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LOWER SCHOOL STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Lower School is dedicated to educating the whole child. We focus on each child's growth academically, physically, socially, and spiritually. We believe there are unique gifts within each child, and we stress acceptance and celebration of differences as well as concern for and cooperation with others. We seek to provide a balance between independent thinking and receptivity to the ideas of others.

By emphasizing individual strengths and talents, we nurture a sense of self-worth among our students and a confidence to take risks. We seek to balance mastery of basic skills and concepts with open-ended problem solving, expansive thinking, and creative writing.

Our child-centered environment is characterized by a quiet hum of challenging activity. Our cooperative approach to learning promotes a sense of community, strengthens communication and social skills, and encourages respect for the contributions of others.

We strive to promote awareness and a concern among our students, so that they become actively involved in making their community and the world a better place. Our hope for our students is that they discover the joy of lifelong learning.
Lower School Faculty & Staff, 2017-2018

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Academic Program Overview

At the Sandy Spring Friends Lower School the social and emotional development of our children is as important as the academic development. We are committed to creating a community where each child feels a sense of belonging and significance within the class. We strive to foster responsive interactions through sharing, listening, inclusion, and participation. Opportunities are provided for students to lead, as well as to follow others. They learn to appreciate differences among one another, stressing consideration for others through mutual respect. We teach the skills needed to be a responsive member of a classroom and a school community. We also strive to teach our children to be aware of the needs of people beyond our immediate community by participating in a variety of community service projects.

Community and Spiritual Life

The Lower School focuses on spiritual growth as part of the development of the whole person. Elements of the curriculum are woven into all daily learning experiences. Based on the essential Quaker belief that there is “That of God” in each person, every area of learning emphasizes a respect for others and encourages an appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. We stress the Quaker values of service, simplicity, equality, integrity, community, stewardship of the environment, and the peaceful resolution of conflict as part of our continual search for truth. We want our students to develop a deep appreciation of themselves and others and to discover the joy that spiritual awareness can bring to their lives.

Meeting for Worship

Meeting for Worship (MFW) is an integral part of the culture of Quaker schools. Meeting is a time for the community to gather and sit together in silence, listening for the still small voice within. Each month, Lower School classes participate in activities and discussions that introduce and reinforce the Quaker Testimonies, often referred to with the acronym, “SPICES”: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. In addition to the SPICES, the themes of “That of God in Everyone,” Service, Perseverance, and Courage are also explored.

Students learn to appreciate the role of silent worship and reflection through in-class practice of settling into silence. Teachers guide the students to think about the month's queries and reflect on thoughts that are shared during Meeting for Worship. Students also learn the importance of leaving space for more silence after someone shares their thoughts during Meeting for Worship. Lower School students gather for Meeting for Worship Tuesday afternoons in the Meeting House. We sit in silence for approximately 25 minutes. The Meeting ends when the silence is broken and we shake hands. We leave the Meeting House while singing a parting song.
Morning Meeting

Morning Meeting is a classroom gathering that serves as a transition from home to school, and helps children to feel welcome and acknowledged. It provides a meaningful context for teaching and practicing social and academic skills. The five components of our Morning Meeting are observing a moment of silence, greeting one another, reading or discussing a Morning Message, doing a group activity, and sharing. These components encourage cooperation, foster inclusion, and improve communication. Children thereby develop the ability to become responsive members of both the classroom and school community.

Community Service

Throughout the school, students learn to serve their community in a variety of ways. They perform simple jobs in the classroom and on the campus grounds. Students serve the local and world communities with outreach service projects. Service projects are approached through developing connections between the students and the recipients of their efforts. Deeper understanding of the need for and impact of community service is reached through classroom discussion, related reading, and collaborative activities.

The objectives of community service are:
• To experience the satisfaction and fulfillment that comes from serving others and making a difference in the community.
• To develop a sense of responsibility as a member of the school community as well as the world community.
Outdoor Education

One of the natural outgrowths of being part of a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school located on a 140-acre campus is participation in developmentally-appropriate outdoor education activities. For younger students, this program takes the form of exploration of our woods, pond, stream and Community Farm, as well as the study of the plants and animals that share this natural setting with us.

Peace Education

Through peace education, we help students build constructive, honest relationships by voicing thoughts clearly and respectfully, listening to others openly and attentively, and resolving conflicts peacefully. Conflict resolution skills are taught through modeling and role-playing. We support the children as they attempt to see the points of view of others during negotiations with their peers. We encourage students to cooperate and show respect and kindness for others, while still honoring their own needs. The children practice using their words to express their feelings and needs to others, to aid in conflict resolution and interactions with peers.

- As students move throughout the Lower School, they learn to:
  - Recognize and appreciate the good (“That of God”) in others.
  - Practice kindness and respect for every individual and living thing.
  - Take responsibility for personal actions.
  - Discuss different feelings and reactions to those feelings.
  - Listen to and find ways to affirm self and others’.
  - Develop communication and problem solving strategies.
  - Demonstrate a sense of fair play in different situations.
  - Use “I messages” in the resolution of conflicts.
Assessment and Reflection

“Assessment” and “reflection” play important roles in our classrooms in authentic ways that go far beyond the administration of tests. Several times a year, Lower School teachers spend time with each student to focus on assessment of specific skills. In addition, portfolios can be used to keep track of the development and growth of our students on a more regular basis. Three-dimensional projects, group projects and hands-on activities are captured through photos and videos. The students’ words and explanations of their work are included at every opportunity. Their growth and development can be tracked through the progression of their work.
Language Arts
Language Arts Overview

The language arts curriculum consists of Reading, Handwriting, Vocabulary and Oral Language. Pre-primary students practice and develop a strong foundation of skills and, in so doing gain positive feelings towards the components of language and literature. Multi-sensory techniques are employed in the classroom.

Reading

PK3: Students are exposed to literature through stories, poems, and rhymes. Listening to stories builds early comprehension skills as students learn to identify details about characters, plot, setting, and moral. Students are guided to use illustrations as clues for prediction. The classroom library provides a variety of genres to encourage independent exploration.

PK4: Students explore a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction books, rhymes, and poetry. Children enjoy repeating familiar rhymes and gain ownership of them through memorization and choral recitation. Class discussions build early comprehension skills as students learn to listen for details about story components. Students develop inferring skills through utilizing picture clues, wondering and making predictions. The classroom library provides a wide range of books to encourage exploration and an appreciation of literature.

Kindergarten: In Kindergarten, students build phonemic awareness and develop reading skills through an eclectic approach that reinforces the sound/letter relationship, and combines phonics and whole language in a literature rich environment. The Reading Horizons curriculum is a systematic, research-based methodology that teaches proven reading strategies. Students use multi-sensory techniques to build a strong foundation of skills in handwriting, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, listening, and thinking. Students read in small skill-based groups, partnered with a classmate, and individually with a teacher. Beginning books contain repetitive text, limited vocabulary, and picture clues to support developing decoding skills. Phonics books focus on particular vowel sounds and contain limited, repetitive vocabulary. Comprehension is built at all reading levels, as children respond to questions about story content and participate in literacy activities.
Oral Language

Listening and speaking are important life skills; therefore, these skills are developed and reinforced throughout the day. Large and small group activities and one-on-one communications provide opportunities for language development. Students practice taking turns and listening attentively and respectfully to their classmates’ ideas in large and small group discussions. Students learn to raise their hands and hold their thoughts while listening to what friends and teachers share.

Students begin to distinguish the difference between questions and comments while showing an interest and appreciation for what is being shared. As they are introduced to new concepts through class discussions, students are encouraged to draw on their background knowledge and make connections to the newly-learned information.

**PK3:** Students build listening skills during Morning Meeting and throughout the day. Understanding both verbal and non-verbal spoken and unspoken messages boosts overall communication skills. PK3 students continuously develop their language skills as they practice organizing their thoughts into verbal messages and express those messages with increasing clarity.

**PK4:** Listening to books read aloud, as well as oral stories shared by students and teachers daily, promotes the development of listening skills. Students listen for directions throughout the day to successfully complete projects, activities, and scheduled transitions. Sharing time, including Family Share, provides opportunities to practice being a good, respectful listener. Speaking skills are further developed during meeting times where participation is encouraged from all students.

**Kindergarten:** Listening and speaking skills are reinforced throughout the day in group activities and in one-on-one interactions. During Morning Meeting, the children practice taking turns and listening when others are speaking. Students learn to hold their thoughts while listening to what others share. Students ask questions for clarification and to further their understanding. Speaking skills are developed while students work to clearly state their thoughts and ideas in a logical and meaningful progression. During sharing time and Roots presentations, students learn to balance an eagerness to speak and share their own thoughts and opinions with a growing respect for classmates’ different perspectives and points of view.
Vocabulary

Vocabulary development happens throughout the day, both formally and informally. Words and concepts are introduced organically through thematic units and daily experience. Teachers are guided to select words for instruction, develop student-friendly explanations of new words, create meaningful learning activities, and get students involved in thinking about, using, and noticing new words both within and outside the classroom. The goal of our program is to enlarge the students’ vocabulary, thus promoting word knowledge and reading comprehension.
Writing

Writing is used as a communication tool in all curricular areas. Pre-primary students build pre-writing skills through stories and imaginative play. Sharing ideas and experiences allows students to create a personal narrative. Dictation to a teacher scribe supports students’ written expression as pre-academic skills develop.

PK3: Students begin to gain an understanding of writing through listening to stories. Group writing encourages brainstorming and idea extension while incorporating vocabulary, rhyme and humor. Imagination and creativity provide inspiration for original story composition, as well as the repetition of known stories. Individual students have opportunities to dictate stories to a teacher scribe and to illustrate story creations.

PK4: Storytelling and enactment serve as powerful tools to build early writing skills. Students are encouraged to become storytellers as they take what they know about stories and create narratives on their own. Stories are dictated to a teacher scribe. This transcription process provides students with an appreciation for the printed word and an awareness that words hold meaning. Completed stories are then illustrated and shared aloud with the class, with the option of choosing from a variety of storytelling props.

Kindergarten: Students are encouraged to write on a daily basis. The classroom writing center offers a variety of materials for independent and teacher supported work. The children write notes to friends, label clock structures, and write messages based on imaginative play. Students independently write narrative stories with a specific skill focus during Writing Workshop classes. Students are encouraged to label or write as much as they are able. In addition, children may be asked to dictate a response to a story, query, or idea. Early attempts to write are supported by teachers. While conventional spellings for commonly used words are offered, the children are praised for their attempts to spell words independently using inventive spelling.

Handwriting

At Sandy Spring Friends Lower School, students are instructed in handwriting using the Zaner-Bloser’s Handwriting curriculum.

PK3: Students develop fine motor skills through activities with playdough, coloring and cutting, clay, and age-appropriate manipulatives. The pincer grasp is introduced in preparation for the PK4 Zaner-Bloser Handwriting curriculum.
PK4: Students are introduced to handwriting using the *Zaner-Bloser: On the Road to Writing and Reading* curriculum. The program focuses on the development of fundamental prewriting skills using songs, stories, movement and manipulatives to create activities that complement the Pre-Kindergarten curriculum. Students gain a sense of spatial awareness and directionality as they learn letter and number recognition and formation.

Kindergarten: Students are instructed in handwriting using the *Zaner-Bloser Handwriting* curriculum. The program focuses on the development of basic strokes and letters in manuscript, practicing correct letter and number formation with a focus on legibility and spacing. Kinesthetic activities, such as writing in sand and/or shaving cream, writing in the air, and tracing letters and numbers on one another’s backs, reinforce letter formation skills. The directionality skills needed for successful reading and writing are emphasized through the importance of top to bottom and left to right. As the children begin to write with pencils, the appropriate pencil grip is demonstrated for ease of writing. Children are introduced to the foundational literacy skills necessary for writing and reading development.
Mathematics
Mathematics Overview

Mathematics at the pre-primary level is integrated throughout the curriculum and daily routines. Students become competent in basic math skills and to view math as fun, exciting, and relevant to their lives.

PK3: Students develop early math skills through manipulation, play and experimentation. Math experiences are integrated throughout the day in routines like the calendar, weather and attendance. Many math experiences include free play with manipulatives to strengthen number sense and one-to-one correspondence. The open-ended nature of our math program encourages the development of mathematical concepts. Math skills, such as patterning, number sense recognition, counting, graphing, sequencing, tallying, and measurement are introduced in a play-based atmosphere.

PK4: In the PK4 classroom, math instruction includes manipulation, play and experimentation. Math experiences are integrated throughout the day, in daily routines such as the calendar and weather graph. Free play with math manipulatives offers open-ended experiences while laying the groundwork for symbolic understanding. Math skills such as patterning, number recognition, counting, graphing, sequencing, tallying, and measurement are introduced in a play-based atmosphere. More structured activities are conducted in flexible learning groups and implemented specifically based on the ability to extend an activity to the developmental levels of each student.

Kindergarten: Students develop thinking and reasoning skills in a natural developmental progression through a manipulative-based approach that encourages cooperative learning, experimentation, and real life exploration. Math activities are integrated throughout the day beginning with Morning Meeting. Children build number sense and beginning graphing skills daily as they complete the calendar, 100's chart, weather graph and number line. Students analyze the data from the “Question of the Day” and discuss their findings. Students practice counting, writing corresponding numerals, composing simple math equations and using comparative language such as “more than”, “less than” and “the same”. In flexible learning groups, materials are introduced and specific skills are taught. Importance is placed on the language of math as students share their work and compare outcomes.
Science
Science Overview

Children are inherently curious and full of wonder about their world. They are constantly observing and exploring their environment. Our science program supports this innate curiosity and emphasizes hands-on, inquiry based activities that allow students to explore the world around them. Students use their senses as they observe, explore, identify, and compare and contrast. The science curriculum uses the school grounds as a natural extension of the classroom. Pre-primary students collaborate to maintain two gardens for the pre-primary classrooms. Students help to plant, maintain, harvest, and enjoy vegetables from their raised garden beds throughout the year.

PK3: The science curriculum welcomes the emergent and diverse interests of three year old children. An open-ended approach responds to their innate curiosity. With teacher guidance, students learn to formulate “what”, “why” and “how” questions to gather information. They learn to predict by wondering what “would”, “could” or “might” happen next. Children are encouraged and supported to explore, collaborate and discuss their discoveries.

PK4: The science curriculum intentionally leaves room for the emergent interests of the children. An open-ended approach responds to the innate curiosity, fascination, and wonder which young children hold about the world around them. In keeping with our Quaker values regarding stewardship for the earth, students learn to reduce food waste, create rich reusable soil, and develop an understanding about the cycle of food as they give back to the earth. Additional topics of study may include ecology, health, nutrition and safety, physical science, and earth sciences such as air, water and weather.

Kindergarten: In Kindergarten, science includes a variety of activities, tools, and discovery stations to support each thematic unit of study and emergent curriculum. Throughout the year students study insects, earth science such as air, water and weather, physical science, and health and safety. The emergent curriculum is built upon the interests and questions of students. Students are encouraged to explore the science center individually or with classmates. Explorations often lead to great discoveries that they are shared with others. Through small group science activities the children learn to listen to classmates’ observations and hypotheses and work together toward finding answers to their many questions. Students also participate in year-long composting and gardening science projects. Leftovers from snacks are composted and transported to the cafeteria compost bin. The compost is utilized in the pre-primary garden in which the students plant vegetables. Students help maintain and water the gardens throughout the growing seasons. Special stewardship projects include opportunities to work with Middle and Upper School students, as well as the SSFS Community Farmer.
Social Studies
Social Studies Overview

The pre-primary social studies curriculum focuses on the SSFS school community. Many opportunities are provided to gather with other Lower School students throughout the school year. Lower School assemblies and weekly Meetings for Worship build awareness that we are one community. Relationships are fostered with the Middle and Upper School students. This includes the Pre-primary/Senior Buddy program. Students become familiar with one another, thus promoting a sense of community within the School as a whole.

PK3: For many children, the PK3 program at SSFS may be their first school experience. Three year olds are just beginning to show an interest in expanding their focus from self to others. Stories open the door to learning about people and places, both near and far away. Children become more aware of and curious about others and the world around them. The social studies curriculum focuses on community, beginning with our own. The specific characteristics that make and define each of us, including individual likes, interests, abilities, physical appearances, and family cultures, are celebrated. Time is devoted to developing a sense of awareness and an appreciation for individual differences through a variety of activities.

PK4: In PK4, children begin to show a heightened interest in the stories and lives of others. They become more aware of and curious about others and the world around them. A major part of the social studies curriculum is focused on community, beginning with our own. Students learn to compare and celebrate the specific characteristics that make and define each of us, including individual interests and abilities, physical appearances, and family cultures. A sense of awareness and an appreciation for these individual differences is developed through a variety of activities.

Kindergarten: Students have the opportunity to expand their awareness of the world beyond their own through the integration of the social studies curriculum into daily classroom activities and thematic units. Learning is supported and enhanced by field trips, guest speakers from the local community, and our own classroom community of children and families. Students learn about their classmates’ families, heritage, and traditions with our “ROOTS” family sharing and “Our Friend” activities. Children learn about cultural and religious holidays celebrated by their classmates and develop an awareness of the diversity in the world. Early map skills are introduced by locating places of family origin on a world map. Map skills are reinforced as the children create their own representations of places on the Sandy Spring Friends School campus. During a study of the postal system, students learn about community helpers and the process of mail delivery and create a “Wee Mail” post office in which they collect and deliver mail across campus. Kindergarten students are partnered with third grade Reading Buddies; and they attend Meeting for Worship and Assembly with the entire Lower School. Senior Buddies partner with Kindergarteners on Community Day and escort them to All School Assemblies.
Art
Art Overview

The goal of the pre-primary art program is to foster a sense of pride, pleasure, and accomplishment in their artistic ability while broadening their artistic knowledge base. The process of experimentation, creative thinking and problem solving is the primary focus, rather than just the end product.

**PK3:** Art is integrated into the day as an important modality of learning. The PK3 classroom provides opportunities for free exploration with a variety of media. Students develop small motor muscle control through the manipulation of materials such as play dough, modeling clay, large beads, sand, and yarn. In addition, children have daily opportunities to choose drawing, painting, cutting and pasting, as well as other craft activities.

**PK4:** Art projects and activities are integrated into classroom instruction in all subject areas. Students continue to develop small motor muscle control, manipulate through the manipulation of a wide variety of materials. Opportunities for drawing, painting, cutting, and pasting are offered throughout the day. Monthly self-portraits are drawn to provide children with the opportunity to see their growth as artists while fostering their self-concept.

**Kindergarten:** Daily art projects in the classroom are viewed as opportunities for students to express themselves, to use their imaginations, and to extend their learning. Art activities enhance classroom themes and offer unstructured exploration of a wide variety of media. Students have daily opportunities to draw, paint, sculpt, create collages, cut and paste. Students are encouraged to use both familiar materials, such as markers and crayons, and new ones such as craypas and wet chalk. Both two- and three-dimensional projects are undertaken to give students aesthetic and sensory experiences. The focus during any art project is on the process used by the child, rather than the finished product. Students are encouraged to be creative in representing their thoughts and ideas and to take risks, regarding “mistakes” as learning experiences. As a whole class, time is taken to reflect on the process. Students share their ideas and learn to give feedback to one another. The Kindergarten class visits the Art Barn weekly to become acquainted with the creative space, to talk about art and its role in our world, and to further explore paint, color blending, texture, line, patterns, printing, collage and clay.
Music
Music

Music Overview

The primary goal of the Lower School music program is to present music to students in ways that foster a life-long enjoyment and appreciation of music. The program also endeavors to provide experiences that develop and continually increase musical skills while nurturing musical imagination and creativity. Students at all grade levels explore and expand their musical abilities through singing, moving, playing instruments, listening to selected musical works, and creating original music and interpretive movements.

Our students enjoy playing a variety of ethnic instruments, attending multicultural assemblies, and learning about celebrations and traditions from around the world. When young children experience a wide variety of music through lyrics, rhythm, and dance, diversity is celebrated. Drama and improvisation are integral parts of the Lower School music program as we blend music with storytelling and playacting. Classroom music techniques and activities are drawn from a variety of music methodologies including Kodaly, Orff, and Dalcroze. By the time children complete our Lower School Music program, they have learned to read the treble clef, count measures, play chords with hand chimes, play melodic patterns on xylophones, and play the soprano recorder.

PK3: Music is incorporated into daily classroom routines and activities. Storytelling and playacting blend music with drama and improvisation. Experimentation with sounds, pitch, tempo (fast/slow) and dynamics (loud/soft) are introduced as a foundation to musical concepts taught in PK4 through grade 5. Chants, rhymes and songs are combined with movement to establish a sense of pulse and rhythm. Call and response songs, and simple melodies reinforce emerging language skills, as well as sound experimentation. Students learn to listen for sound and silence, rhythmic patterns and repetitions. Simple rhymes and songs allow children to feel and express rhythms with movement.

PK4: Students are introduced to many musical concepts through songs and chants. Students listen for sound and silence, key words and directions in songs, and same/different melody and rhythm patterns. Students say and sing simple rhymes and songs to practice word enunciation; feel rhythmic pulses, and experiment with the speaking, singing, whisper and loud voices. They use stepping, walking, hopping, galloping, clapping to move to the beat; show fast/slow tempos; indicate up/down melodic movement; and interpret emotions expressed in music. Students play a variety of instruments to experiment with sounds, develop body coordination and control, and explore their own originality.

Kindergarten: In Kindergarten, students learn about music by comparing similarities and differences in music. Students explore musical contrasts such as fast/slow, loud/soft, high/low, and ensemble/solo performances. They compare sounds and investigate the sound production methods of a variety of objects and instruments. Students develop a varied repertoire of folk, traditional, just-for-fun songs, and song games. Echo singing helps students closely follow the melodic contour of songs, recognize and perform same/different melodic phrases, and gain confidence singing with the group and independently. They step, walk, skip, clap, and snap to internalize the steady pulse or stressed beats in music of varied tempos and to show the rhythmic accents of word syllable patterns. Students use their creativity to improvise instrumental accompaniment, vocal sounds, and body movements to interpret characters, emotions, or images in music.
Spanish Overview

In Lower School, Spanish study begins at PK4 and focuses on active listening, comprehension, and communication. Students are introduced to the language as they were introduced to their mother tongue. As they progress through the grades, students gradually internalize frequently-used vocabulary and basic grammar while they learn to speak. By the fourth and fifth grades, students become familiar with phonetic spelling and begin to communicate ideas in writing. The target language becomes comprehensible to students through multisensory activities such as songs, chants, rhythmic repetition of patterns, Total Physical Response activities (TPR), and Storytelling (TPRS). Visual cues such as gestures, pictures and props are used to support comprehension. The consistent repetition inherent in chanting and singing at an early age leads to the student's acquisition of good pronunciation. Students are exposed to the culture of Spanish-speaking countries through observation of non-verbal language, traditional games, songs, and poems.

PK4: Students in Pre-Kindergarten listen to commands in the target language and respond to commands with gestures and actions. Students get accustomed to the correct pronunciation through singing and chanting. Students learn how to greet and count in Spanish, and acquire basic vocabulary regarding themes such as colors and shapes, pets and domestic animals, basic means of transportation and some parts of the body.

Kindergarten: Students in Kindergarten listen to daily-used commands in the target language and respond to these commands with gestures and actions. They continue to develop their pronunciation skills by singing and chanting more complex structures. Students practice listening to simple questions about familiar songs, and answering with words and sentences. Students learn new expressions about greetings and courtesy, count to 25, and expand their vocabulary about animals, transportation and parts of the body.
Physical Education
Physical Education Overview

The goals of the Lower School physical education program derive from the School’s mission to develop “the trained mind, the skilled hand and the healthy body.” The School encourages enjoyment of physical pursuits throughout life by helping students to be successful and comfortable in a variety of active games, dance, and exercise. Quaker values are stressed in play to build sportsmanship and teamwork. Our learning approach is developmental – accepting and challenging individual levels of fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding of strategy. Physical education classes begin at PK3.

Based on the National Association for Sports and Physical Education Standards, five skill areas – locomotor movement, space awareness, manipulative skills, stabilizing skills, and rhythm and dance skills – are developed through age-appropriate activities. As an enhancement to exploring these skills in a non-competitive atmosphere, an adventure-based component is incorporated. Participating in “challenge by choice” initiatives and non-traditional activities, students are engaged in the exploration of self and group goals while enhancing their level of physical fitness, decision making, and expanding personal comfort levels.

Lessons are designed to optimize the cognitive and physical abilities of children. Students participate in a series of activities during every PE class. Students begin with a loco motor/space awareness activity, then move to a manipulative activity (such as throwing), continue with a non-manipulative activity (such as balancing, stretching or jumping), and conclude with a rhythm activity. Skill themes follow a gradual progression and are reviewed throughout the year after they have been introduced. The physical education curriculum includes an ongoing focus on developing appropriate social skills such as cooperating, taking turns, and sharing.

Wellness Overview

The Lower School Wellness curriculum consists of three components: physical health, preventative health and social/emotional health. Students learn the benefits of taking care of their body. Lessons on fitness, injury prevention, and nutrition are taught in Physical Education to help students learn to identify healthy choices and activities. Preventative health education and lessons that emphasize the importance of germ prevention, sun safety, and hydration are taught at relevant times during the year. The Life Skills curriculum focuses on the social and emotional health of students.
Play Time
Value of Play

Play is an integral part of each school day. Students are offered free play opportunities, both indoors and outdoors. Our natural playground offers many opportunities for unstructured play. Students develop motor skills while exercising and build social skills while playing and exploring with friends.

Indoor free play opportunities are available throughout the school day. Play is the child’s emotional, physical, cognitive, and social work. Free play acts as a medium for expressing thoughts and feelings. It provides a risk free environment which enables children to increase well-being and self-esteem. Play enhances both fine and gross motor development, allows children to test the limitations of their bodies, and improves self-assurance in physical abilities. Cognitively, play allows for the development of language and for creative thinking that promotes problem-solving. Over the course of the year, pre-primary students are encouraged to become more interactive and collaborative with classmates.
Life Skills

The *Connected and Respected: Lessons from the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program* was developed to nourish a respectful and caring classroom community by way of five key themes and through developing essential emotional and social learning competencies.

Five Key Themes of the *Connected and Respected* curriculum:

- Making Connections
- Emotional Literacy
- Caring and Effective Communication
- Cultural Competence and Social Responsibility
- Conflict Management and Decision Making

Emotional and Social Learning (ESL) Competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Self-Management
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship Skills

The curriculum is structured in a workshop format that includes the following components:

- **Gathering**: A time for a community-building activity or sharing that focuses students on the purpose of the day’s lesson.
- **Agenda Check**: A review of the plan and expectations for the lesson. The agenda is usually presented in a visual format (on chart paper on the board).
- **Main Activities**: The core of the lesson which involves structured group activities based on the lesson’s subject.
- **Summary**: A recap and review of the lesson to check for understanding and reinforce internalization of the lesson’s message. Discussion questions, art, writing and small-group sharing or reporting are some of the recap exercises that can be incorporated into the Summary.
- **Closing**: A song, quote or exercise to provide closure to the lesson.
- **Extension and Infusion**: Reinforcement activities that expand the lesson. Extensions can include additional sharing, art and writing, games and roleplays, as well as opportunities to practice and consider ways to integrate skill practice throughout the school day.
- **Connecting to Literature**: Age and level-appropriate books and guided questions that connect the lesson theme and targeted skills.
Technology Integration Overview

We believe that technology skills are best learned through integration into the context of class-related projects. Technology is integrated by teachers in project-based learning assignments across the curriculum. A variety of teacher-selected iPad apps and online resources are used to reinforce and extend learning. iPads can be used for creative expression and to document what students have learned.

Library Overview

The library program has the dual goals of fostering a love of books and teaching information skills. The program is planned to blend with the Lower School curricula, supporting both academic and spiritual themes. During the early grades, library classes emphasize the pleasure derived from books. Pre-primary students learn to enjoy rhyming texts, including nursery rhymes, and to participate appropriately during stories, seizing opportunities to joyfully explore narrative through all their senses. Students begin to recognize authors and illustrators and act out stories. They extend their listening skills through various participatory activities such as call and response, anticipation, gesture, predictions, rhyming, and singing. Librarians and teachers share literature in a variety of ways through the use of flannel boards, creative dramatics, storytelling, music, and poetry. They also demonstrate appropriate use of library materials. Students regularly borrow books and learn to be responsible for their safe return.

As the students begin to seek more materials and information of interest to them, they learn to use and understand the organization of the classification system and the automated library catalog. When well-grounded in our system, students apply the same skills to search other library reference tools (in both electronic and print formats) and the Internet. The library program supports classroom research with practical instruction in how to find, collect, and evaluate information. Students explore the concept of respect for other people’s work and intellectual property as the basis for citation and bibliography creation. By the end of the Lower School years, students are expected to be adept at the essential skills of asking good questions and finding answers.