



CHATHAM DAY SCHOOL

Early Childhood & Lower School
Curriculum Guide
2024-2025

This curriculum guide is intended to reflect the scope and sequence of our academically ambitious programs for preschool through grade eight for the 2018-2019 school year. As curriculum is dynamic and ever-changing, we view this curriculum guide as a living, breathing document. Each year brings with it the opportunity to build and revitalize programs, particularly as we seek to meet the needs of our increasingly complex 21st Century and respond to the extraordinary potential of our CDS students.

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Mission statement

Chatham Day School celebrates and values each child as a unique learner with extraordinary potential. We offer an academically ambitious program that promotes intellectual achievement and emotional growth in a diverse and nurturing environment.

the early childhood experience

The early childhood experience establishes a joyful foundation for learning and a love of school for our youngest community members. Dur



ing this period of extraordinary development, teachers create authentic learning opportunities in a setting that fosters social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth. In each class, children experience a balance of structured, teacher-directed lessons, along with time to learn through play and social interactions with peers. Play is an essential tool for learning at this stage of development, so students are given time during centers to explore with blocks, develop imaginative stories, and express themselves with creative tools. Social interactions are also a primary focus, and children are taught to be responsible for themselves and to be considerate of others through school-wide monthly Life Skill themes that focus on concepts such as kindness, respect, cooperation, and gratitude.

Preschool playhouse

The Preschool Playhouse program is designed as a first introduction to school, meeting for half-day sessions twice per week. Play is paramount at this age for young minds to discover how things work, learn new vocabulary, role play, and explore the world beyond their families. Friendships begin to form as parallel play gradually becomes more cooperative with teacher guidance.

Thematic studies guide the curricular programming. These themes are woven throughout the day beginning with morning circle time, when all children learn to gather together and greet one another. The themes inspire story time, music and movement, and art projects within the classroom. Students

explore their surroundings during indoor free play and engage with developmentally-appropriate toys, games, books, dress-up clothing for imaginative play, and blocks for building. During outdoor recess, students spend time digging and discovering in the sand box, navigating play structures, and enjoying the nature that surrounds us. Preschool Playhouse students also get an introduction to the CDS Co-Curricular Program through weekly lessons with our physical education, visual arts, and performing arts faculty.

preschool

The preschool experience provides our young students with a nurturing and structured environment for learning. The focus of this class is on friendships, cooperative play, and expanding language and interests through an exciting theme-based curriculum. Each day begins and ends with free play time, and structured learning activities throughout the day capitalize on the natural desire of children to explore and interact with teachers and peers.

Recognizing the early years as a critical period of language development, the classroom provides an environment that is filled with the written and spoken word. Children are read to daily to promote vocabulary acquisition, recall, comprehension, and prediction skills. They develop listening skills as they identify characters, settings, and major events in a story. Gross and fine motor skills are strengthened through a variety of hands-on activities. The Handwriting Without Tears® program helps students develop pencil grip and practice pre-writing skills using child friendly language and a multi-sensory approach that make letter and number formation easy and enjoyable.

The development of numeracy, in concert with literacy, is the primary goal of mathematics instruction. Children explore numbers through 30, using the calendar as a guide for counting.

One-to-one correspondence, as well as number, pattern, and shape recognition are learned through hands-on activities. Spatial reasoning and problem solving are highlighted within daily interactions.

Vocabulary is further enhanced by the frequent use of proper mathematical terminology, such as cardinal numbers, positions, and temporal relationships.

Science and social studies themes help children to develop and deepen their understanding of the world around them and how they fit into that world as individuals. Inquiry-based learning provides a forum for capturing “teachable moments” and exploring the many questions posed by preschoolers as they explore their surroundings. Children learn how to interact with others and how their actions impact those around them.

Preschoolers enjoy both indoor and outdoor opportunities for free play. A daily rotation of co-curricular classes include performing arts, visual arts, library, Spanish, and physical education.

prekindergarten

The hallmarks of the prekindergarten program are a healthy balance of structured academic activities, free play, and exercise, coupled with a focus on character development and social and emotional learning. Curious by nature, the “why” questions that are so prevalent at this age are indulged by teachers who capitalize on these opportunities to explore cause and effect with their students. Prekindergarten classes begin each day with circle time or morning meeting before transitioning to the rest of their daily schedule.

Literacy is infused into every aspect of the prekindergarten experience. Children are read to every day while being introduced to the rich world of literature. The importance of oral language is reflected in meaningful conversations and opportunities for children to tell stories, recognize and anticipate cause and effect, and understand logical sequences and progression of events. Communication skills continue to evolve as children participate in group discussions and oral presentations, such as weekly show-and-tell. Phonics lessons are woven into the curriculum each day, and children enjoy one-on-one reading with teachers as reading skills emerge. Students practice recognition and writing of capital and lowercase letters, as well as numbers. Through a combination of dictation and drawing, written pieces are composed that narrate events and illustrate reactions to what happened.

Mathematics lessons are integrated into the children’s daily routine and play. Formal instruction centers around building number sense, including representation and comparison of whole numbers. Students learn to tell time, count money, use a ruler, and explore geometric shapes. Visual representations of math are highlighted as they model addition and subtraction facts using manipulatives.

Social studies units mirror and reinforce the principles inherent in the school’s Life Skills programs. Children continue to develop social skills that help them to become good citizens and positive contributors to the school community. They explore roles within their families, school, and community, and they cultivate cultural and environmental awareness as they learn about the world in which they live. Children begin to think like scientists and are introduced to the scientific method as they make predictions and observations, gather data, and formulate conclusions. Inquiry-based experiments, planting in the garden, and local field trips all add to the breadth of experiences for

these students. An emphasis on work habits, such as taking care of classroom resources and following directions, prepares them for a successful transition to kindergarten.

Early childhood Co-curricular program

Art

The Early Childhood art program seeks to introduce our youngest students to the world of visual art through exploration and play. Children begin by experimenting with mark-marking and, through exploring new processes, are continuously strengthening their fine motor skills in fun and engaging ways. Creativity is fostered and skills are developed as children take part in a variety of art activities including painting, drawing, collage, printmaking, and sculpture. They are also exposed to the works of famous artists and find inspiration in the shapes, lines, and colors that they see. Children see their own work and the work of other CDS students showcased in our gallery and around campus.

Performing Arts

Early childhood performing arts classes guide students through a musical workout that helps children become tuneful, beautiful, and artful. The basic elements of melody, rhythm, and emotional response are introduced to children through a variety of activities that also help develop their fine and gross motor skills (fingerplays, singing, instrument play, and dance), spatial awareness (circle games and dance), listening skills (vocal warm-up, echo singing, and song tales), cultural awareness (folk music), numeracy (counting the beat) and literacy (vocal warm-up line singing), creativity (child-created tunes), and social/emotional growth (song tales and dance). Students also have drama lessons that help develop empathy and social/emotional growth by acting out stories and, afterwards, reflecting on its events, characters, and moral. Students demonstrate classwork at one “informance” and one year-end music celebration.

Physical Education

At Chatham Day School, Early Childhood students develop a sense of their physical capabilities under careful instruction that promotes attention to movement and play. Students gain awareness of their bodies and ability to move with coordination through exercises that increase balance, core strength, gross motor skills and speed. All students receive equal opportunities to reach their potential and are encouraged to progress at individual rates. Students focus on shuffling, skipping, moving backwards, running, and hopping in creative running games that spark imagination and exploration. Students are introduced to the fundamentals of stretching and adjust to team games that increase the students’ communication abilities and self-awareness in a group setting.

Spanish

As students learn at a young age through different experiences, they can begin to apply the Spanish language and relate it to the content they are learning in their classrooms to make bilingual connections. As they explore classroom themes each week, they are exposed to the same materials in the Spanish classroom. They have time to play and complete activities in centers with small groups, allowing for differentiated practice for each set of vocabulary. In each class period, Spanish lessons are executed using a variety of teaching methods including games, kinesthetic experiences, song and dance, as well as conversation. Assessments are made through one-on-one time during centered play to ensure each student has a working understanding of the vocabulary they are practicing with each activity.

the lower school experience

Building on the strong foundation of the early childhood experience, Chatham Day School's lower school fosters a meaningful and long-lasting relationship to learning and establishes important habits for future academic success.

Our program makes the most of lower school students' inherent enthusiasm for learning. We meet each child where they are, help them set individualized goals, and guide students to understand themselves as learners. We believe in the importance of a developmentally appropriate curriculum that builds upon itself each year. Providing a scaffolded and differentiated experience allows students to develop the self-confidence and skills to "aim high."

Students understand that learning extends beyond the walls of the homeroom class. From our Morning Meeting assemblies to the Co-Curricular Program to our Learning Garden and Fitness Trail, we offer a rich student experience that allows for multiple forms of creative and physical expression. Students joyfully participate in visual arts, performing arts, choir, chess, and Spanish classes several times a week. Acknowledging the importance of movement to child development and learning, physical education occurs every day, in addition to two daily recesses. Our lower school students feel connected to the larger community as they give back through their leadership and service learning projects. Field trips that support our curriculum give students an opportunity to learn from experts and unique resources in our community.

Our approach to character education and social emotional learning fosters a warm, nurturing spirit in the CDS lower school. The school-wide monthly life skills themes guide our young community members to be thoughtful and responsible citizens and friends. Our Buddy Program connects younger and older students together in meaningful ways such as sharing in gratitude circles, paired

reading times, and conducting science explorations. These experiences provide opportunities for leadership and mentorship as well as strengthening the CDS community as a whole.

Kindergarten

The first year of our lower school is a crucial one for building strong foundational skills. As essential reading and numeracy skills are developed, students in our full-day kindergarten program receive individualized attention from skilled and inspiring teachers in small class sizes. Equally important, kindergarten develops student's independence with classroom routines and sense of responsibility to one's self and the classroom community. Although the kindergarten students are the youngest members of our lower school, they too take on leadership roles in Morning Meeting and with service learning.

LITERACY

The goal of the literacy program in kindergarten is to inspire young readers and writers to love language and feel powerful through the skills they acquire. Students learn the main components of literacy – listening, speaking, reading and writing – through directed lessons, centers, cooperative groups, and differentiated instruction.

Each day students read one-on-one with a teacher. Teachers assess reading development on an ongoing basis so that students receive “just right” books that challenge their skill level and help them grow, while also fostering self-confidence and enthusiasm for literature. In addition to individualized reading instruction, we teach a research-based phonics curriculum using Wilson Foundations and the Teachers College Reading Workshop. Teachers model reading fluency and expression through daily read alouds and invite parents to come into the classroom as “Mystery Readers.”

Our young authors dazzle us with all they learn through the Teachers College Writing Workshop. Beginning the year by drawing pictures that tell a story, adding labels and action lines, students develop the strategies for turning their pictures into words, then sentences, and finally full-fledged stories. Teachers inspire kindergarten writers with author studies. Throughout the year, students learn how to write different types of texts, including small moment narratives, how-to stories, informational texts, and persuasive texts. Student authors proudly read their published pieces to classmates. At the conclusion of each writing unit, kindergarten authors celebrate their accomplishments by sharing their stories at a publishing party or “Author’s Tea.”

Kindergarten students learn speaking and presentation skills. Each child has the opportunity to present information about themselves to their classmates, as well as the chance to read their writing and other assignments aloud. Active listening is a key component to all learning and is practiced throughout the day.

MATHEMATICS

Teachers guide kindergarten mathematicians to explore mathematical ideas as they develop their number sense. Students learn key concepts through a variety of methods and strategies. Each day a new math lesson is taught from the Saxon Math program and practiced through hands-on centers, worksheets, iPad apps, and enrichment activities. In addition to directed lessons, math plays a vital role in other aspects of the day, including calendar work and morning routines, coding, and science lessons.

Some of the topics covered in our kindergarten curriculum include comparing and ordering numbers; skip counting by 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s; identifying a sorting rule; identifying and extending patterns; data collection and graphing; problem solving; and learning basic addition and subtraction facts. Teaching of these concepts spirals to help ensure mastery of developmentally-appropriate content. Students use manipulatives, such as base ten blocks, Unifix cubes, and pattern blocks, to see concrete representations of math concepts.

SCIENCE

Kindergarten scientists begin the year by learning the process of the scientific method. Through an inquiry-based model, teachers help students discover how the world around them works. Science units include: the five senses, life cycles of plants and animals, the solar system, and states of matter and motion. Essential science skills, such as observational sketching and recording data, are integrated into lessons. Students develop engineering skills and learn the design process through incorporation of materials from the Engineering is Elementary program from the Boston Museum of Science.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Using the IMPACT Social Studies curriculum, students explore the social studies domains of history, geography, economics, and civics. Curiosity is sparked within the students for a seamless blend of content, inquiry, and multiple perspectives to help develop citizenship in action as they answer the essential questions of “How are we unique?” , “What does it mean to be a good citizen?” , and “How do people cooperate?”. Project-based learning is incorporated regularly, but particularly through the kindergarten service learning project, The Seeing Eye. This service learning project forms cross-curricular ties throughout the kindergarten subjects as students learn about those

different from them, contemplate life without one of their five senses, write supporting persuasive posters, as well as host a bake sale.

First grade

At CDS, first grade students begin the year as confident members of the lower school. They know the expectations of our school day and are familiar with classroom routines. During this pivotal year, students focus on setting academic goals, developing their skills and their creative voice, and beginning to know themselves as learners, with guidance from the adults in their lives. Moving beyond a primarily egocentric view of the world, first graders know how to be responsible and kind members of a community and love contributing to all aspects of school life.

LITERACY

Developing literacy skills and a love of literature remains a high priority in first grade. Whether the student is an emergent, developing, or advanced reader, leveled books are utilized as students read one-on-one daily with a teacher and receive a selection of books each week for practice in class as well as at home. The Teachers College Reading Workshop model provides students with reading skills and strategies. The students practice skills individually, with a reading partner, and with a teacher. Our reading program further refines fluency, phonics, and comprehension, and delves into domains such as how to read nonfiction texts and examine story elements. Teachers read a variety of picture and chapter books to students to help them practice listening skills, to introduce them to a wide range of texts, and to model appropriate expression.

First grade authors love crafting stories to share with their peers and the adults in the community. Writing Workshop lessons coach students to expand their writing to full page stories, as they increase their writing stamina. Initially composed of stories about oneself, first grade writers broaden their scope to include expository, narrative, and opinion pieces. Students demonstrate an increasing command of grammar conventions in both writing and speaking and become more familiar with nuances in word meaning and figurative language. Handwriting without Tears helps students improve their print penmanship as fine motor skills develop.

Speaking and listening continue to be key elements of a student's day. Whether informally sharing ideas about solving a math problem or reciting a poem at Morning Meeting, students in first grade have opportunities to practice presentation skills in a variety of settings.

MATHEMATICS

In first grade, we move students from concrete representations of numbers toward graphic representations, ultimately moving them toward the abstract symbols that comprise the language of mathematics. Building number sense, mathematical vocabulary, and resilience in problem solving creates capable and confident mathematicians.

Math lessons focus on extending base-ten notation understanding, building fluency with addition and subtraction, utilizing standard units of measure, telling time, problem solving with dollars and cents, and describing and analyzing shapes. As in kindergarten, these topics spiral throughout the year, which facilitates mastery of grade level objectives. Differentiated lessons and homework provide opportunities for students to practice skills and extend their thinking.

SCIENCE

Designed to harness the innate inquisitive nature of young children, the first grade science program is engaging and relevant. Students are active participants as they explore big ideas learning units such as working in the CDS garden, sea life, weather and climate, sound, heat and light, and visits to the Maker Space for students to explore, tinker, and invent.. Using the Engineering is Elementary program, first graders design windmills and investigate sound as they learn to think and speak like budding scientists and engineers.

SOCIAL STUDIES

First grade curriculum builds upon the social studies foundation from kindergarten. Expanding the notion of community, beginning with the school community as a model, students explore civics and local government. This provides a forum to promote the ideas of citizenship, civic responsibility, and leadership. Students examine basic economic principles and map the physical geography of various rural, suburban and urban communities. Trips around our local community, such as the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown and downtown Chatham, reinforce class discussions.

second grade

The second grade year marks the shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” The foundational skills, taught and solidified in kindergarten and first grade, allow students to tackle greater depth in academic classwork and creative expression. Taking pride in our school community as well as becoming more independent learners are hallmarks of the second grade program.

LITERACY

The approach to literacy in second grade balances independent reading with whole class novel studies, allowing for differentiation and the support of individual learning needs. Discussing literature with peers and teachers allows for thoughtful, reflective class conversations. In addition to novel studies, students read independent chapter books that are age and reading level appropriate. Teachers ensure that classroom libraries appeal to the individual interests of every child and help broaden their reading experiences by encouraging the exploration of a variety of genres. Directed lessons from the Teachers College Reading Workshop examine the notable elements of fiction and nonfiction texts, while building upon reading skills and enhancing comprehension strategies. Students respond to comprehension questions -- orally and in writing -- to express a deeper understanding of texts.

Writing is an integral part of all subject areas in second grade. Students have many opportunities to express themselves in writing, including writing about math thinking and reflections in science and social studies. During Writing Workshop, students conference individually with a teacher throughout the steps of the writing process, from prewriting through publication. Organization, clarity, and detail are among some of the major themes of writing in this academic year. They celebrate their achievements as writers with a publishing party, inviting family, faculty, and peers to listen to their published pieces.

Second grade also begins the introduction to cursive handwriting using the Handwriting Without Tears® program. Correct spelling is emphasized throughout the year in all areas of the curriculum. To foster good spelling students receive weekly word work that is customized to their skill level and spend the week studying a challenging, individualized collection of words noticing patterns among letter combinations and sounds. Grammar lessons cover the conventions of writing and target areas for improvement in student writing.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics instruction solidifies students' grasp of place value through the hundred thousands, preparing students to add, subtract, and describe large numbers. Strategies for understanding multiplication and division are presented in a variety of ways, allowing students to build a strong conceptual understanding of the relationship between the two operations. Other topics for the year include geometry and spatial reasoning, time, measurement, and data analysis. Teachers provide opportunities for reinforcement of concepts through centers and games. Problem solving and critical thinking are important elements of second grade math. Students are presented with increasingly complex word problems that introduce algebraic thinking and challenge students to apply what they have learned in novel situations.

SCIENCE

Second grade science combines focusing on topics that are of natural interest to children this age with hands-on explorations, teamwork, and creative problem solving. By building upon prior knowledge, students use a design thinking approach to conduct experiments that investigate force and balance, the universe and its stars, and simple machines. Throughout the year, there is an underlying focus on engineering as students build bridges and rollercoasters, and design inventions incorporating simple machines. Other areas explored include dinosaurs and fossils.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Second grade social studies revolves around the idea of exploring who we are. Students examine why it is important to learn about the past while comparing and contrasting things of long ago and today. They then go on to investigate how geography can help us understand our world. Another topic that will be explored is how we get what we want and need, therefore delving into the world of goods and services through economics lessons. Students will then learn about the government; why we have rules, how laws are made, and how citizens and government can work together. Throughout the year and as a final focus students will learn how people make a difference in our world.

third grade

Third grade marks the culmination of the lower school experience at Chatham Day School. Students apply skills acquired throughout lower school to larger-scale projects and long-term assignments and take greater ownership over their learning process. In preparation for middle school, students are each assigned a Chromebook, which they use for in-class assignments, research, keyboarding, and projects. As the oldest members of the division, third grade students play an integral leadership role in our community. Walking the preschool students to their classrooms in the morning is just one way in which third grade students act as role models and trusted older friends to our youngest community members.

LITERACY

In language arts, students refine their reading and comprehension skills as they embark on more complex novel studies and independent reading selections from a variety of genres. Lessons from Teachers College Reading Workshop support students in articulating main ideas, understanding various text structures, exploring character development, and conducting research. Students continue to make connections to texts and to employ inferential thinking as they read increasingly nuanced material. Whole class novels and small group reading clubs are a source of rich conversations, as well as a model of fluent and expressive reading.

Writing Workshop guides our third grade students to explore many forms of writing such as personal narratives, expository texts, persuasive essays, poetry, and creative fiction including fairy tales and mysteries. Grammar lessons focus on parts of speech, punctuation, and other writing conventions and are then incorporated into the writing process. Students proofread, edit, and revise their written work prior to publication. The acquisition of grammar and word study are both explicitly taught and integrated across disciplines. Cursive handwriting and keyboarding continue to be practiced throughout the year.

Communication coursework in third grade highlights clear verbal communication and conflict resolution. The class also addresses online communication, using the Common Sense Media digital citizenship curriculum as a basis for age-appropriate lessons about online responsibility and safety.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics instruction centers on developing fluency with multiplication and division, with an emphasis on applying these skills in problem solving situations. A solid grasp of place value from the millions through the thousandths place allows students to grapple with a variety of real-world situations including those involving fractions and decimals. In addition to mental math and skill

acquisition, open-ended investigations provide students the opportunity to ask questions and seek answers as they search for patterns, explore multiple ways to approach a problem, and apply higher order thinking skills in creative ways.

SCIENCE

Science begins in third grade by learning about the water cycle and the important processes of evaporation, transpiration, condensation and precipitation. Using an Engineering is Elementary Kit, third graders are introduced to engineering and technology. The water cycle is reinforced as students learn about the importance of clean water, and engage in an engineering challenge focusing on designing a water filter. Students also choose and research their own endangered species and present their culminating projects at the Third Grade Safari Tour. During this unit, students introduce their Service Learning Project to “Adopt and Endangered Species” through the World Wildlife Fund.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our Social Studies curriculum focuses on the various regions of the United States. Students explore the culture, weather, famous attractions and landmarks, and natural resources that are found within each region. Different types of communities are explored, depending on where you live. Third graders also explore the way the environment changes depending on where you live, as well as what can make a community unique. Students end the year learning about American Heroes and how they have helped shape our country.

lower school co-curricular program

Art

The Lower School art program at CDS encourages personal creative development, self-discovery, and positive emotional growth. As students progress through their study of art, they are exposed to various materials and methods which are used to make meaningful works of art. Skills such as drawing, painting, printmaking, and collage continue to be developed each year, and new modes of expression are introduced. Students come to understand why artists make art: to tell stories, to communicate ideas, and for personal expression. Students study classical and contemporary artists, as well as works of art and literature, which serve as inspiration for their own creations. The artistic endeavors of students are showcased in our gallery and around campus.

Performing Arts

Performing Arts in the Lower School continues to offer students opportunities to practice and grow their “tuneful, beatful, and artful” skills. Students experience and create music in a variety of ways, including games, singing, body percussion, instrument play, creative movement, folk dancing, and song dances. Students are encouraged to share performing arts from their cultural heritages, and folk songs from around the world are the main sources of material for students to learn and practice musical concepts. Instruments for all grades include pitched (Orff xylophones) and unpitched percussion (hand drums, handheld percussion instruments); third grade students begin recorder study. Students have three different opportunities to demonstrate their musical skill throughout the year: a choral performance, an instrument and movement performance, and a musical theatre performance.

Physical Education

At Chatham Day School, our primary goal for the Lower School students is to provide maximum opportunity for children to enjoy physical activity and thus realize that it is a desirable and worthwhile endeavor; one they will want to continue throughout their lives. Students will continue to make connections to lifetime activities and sports while they increase their understanding of sportsmanship, cooperation, teamwork, and listening to and following directions. Students work on flexibility through a sequence of fundamental stretches, develop strength through effective core-body movement exercises, increase speed and agility through dynamic running, and reinforce teamwork skills through sports and games. Students are encouraged to set personal wellness goals.

Spanish

The fundamental skills required to learn a second language mirror those acquired when learning our first language. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are integral to the study of Spanish. Spanish

lessons are executed using a variety of teaching methods including games, kinesthetic experiences, song and dance, as well as conversation. Students are immersed in the Spanish language from an early age ensuring the learning is rigorous, yet care is taken to ensure that activities are developmentally appropriate. Online materials are used to supplement instruction. Students are given opportunities to apply their knowledge to authentic tasks such as conversations, short writing exercises and leveled reading comprehension.