource for the entire BCD community equipping faculty as well as students with materials that complement their courses of study. In addition to serving as a resource, the BCD library program will introduce students to the excitement and opportunities that the library has to offer.

Students will become familiar with the organization of the library while learning of some of the different materials and genres available. In addition to exploring the library, students will engage in weekly read alouds during which participation and active listening will be stressed. These high interest stories will be selected to complement areas covered in the classroom as well highlight aspects of story form.

Finally, the opportunity to borrow materials will provide the students with the responsibility of caring for and returning books. Students will be encouraged to visit the library outside of their scheduled class period to further explore their own areas of interest.

## **music**

Ms. Natalia Bernal

The music curriculum for preschool and Lower School students is based on the belief that each child can do well and enjoy music in a supportive environment that fosters creativity and freedom of expression.

Kindergarten children participate in a wide range of musical activities including singing, dancing, listening, playing instruments, and movement. Students are introduced to simple rhythmic concepts and notation. Singing is focused mainly on folk songs and games and the selection of materials reflect consideration of each child's growing and changing abilities. Many styles of music are explored when listening, dancing, and playing.

## **physical education**

Mr. Jordan Storti

The physical education program for kindergarten is separated into three areas of development: equipment play, a theme for the month, and small games. Equipment play activities help develop the abilities children need to participate in actual sports later on. Small equipment play activities include: balls, hoops, ropes, cones, bean bags, balloons, and scarves. Large equipment play activities include: parachutes, tires, scooters, mats, beams, and the climbing wall.

Each physical education class has a theme, so we can concentrate on an area appropriate for three to five-year-olds. We observe how they improve their motor skills, listening skills, ability to follow directions, and memory retention. A theme will usually last four weeks. Themes include: signals, animals, shapes and pathways, obstacle courses, ball skills, stunts, alphabet letters, and exercises.

To finish each class, the children gather for a small game that is fun and designed to promote positive interaction among the group. Small Games include: Pac Man, Gingerbread Man, and Two-Headed Monster.

Because kindergarten students typically spend much of their PE time outdoors, they should always be dressed appropriately for the weather!

## **VERTICAL CLASSROOM 1/2**

*In the grades 1-2 classroom, the developing child's academic, social, and emotional growth is nurtured in many ways. Through regular use of cooperative learning and conflict resolution strategies and by modeling and teaching attitudes of positive self-esteem and acceptance the differences and similarities of others, a strong learning community is formed.*

**Ms. Erika Hollander**

The vertical 1-2 classroom offers high expectations for all students, a curriculum that focuses on depth over coverage and a commitment to helping young children use their minds fully. In our classroom, the developing child's academic, social, and emotional growth is nurtured in many ways. Through regular use of cooperative learning and conflict resolution and by modeling and teaching attitudes of positive self-esteem and acceptance of the differences and similarities of others, a strong learning community is formed.

School work is made meaningful for children by connecting learning to the world. Teacher and students work together to develop a culture of respect, commitment, and collaboration. The multi-age classroom is designed to promote independence, engagement, and a sense of ownership of the environment.

Children are able to access curricula at their own levels. Teaching and learning is personalized to the maximum extent possible so that all students experience challenge and success. The teacher ensures that every child learns to his or her potential.

Within an environment where limits and rules are clear, children assume an ever-increasing sense of responsibility and self-control. By adapting curricula to the developmental phases of six to eight-year-olds and by allowing for each child's individuality, the students' innate curiosity and natural creativity remains strong and provides the basis for intellectual growth.

The comprehensive English language arts program encompasses creative and expository writing, a phonetic approach to spelling, a fine tuning of printing, and a literature-based reading program. While inventive spelling is still expected in writing, students will move towards more frequent use of conventional spelling as the year progresses.

Students learn to write creatively using a writing workshop model including drafting, editing, revising, and publishing of various pieces of writing following our genre studies, including: personal narrative, poetry, non-fiction, research, and fiction. Cross-curricular writing is also done in social studies, science and math.

The reading program uses techniques from both whole-language and phonics approaches and blend concepts including: sound/symbol relationship, decoding and sight words, grammar, silent and oral reading, comprehension, and literary genres. Children work in flexible guided reading

groups that best address their needs as individual readers and promote success with language. The children will hear stories read out loud, read together as a whole class and as peer readers. Through exposure to excellent children's literature, students develop a love of reading that will last a lifetime.

Our study of mathematics emphasizes mental math, understanding concepts through practice, real-life problem solving, and learning through games and manipulatives. The skills covered will be: addition, subtraction, multiplication, tables and graphs, estimation, basic fractions, geometry, money, time, measurement, probability and statistics, and patterns. Children of this age learn best through a hands-on approach with many different manipulatives. Use of math journals and cooperative problem solving are weekly activities.

In the vertical 1-2 classroom the developing child's social understanding is nurtured in many ways. The year begins with a focus of Responsive Classroom® meetings and activities which allow the children to become acquainted with their peers. Through this carefully structured introduction to the year and the classroom expectations, the students realize their responsibility to themselves, to each other and to the entire BCD community. This social curriculum emphasizes the connection between social and academic learning. Children learn best when they are engaged in meaningful ways with others and have the skills to do so. Additional topics in Social Studies class will be Colonial Times, Peace, maps and geography, the culture of Mexico and a final unit on the culture of our ancestor's.

Children are naturally curious. The science curriculum uses their prior knowledge and springboards deeper learning on a range of topics from bears, birds, and trees to oceans and bees. The students observe, inquire, and connect to the world around them. They record what they have learned in both picture and word in science notebooks. The children engage in the scientific method by conducting a variety of experiments with familiar objects, such as candy, crayons, or water. They make predictions, test them out, make observations, and record their findings.

In conclusion, the vertical 1-2 curriculum is a well-rounded one in which children can grow and learn in all areas. Through the combined efforts of the school, classroom and home, these young children journey far to develop strengths as students and as members of our larger community.

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## **world language**

**Sr. Miguel Silva**

Students in the 1/2 classroom will be exposed Spanish twice weekly. Lessons always begin with a “circle time” during which we recite seasonal verses, sing songs and do finger-plays, and clapping verses. The remainder of the lesson is spent working on class projects, hearing stories through puppetry, and playing many games. These games (the heart of the class experience for the children) are designed to reinforce the curriculum and to inspire the children to abandon English and speak the second language more spontaneously. The children learn a great deal of vocabulary and passive grammar from this playful work. Thanks to their enhanced powers of imitation and imagination at this age, the children also acquire authentic accents and learn to see Spanish as whole languages. After all, this kind of language learning resembles how we all learned to speak our native tongues – through a playful immersion in the language.

Teaching Methods include: games, songs, rhyming finger-plays, storytelling through puppetry, skits, drawing and coloring in Spanish notebooks, celebrating festivals and birthdays

Through these methods, students learn concepts such as: greetings, classroom vocabulary, numbers and number work (1-69 by year's end), colors, body parts, clothing, family members, nature vocabulary (animals, seasonal plants, fruits, flowers, insects, the cosmos, the change of seasons and weather), the date (recognition of days of week/months of year), daily activities), the imperative (commands), basic conversation (talking about yourself: name, age, family, where you live, likes/dislikes, etc.), and an introduction to Spanish-speaking sites and cultures.

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## **music and chorus**

**Mr. Jon Suters and Ms. Natalia Bernal**

The music curriculum for preschool and Lower School students is based on the belief that each child can do well and enjoy music in a supportive environment that fosters creativity and freedom of expression.

Music classes for students in grades 1-2 meet twice a week for 30 minutes. The music curriculum for Grades 1-2 consists of music activities such as singing, listening, playing, and performing. Through music, students discover and explore the concepts of melody, harmony, dynamics, and form.

A typical class includes movement activities to develop rhythmic coordination and singing, accompanied by rhythmic response through body movement and/or instrument playing. Music reading emphasizes quarter note, eighth note, and quarter rest patterns. Lessons also include listening to various selections in order to appreciate different styles.

The main objective of the music activities is to develop creativity and self-expression, as well as to develop music skills for personal enjoyment.

Students in Grades 1–3 also participate in Chorus once a week for 30 minutes. Focus is on building community and enjoying singing within a broad repertoire as well as on preparation for concerts and performances. Proper breathing and vocal technique is emphasized and a variety of pieces are chosen.

## **physical education**

**Mr. Jordan Storti**

The physical education program for grades 1/2 is designed to help students learn and strengthen the skills necessary for playing and becoming successful at all of the sports available to our children today. We also continue to take a serious look at the physical fitness level of each child and make sure they learn to understand the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

Developing skills at this age include: traveling movements, spatial awareness, relationships and effort. Ideas for this year include: walking, group challenges, volleyball skills, scavenger hunts, ice skating, obstacle courses, soccer skills, gymnastic skills, lacrosse, family games, basketball skills, and tag games.

Please check your child's schedule for gym days. Long skirts, clogs, party shoes, etc. are not appropriate. An extra pair of sneakers for Fitzpatrick Hall is mandatory. The sneakers can be old, but the children must carry them to gym.

