

KINDERGARTEN
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW
2008-2009

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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 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

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LANGUAGE ARTS

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.

KINDERGARTEN

At the kindergarten level, children's language development is very exciting and important. Their literacy skills are emerging and growing rapidly. When children are first learning to read, they need to hear stories read with expression, and throughout kindergarten, teachers and students participate in a variety of literacy activities by sharing books and stories of all types. Children are taught and encouraged to respond to literature in ways that build their comprehension, imagination and their love of language.

You can assist your child by reading to him or her daily and having plenty of books in your child's room for him or her to "read" independently. Talk about the books you read with your child; ask which parts he or she liked best and if the stories reminded him or her of anything in their own lives. Provide plenty of writing materials so that your child can illustrate his or her reactions to stories or to create stories independently. Play rhyming games together, and read or sing poems and songs together that use alliteration and rhyme. Point out places where you use reading and writing in your home. You are the best model of what you want your child to become, so be sure that your child sees that you are an enthusiastic reader and writer, too.

Reading Benchmarks (for the end of Kindergarten):

Reading Readiness Skills:

- Understand that spoken language can be written down
- Recognize the alphabet
- Be aware of reading directionality (top to bottom, left to right)
- Blend sounds in words
- Recognize patterns in printed words and phrases
- Use picture, contextual, and phonetic clues to understand print

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LANGUAGE ARTS –Reading Benchmarks (continued)

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.

- Recognize and name letters
- Associate consonant sounds with their corresponding letters
- Recognize initial consonants sounds in spoken words
- Recognize familiar words in text and high frequency words in isolation

Comprehension Skills:

- Demonstrate knowledge of cover, title, author, and illustrator
- Relate personal experiences to stories
- Ask questions, make comments, and express opinions about a variety of texts
- Predict what will happen in a story
- Retell stories in proper sequence

Writing Benchmarks (for the end of Kindergarten):

- Identify and illustrate beginning, middle, and end of stories
- Use correct letter formation to print upper- and lower-case letters
- Begin using letters, spelling approximations and pictures to communicate in writing
- Begin recording and re-reading own written message
- Follow the steps in the writing process with teacher guidance: pre-write, draft, revise, edit, publish, analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of written work

MATHEMATICS

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

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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 metric 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

The kindergarten social studies curriculum develops the foundation on which other social studies skills are built. It aligns with the Connecticut State standards for social studies by developing concepts and themes in four key areas: history, civics and government, geography, and economics. Being highly integrated, it is taught through all other content areas.

The kindergarten program focuses on student as individuals, students and their families, students and their community and the students' orientation to the world around us. Students become sensitive to the environment and the need to protect it when learning about recycling. They learn important ways to conserve and recycle materials within the school, at home, and in their communities. Students are taught to accept the uniqueness of each person and to appreciate the ways people are alike and different. In practicing good citizenship, they learn empathy towards others by becoming sensitive to how their words and actions affect the attitudes, feelings and behavior of others.

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SCIENCE and HEALTH

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 in Society

Kindergarten Science

I. Properties of Matter

Objects have properties that can be observed and used to describe similarities and differences.

II. Heredity and Evolution

Many different kinds of living things inhabit the Earth.

III. Energy in the Earth's System

Weather conditions vary daily and seasonally.

VI. Science and Technology in Society

Some objects are natural, while others have been designed and made by people to improve the quality of life.

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 kindergarten Health Education program focuses on nutrition, safety and choices. The students learn to identify foods as part of food groups in an effort to teach them how to make healthy choices in their diets. They are also taught to understand that eating the right foods and the right amounts of those foods will positively affect their growth and development. Drugs are introduced as any other substance, other than food, which affects the ways the mind or body function. The concept of taking medicines develops an awareness that medicines should only be given by an adult caretaker and are for the purpose of being physically well.

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ART

Art is used to allow and encourage students to express their responses to what they see, feel, know and imagine. The kindergarten curriculum is designed with the student's developmental stage in mind. As the kindergarten student interacts with his environment and the people in it, he/she grows intellectually, emotionally, socially, as well as physically. The visual arts aid and enhance the student's growth in each of these areas as well as in the important areas of perception and creative thinking.

The curriculum encourages exploration, self-expression, the development of basic skills, concepts and vocabulary. Understandings and skills develop from lesson to lesson, and students develop an increased awareness of art as they create and view examples of famous works of art.

Goals:

Learning Through Perception

Students learn about color, shape, textures, spaces and shapes through their interaction with their world. The visual art program builds upon the students' curiosity and growing awareness by helping them to look and think about the world that is in their imaginations as well as the world they view every day.

Criticizing and Judging Art

The kindergarten student can, with guidance, begin to understand why art is valuable in our society. The young inquiring mind can respond to the teacher's question about a work of art and what makes it unique. Students are shown works of art to gain new information about the nature of art and how one art may be different from another. Even at this young age, students begin the process of trying to understand and to make judgments.

Building Productive Artistic Abilities

Increasing physical dexterity allows students to develop the skills needed to draw, paint, shape, cut, paste and organize (compose). In addition, while producing artwork, students gain the ability to solve problems and to begin to understand how the art elements line, shape, color, texture, and space can be used.

Learning to Use Tools and Materials

Guided instruction helps to make the kindergarten student more familiar with tools and materials. Experimentation and independent work help to expand skills and understanding of the qualities, potentials and limitations of various media.

Learning About Artists and Artwork

Through viewing artwork and teacher -directed discussion students are exposed to the diversity found in works of art from various times and cultures. Through this experience, they begin to understand why people create art and why art is important to the artist and to the viewer. Students also begin to understand the correlation of art to everyday life.

Learning the Language of Art

Students begin to use art vocabulary to communicate their awareness of lines, shapes, colors, etc. With guidance, concepts such as balance and other principles can begin to be a part of how the student talks about his/her work.

Objectives:

Students will begin to:

- Learn about the elements used to make art, i.e. line, shape, space, texture, value
- Learn aspects of color mixing
- Become aware of the existence of principles in art, i.e. balance, emphasis, harmony, rhythm, unity and variety
- Create simple projects in a variety of techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, fibers and three-dimensional constructing and shaping
- Understand how to arrange lines, shapes, colors, and other elements to communicate thoughts, feelings, experiences and stories
- Know and understand the proper use of supplies and materials
- Become aware of various art forms in their environment

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LEARNING RESOURCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (LIBRARY-MEDIA)

The “LRIT” program consists of eight 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 learning resources and information technology. Below the italicized statement is the developmental objective for kindergarten students.

1. Defining Information Needs: *Students will clearly define information needs and identify effective actions needed for research, problem solving and pursuing personal interests.*

In kindergarten, students will identify resources of interest to them in the Library-Media Center and will learn the process of circulation – borrowing materials from the LMC and returning them.

2. Information Systems: *Students understand and utilize the systematic organization of resources.*

In kindergarten, students will begin to understand that Library-Media Centers are organized collections of materials.

3. Information Strategies: *Students will effectively use information skills and strategies to find information, solve problems and pursue personal interests.*

In kindergarten, students will understand that different media have different characteristics, qualities and uses. In addition, students will demonstrate their awareness that information resources exist outside of school in locations such as libraries, museums and nature centers.

4. Information Processing: *Students will evaluate information critically and competently.*

In kindergarten, students will locate and select appropriate materials of interest to them. Students will demonstrate attentive and purposeful listening and viewing skills.

5. Application: *Students will use appropriate techniques to effectively communicate ideas, information or conclusions.*

In kindergarten, students will develop an awareness of video, audio and multi-media tools or communication.

6. Evaluation: *Students will reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of their own performance.*

In kindergarten, students will assess their personal performance based on their adherence to established routines.

7. Responsible Information Use: *Students will use information resources responsibly, legally and ethically.*

In kindergarten, students will take proper care of library-media materials.

8. Appreciation of Literature: *Students will read and experience various forms of literature.*

In kindergarten, students will identify familiar literary characters, express personal reactions 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 kindergarten library-media program introduces the library at an informal level, focusing on awareness of the purposes and resources available there.

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MUSIC

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.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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.