

**DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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**GRADE 1**  
**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**  
**2008-2009**

- **LANGUAGE ARTS**
- **MATHEMATICS**
- **SOCIAL STUDIES**
- **SCIENCE and HEALTH**
- **ART**
- **LEARNING RESOURCES and**
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
- **MUSIC**
- **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

## Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

September 2008

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Open House! This evening, you will have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher and learn about the challenging and engaging educational activities planned for this year. This Curriculum Overview has been prepared to provide you with general information about what will be taught during this important year in your child's education. Summaries of each subject area are included, and they will be supplemented by information from the classroom teacher.

In the Darien Public Schools, curriculum content and teaching methodology are continually reviewed. Each year, the Darien Board of Education establishes goals for instruction, as well as for other aspects of the school system. In the 2008-2009 Board of Education Goals, there are two that refer to curriculum (what and how we teach) and assessment (measurement of student learning). Goal # 1 states: "All students will have appropriate access to challenging and enriching instructional programming." Goal # 2 states: "All students will maximize their learning as measured by selected assessments."

With these goals providing over-arching direction, a systematic review of curriculum is in place. Over the past few years, revisions of language arts, health, and science have been completed. The proposed schedule for 2008-2009 elementary level curricula includes development of detailed units of study for the revised social studies curriculum and a review of mathematics to improve assessment and differentiation of instruction. All current curricula guides are posted on the district website: [www.darienps.org](http://www.darienps.org) under the heading of "Curriculum." You are encouraged to access this information regularly.

Sincerely,

*Judith Pandolfo*

Judith M. Pandolfo, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## LANGUAGE ARTS

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In accordance with students' developmental needs, Darien elementary staff members have organized a sequential language arts program that systematically develops reading, writing, and language competence in grades K through 5. This program is based on standards derived from the Connecticut Language Arts Framework, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the International Reading Association.

### **There are five goals of the K-5 Language Arts program. Students will:**

- develop the skills to read, write, listen, and view texts to construct meaning, gain knowledge, solve problems and respond thoughtfully to a variety of texts;
- write and speak English proficiently to communicate effectively;
- choose and apply strategies that enhance the fluent and proficient use of language arts;
- understand and appreciate texts from many literacy periods and cultures;
- develop a positive view of themselves as listeners, speakers, readers and writers;
- choose to listen, speak, read, and write for lifelong learning, work and enjoyment.

### **The teaching of language arts is a careful balance of a number of essential components. Among these are:**

- a stimulating classroom environment;
- the sharing of excellent literature read aloud to students across the curriculum;
- opportunities for shared reading, where students and teachers are all looking at a text together (e.g., big books, class sets of the same text, or text viewed on an overhead screen or PowerPoint);
- teacher modeling and explicit reading and writing strategy instruction ;
- direct instruction in the study of words (phonics, spelling, vocabulary);
- large blocks of time for students to engage in independent reading and writing to practice newly developing skills and strategies;
- opportunities to talk with teachers and students about what has been read or written;
- opportunities to write for many different purposes, in a variety of genres, and receive feedback;
- on-going assessment, both formal and informal, that informs individual, small group, and whole class instruction.

## **GRADE 1**

Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Parents of first graders will observe different stages and rates of learning as children move from emergent to accomplished readers and writers. In first grade, children still need us to read to them daily and talk about books. They need to see parents and teachers regularly model reading and writing skills and behaviors.

First graders begin using writing to communicate what they are thinking and feeling. Encourage your child to write at home by providing paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and computers. Allow your child to write their spelling approximations. Talk to your child about the content of his or her writing, and ask questions to help them clarify and elaborate upon their ideas.

### **Reading Benchmarks (by the end of first grade):**

#### Reading Readiness Skills:

- Identify letters and their sounds
- Recognize sight words
- Recall, predict, and draw conclusions about text that is read aloud

#### Word Analysis Skills:

Teachers in grades K-2 are using the Fountas & Pinnell system for phonics and word study to provide more resources to accommodate the strengths and needs of individual students and their word study skills.

- Identify consonant sounds
- Recognize word endings, compound words and contractions

#### Vocabulary Skills:

- Build sight vocabulary
- Use phonics and meaning clues to recognize words in text
- Begin to identify synonyms, antonyms and words with multiple meanings

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## LANGUAGE ARTS – Reading Benchmarks (continued)

### Comprehension Skills:

- Identify main ideas and details in stories (with support from teachers)
- Make predictions about upcoming events in stories
- Retell stories in proper sequence
- Recognize the difference between fiction and non-fiction

### Oral Reading Skills:

- Begin to use appropriate voice inflection and phrasing when reading

### Independent Reading Skills:

- Self-select reading material
- Read quietly for longer periods of time

### Writing Benchmarks (by the end of first grade):

- Understand and use the steps in the writing process with increasing independence: pre-write, draft, revise, edit, publish, analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of written work
- Begin to write narratives with beginning, middle and end
- Write personal reactions to stories read aloud or independently
- Use own words to summarize facts and give information about a known topic
- Write sentences with appropriate verb tense
- Identify punctuation and rules of capitalization: period, question mark, exclamation mark, upper-case letters at sentence beginnings, I and proper names
- Spell with increasing accuracy
- Print legibly

### Listening and Speaking Benchmarks (by the end of first grade):

- Practice elements of good speaking and listening learned in kindergarten
- Begin to regulate and adjust voice for different purposes (e.g., soft voices for quiet discussions, strong voice for oral presentation to groups)

## **MATHEMATICS**

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The Darien K-5 Mathematics Curriculum Guide is based on the Connecticut K-12 Content Standards and standards established by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. It articulates specific learning objectives for each grade. These objectives are detailed in the scope and sequence of skills that is the foundation for instruction in math. The acquisition of these skills should be seen as a spiral staircase rather than a ladder; students make upward progress, but at the same time return again and again to the basics for review, reinforcement and further practice. Each grade's skills include, to some degree, those of previous grades. Important at all levels is the development of three important attitudes toward math: an understanding of the language of mathematics, enjoyment in the challenges of problem solving and confidence in mathematical reasoning.

The teaching of math is a complex process carried out through many different kinds of methods and strategies. Teachers introduce concepts and skills, provide opportunities for practice through whole group, small group and individualized instruction, monitor students' learning and adjust instruction accordingly. Teachers assess students' learning frequently and use the results of assessments to inform their instructional planning.

The standards, concepts and scope and sequence of skills are grouped into five strands of study. Each year, all students in grades K - 5 will study all of the five areas to ensure their full understanding of concepts in the K-5 Mathematics Curriculum Guide. The strands and components are listed as follows:

### **1. Number Sense and Operations**

- Understanding of numbers
- Ways of representing numbers
- Relationships among numbers and number systems
- Meaning of operations and how they relate to one another
- Ability to compute fluently and to make reasonable estimates

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## MATHEMATICS – (continued)

### 2. Algebra and Functions

- Representation - the display of mathematical relationships in diagrams, drawings, graphs, symbols and tables
- Proportional reasoning - the ability to determine how objects vary in relation to one another
- Variable - the understanding of unknowns and creating methods for figuring their values
- Balance - the concept of equality among variable expressions
- Function - the relationship in which sets are linked by a rule
- Inductive and deductive reasoning – identifying patterns and extending them; seeing a pattern emerging from other given information
- Recognizing, analyzing, describing, extending and creating patterns
- Using patterns to describe mathematical and other real-world phenomena
- Sorting, classifying and ordering objects by size, number and other properties
- Analyzing how repeating and growing patterns are generated

### 3. Measurement

- Making and using measurement in customary and units to approximate, measure and compute length, area, volume, mass, temperature, angle and time

### 4. Geometry

- Analyzing and using spatial relationships and basic concepts of geometry to construct, draw, describe and compare geometric models and their transformations
- Using geometric relationships and patterns to solve problems

### 5. Data Analysis and Probability

- Using basic concepts of probability and statistics to collect, organize, display and analyze data, simulate events and test hypotheses

In the revised curriculum guide, all five strands of skills have been organized into a taxonomy identical to that listed above in the overview. Under each level of understanding, the mathematics strands and specific objectives for each grade are listed.

Mathematics skills are taught through a variety of resources. The primary source for grades Pre K-5 is the Growing with Mathematics program, which was adopted by the Darien Board of Education in May 2002 for use in all five of Darien's elementary schools. The program is organized around a series of sequentially presented math topics and regular assessments of student progress are conducted so that teachers may respond most effectively to students' instructional needs. Growing with Mathematics was selected because it successfully expresses all of the skills included in our scope and sequence, consistently provides students with opportunities for review, reinforcement and practice, incorporates high-quality literature in an integrated approach to math and offers a variety of enriching materials. Important at all levels is the development of three important attitudes toward math: an understanding of the language of mathematics, enjoyment in the challenges of problem solving and confidence in mathematical reasoning.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

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Through the grade one social studies program, students have the opportunity to view themselves as they relate to their family, community and friendships. They gain an understanding of family roles, rules, and responsibilities. Students learn what it means to be a responsible, respectful member of a classroom community and a citizen in the local community. They develop strategies for solving problems and resolving conflicts in social situations. Students expand their awareness of diversity through a study of major cultural holidays and traditions throughout the year. Finally, first graders are introduced to map and globe skills. They learn to recognize features of the globe including continents and oceans. They also develop the ability to read and recognize basic directions/symbols and to navigate simple maps. The Darien Social Studies curriculum for first grade aligns with the Connecticut State standards for social studies in the four key areas of history, civics and government, geography, and economics.

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## SCIENCE and HEALTH

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### Science

The Darien Public Schools K-5 Science Curriculum is designed to guide students to develop age-appropriate scientific knowledge and skills through the investigation of authentic problems in real-world settings. Students will take an active role in creating and testing hypotheses through scientific exploration using appropriate technology. This curriculum is student-centered, inquiry-based, and employs hands-on experimentation at all grade levels.

There are eleven units of study that are the foundation for the Darien K-5 Science Curriculum.

- I. Inquiry
- II. Properties of Matter
- III. Energy Transfer and Transformation
- IV. Forces and Motion
- V. Matter and Energy in Ecosystems
- VI. Structure and Function
- VII. Heredity and Evolution
- VIII. The Changing Earth
- IX. Energy in the Earth's Systems
- X. Earth in the Solar System
- XI. Science and Technology

### Grade 1 Science

#### **I. Forces and Motion**

The sun appears to move across the sky in the same way every day, but its path changes gradually over the seasons.

#### **II. Structure and Function**

Living things have different structures and behaviors that allow them to meet their basic needs.

#### **III. Structure and Function**

Organisms change in form and behavior as part of their life cycles.

#### **IV. Science and Technology in Society**

The properties of materials and organisms can be described more accurately through the use of standard measuring units.

### Health

New health curriculum for grades K-12 was approved by the Board of Education this past April after extensive study and a successful pilot program. The program, entitled **Health Promotion Waves**, fits extremely well with health at each grade level. The curriculum follows the State of Connecticut and national guidelines and the program focuses on children making age appropriate choices that affect their health and well-being.

The grade one Health Education program teaches students about personal hygiene, simple nutrition, safety, dangers of substance abuse, social and emotional health, the senses and major body organs.

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## **ART**

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The first grade art curriculum builds upon the skills and understanding of concepts begun in kindergarten. The continuing development of physical dexterity along with social, emotional and intellectual growth provides readiness for further perceptual and creative growth. In grade one, students work with a variety of two- and three-dimensional media to inspire their creative growth, and they continue the process of understanding art by viewing it and talking about it.

### **Goals:**

#### Learning Through Perception

Students continue to observe their environment. Their work reflects a growing awareness of people (the figure), places (the beginning of landscape), and things (the beginning of still life) as they use new perceptions coupled with stored concepts and their imagination to tell visual stories.

#### Criticizing and Judging Art

Students become aware that standards for judging art are not just personal opinions or vague preferences. Under the guidance of the art teacher, students begin to understand how quality in works of art can be seen, explained and within the limitations of the age level understood.

#### Building Productive Artistic Abilities

Students continue with skill development in the use of basic art elements to create artworks that express ideas and/or solve artistic problems.

#### Learning to Use Art Tools and Materials

Through instruction, students learn the proper use and care of art tools and materials.

#### Learning About Artists and Artwork

Students are introduced to the concept of style and shown examples of works by a variety of artists. When feasible, students are encouraged to try different styles in their own work.

#### Learning the Language of Art

Students continue to add to their repertoire of art terms, discovering and using vocabulary terms related to art elements and principles.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

- Combine theories of art principles such as balance
- Learn how to use materials in a safe and effective way
- Begin to understand basic principles of art such as proportion, large, medium, small
- Be exposed to master artists, their work and the importance of the art and artist
- Understand art as a form for expression and communication to an audience

## Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

### INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

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The grade one instructional technology program was designed to provide enrichment and support for the regular curriculum within the academic day. The instructional technology program consists of four learning standards. Each standard includes related skills that span grades K-12. The italicized information is the standard that guides the K-12 approach to the effective use of instructional technology. Below the italicized statement is the developmental objective for grade one students.

1. **Skills and Operations:** *Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems*
  - In grade one, students will use a variety of media, multi-media and technologies for directed and independent learning activities and will discuss the common uses, advantages and disadvantages of technology.
2. **Social, Ethical and Human Issues:** *Students understand the ethical, cultural and societal issues related to technology; students practice responsible use of technology systems, information and software; students develop positive attitudes toward technology use that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits and productivity*
  - In grade one, students will use hardware and software with care and will demonstrate positive social behaviors when using technology.
3. **Technology Productivity and Communication Tools:** *Students will use a variety of media and formats to collaborate, publish and interact with peers, experts and other audiences.*
  - In grade one, students will use a variety of media for problem -solving, communication, and illustrating thoughts and ideas.
4. **Technology Resource Tools:** *Students select and use specific technology tools to accomplish specific purposes.*
  - In grade one, students will use simple menus to locate information.

### LEARNING RESOURCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (LIBRARY-MEDIA)

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The “LRIT” program consists of eight learning standards. Each standard includes related skills which span Grades K-12. The italicized information is the standard that guides the K-12 approach to the effective use of learning resources and information technology. Below the italicized statement is the developmental objective for grade 1 students.

1. **Defining Information Needs:** *Students will clearly define information needs and identify effective actions needed for research, problem solving and pursuing personal interests.*
  - At grade one, students will identify formats of resources available in the library-media center.
2. **Information Systems:** *Students understand and utilize the systematic organization of resources.*
  - At grade one, students will alphabetize by first letter to find information in resources and understand differences between fiction and non-fiction.
3. **Information Strategies:** *Students will effectively use information skills and strategies to find information, solve problems and pursue personal interests.*
  - At grade one, students will understand simple charts, graphs and tables.
4. **Information Processing:** *Students will evaluate information critically and competently.*
  - At grade one, students will choose material based on ability level.

## Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

### LEARNING RESOURCES and INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (continued)

5. **Application:** *Students will use appropriate techniques to effectively communicate ideas, information or conclusions.*
  - At grade one, students will identify various media formats as communication vehicles and equipment needed for that purpose.
6. **Evaluation:** *Students will reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of their own performance.*
  - At grade one, students will assess their personal performance based on established routines.
7. **Responsible Information Use:** *Students will use information resources responsibly, legally and ethically.*
  - At grade one, students will take proper care of library-media materials.
8. **Appreciation of Literature:** *Students will read and appreciate various forms of literature.*
  - At grade one, students will identify familiar literary characters, express personal reaction to a shared story, recognize different illustrative styles, and know some favorite authors and their works.

The implementation of standards and skills is a joint effort between the library-media specialist and the classroom teacher. In teaching library-media skills, a spiraled approach is used, similar to that used in language arts and mathematics. After students master a skill at a basic level, this skill continues to be taught or reviewed in subsequent grades at a more advanced level.

The grade one library-media program introduces the library at an informal level, focusing on awareness of the purposes and resources available there.

## MUSIC

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The study of music on the elementary school level is critical for the development of potential musical aptitude and lifelong learning skills in music.

The Elementary Music curriculum in the Darien Public Schools is based on the three artistic processes of creating, performing and responding to music and is designed to offer a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based music education to all students in kindergarten through grade five.

Pitched and non-pitched classroom instruments, movement, singing and dance skills are an integral part of the general music curriculum. Recorders are introduced to third grade students as a tool to reinforce and develop musicianship during the second semester of the third grade.

Because of the importance of the inherent performance nature of music, General Music students will have the opportunity to participate in one performance or program to demonstrate their musical skills each year. General Music classes meet two times per week and are within the recommended state guidelines for the elementary general music time allotment.

Every elementary school in Darien has a school chorus that is open to all interested fourth and fifth grade students. Students at the elementary level have an opportunity to study a string instrument beginning in grade three and a wind or percussion instrument in grades four or five. Chorus, Band and Orchestra rehearsals meet one time per week for 45 minutes outside of the normal school hours and instrumental lessons are given during the school day in small homogeneous groupings. All Band, Chorus and Orchestra students participate in a formal winter and spring concert performance each year.

# Darien Public Schools - Curriculum Overview

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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The students in the Darien elementary schools follow a well-planned program in Physical Education. Each grade level has its own particular emphasis and contributes to the student's well being in a slightly different way. The elementary curriculum emphasizes movement experiences designed to develop basic loco-motor, manipulative and physical skills. The program also provides modified games and sport activities that are designed to accommodate the physical and emotional level of the students. Darien High school hosts a volleyball jamboree each year for the 4th grade students as the capstone to that activity. The intramural program at each elementary school is also very popular with sessions offered before and/or after school

Connecticut's K-12 Content Standards for physical education are as follows:

**1. Physical Activity**

*Students will become competent in a variety of physical activities and proficient in a few physical activities.*

**2. Human Movement**

*Students will understand and apply principles of human movement to the learning and development of motor skills.*

**3. Fitness**

*Students will use fitness concepts to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity.*

**4. Responsible Behavior**

*Students will exhibit responsible personal and social behaviors in physical activity settings.*

**5. Respect for Differences**

*Students will exhibit an understanding of and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings.*

**6. Benefits of Physical Activity**

*Students will identify and understand how physical activity provides personal enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction.*