



## LOWER SCHOOL CURRICULUM SUMMARIES

### LITERACY

The Literacy curriculum utilizes the Writing and Reading format (Litlife) based on the Columbia Teachers College model. We focus on mini-lesson explicit instruction, independent practice of skills, independent reading, guided reading, and literature circles. Groups of two to four students read novels, discuss the book together, and work with in-depth comprehension questions, while integrating the reading, writing, and social studies. Reading is leveled and students are steered toward “just right” books.

With the common practice of conferencing individually with each student and conducting in-house assessment and inventory, the teacher is assured that a student is moving forward in abilities from grade to grade.

In the Lower School, students study a variety of different genres and write for a variety of purposes. The writing process is emphasized and reinforced through written work including stories, essays, journal writing, and poetry. To further enhance student learning, teachers use technology (Google Docs, Wikis, blogging, Twitter, Glogster, Voki) to produce and publish writing and to facilitate collaboration with others. Vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are integrated into the curriculum throughout the year.

### Kindergarten

A Reading Workshop model begins in January. Kindergarten uses a modified Daily 5 model called “Ride and Read” from September to December designed to increase reading stamina. The class works out of multi-leveled reading bins until January, when we transition to individualized leveled readers. Our writing program is a developmental writing program that is intertwined with the reading program. This approach insures each child’s skill level is individually targeted and helps her grow and develop at her personal pace.

Every girl leaves Kindergarten with a writing portfolio that shows her individual growth throughout the year. This portfolio includes drawing and storytelling, multiple examples of non fiction writing and progresses to complete books written by each girl. The “Handwriting Without Tears” program insures work on correct formation of letters. Both independent and collaborative use of technology is embedded within the Kindergarten reading and writing program and aligned with each unit of study. Speaking and listening skills are integrated throughout each day.

Units of Study Include:

Reading & Writing

no words (comprehension & storytelling unit, symbols, environmental print concepts)

label books (phonics focus & independent writing)

Eric Carle Author study

“How to” books (sequencing unit)

character study

re-telling unit (story concepts: beginning, middle, end)  
poetry  
non-fiction: collaborative research project & individual biography personal narratives  
Word Work  
phonics, digraphs, & instant words  
Speaking & Listening  
discussion, storytime, storytelling, sharing, individual & group presentations  
Handwriting  
Handwriting Without Tears, KinderTown fine motor centers

## First Grade

Both Reading and Writing is taught through the Lit Life Program. Students participate in Writer's Workshop, where they learn to write a variety of genres, such as biographies, poems, fiction stories, and nonfiction pieces. The girls learn to include beginning, middle, and end, as well as revise and edit stories with teacher support. A goal is for the girls to become independent writers in first grade. In Reading Workshop, the girls participate in guided reading groups where they work on fluency, retelling, comparing and contrasting, and comprehending story elements, such as characters, setting, kick-off, events, and tie-up. They use Handwriting Without Tears to learn the correct formation of letters and numbers. The girls learn about short and long vowel sounds, word families, diphthongs, digraphs, homophones, and synonyms. They use the Sitton Spelling as a foundation for our spelling program, where they study and apply core words to their reading and writing. The girls participate in weekly poetry recitals to increase their public speaking skills, while also working on reading fluency.

Units of Study Include:

\*Spelling & Grammar

- consistently spell 1-36 core words
- begin applying short & long vowels
- start sentence with capital
- use end punctuation

\*Writing

- write a response to a question in a complete sentence
- match detailed illustration with writing
- beginning to form complete sentences
- beginning to create a friendly letter using the correct format
- beginning to practice self-editing through teacher guidance (3 things: capital letter, end mark, core words)

\*Reading

- consistently read 1-100 core words
- match detailed illustration with reading
- beginning to read fluently when reading a just right book
- reading aloud their own written work
- beginning to develop reading stamina & sticking with a book
- beginning to independently choose appropriate books
- able to demonstrate comprehension through both verbal & written responses
- able to comprehend the content of a just right book or read aloud (character, setting, events)

\*Skills

- consistently follow oral directions in reading & writing

- beginning to navigate the LS library
- comfortable with public speaking with their reading & sharing their writing

## Second Grade

Students begin the year with a comprehensive author study. The girls study various book genres and learn to identify the differences between the genres. The unit culminates when the girls publish their own book after studying character traits, development, and beginnings and endings of fiction or nonfiction stories. The girls study phonics, specifically short and long vowels, vowel blends, consonants, and homophones utilizing The Sitton Spelling during in-class activities and mini-lessons. The girls practice their phonemic awareness, spelling and writing through weekly practice, including journal writing. Reading Workshop includes read-alouds, reading groups, peer to peer reading, and independent leveled reading. The girls are expected to read at home every night. We use the program Handwriting Without Tears weekly to help hone handwriting skills. Poetry is covered through diverse poetry readings and an in-depth study in April. Biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs are read and discussed in depth during our Women We Admire unit in March.

In Writer's Workshop the girls work on writing many varied pieces. We write weekly letters with a focus on proper capitalization, end of sentence punctuation, core word spelling, and proper letter formatting. We write nonfiction pieces during our social studies units with an emphasis on recalling information and getting it on paper. Creative writing is encouraged throughout our literacy units, especially during the Fairy Tale unit, and explored during our author studies.

Units of Study Include:

### \*Spelling & Grammar

- consistently spell 1-100 core words
- understand & identify homophone and homonym pairs
- apply short & long vowel patterns in writing
- apply capital rules (beginning of sentence, proper nouns)
- consistently use end punctuation

### \*Writing

- consistently writing in complete sentences
- consistently able to write a response to reading
- consistently able to write a reflection
- writing in logical, sequential order
- writing in paragraph format with an introductory beginning sentence and concluding sentence
- generate ideas and choose a theme to write about
- consistently able to create a friendly letter using the correct format
- beginning to practice self-editing
- beginning to identify spelling errors of core words independently

### \*Reading

- consistently read and follow directions
- choose an appropriate just right book for independent reading
- developing fluency as a reader
- continuing to develop reading stamina & sticking with a book
- comfortable demonstrating comprehension through both verbal & written responses
- able to comprehend the content of a just right book or read aloud(character, setting, events)

**\*Skills**

- consistently follow oral & written directions in reading & writing
- consistently listen to a speaker & ask an intelligent question
- beginning to navigate the LS library
- comfortable with public speaking with their reading & sharing their writing

## **Third Grade**

Students begin the year with an introduction of Reader's and Writer's Workshop. The girls will be exposed to a variety of mini-lessons and mentor texts that take them to new levels of making connections, visualizing, asking questions, inferencing, and synthesizing. Using these reading strategies, our students will be able to make wise choices when selecting books that are 'Just Right' for them. Using a Writer's Notebook, the girls will be able to express ideas from their heart, brainstorm topics they are curious about, and create many writing pieces that we will publish in class. Each third grade girl will be able to create and publish many different genres of writing including a personal narrative, an informational text, a poem, and a persuasive essay or opinion writing piece. As the year continues, the girls will be able to experience a variety of genres in reading as well. We will be able to dive deeper into fiction, non-fiction, and biographies. In addition to these genres, we integrate our Language Arts curriculum with our Social Studies curriculum as we read a variety of literature, listen to read alouds, and read and write folktales. As our reading skills and strategies continue to build and strengthen, we will move into Literature Circles, in which each student will have a chance to be in a small group while reading the same book and discussing, sharing, and cooperatively diving into literature. Integrating reading and writing with our Social Studies topics enable us to teach cross-curricularly, in order to make each minute of class time productive, influential, and meaningful for our girls.

Our spelling program continues to follow the Sitton Spelling curriculum. We introduce Sadlier Grammar as well as Sadlier Vocabulary to increase grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

Units of Study Include:

**\*Phonics/Spelling**

- identify and correctly spell core words 1-144
- understands function of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs
- understands meanings of prefixes and suffixes
- explore and identify homographs and homophones
- identify and decode multisyllabic words
- similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia, alliteration, personification
- analogies and eponyms

**\*Writing Foundation**

- punctuation and capitalization
- proper subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement
- possessives and contractions
- regular and irregular verb tenses
- apply learned spelling patterns and exceptions to spell unknown words
- write simple, compound, and complex sentences

**\*Reading Foundation**

- choose appropriate literature to enhance skills such as fluency, accuracy, comprehension, expression, and volume
- appropriately choose from learned group of decoding skills to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding

- establish connections to texts from personal experience or prior knowledge
- understand grade level word relationships and nuances in word meaning
- distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases
- \*Writing Application
  - opinion piece; five-paragraph supporting a point of view
  - informative/explanatory piece; minimum five-paragraph to examine a topic
- narrative; minimum five-paragraph to develop real or imagined experiences or events
  - revising and editing skills on all written work
- \*Reading Application: Literature and Informational texts
  - read and comprehend grade level material independently and proficiently
  - provide in-depth analysis that indicates understanding
  - compare and contrast texts by same author
  - compare and contrast similar texts by different authors
  - re-tell key elements provided by text, visuals, or read-aloud
- \*Collaboration/Presentation
  - read grade level prose and poetry orally with appropriate fluency, accuracy, volume, and expression
    - actively engage in collaborative discussions on grade level texts and topics
    - come to all discussions prepared
  - recount an experience or tell a story using appropriate and accurate facts and descriptive details, speaking clearly with proper pace and expression
  - with guidance and support from adults, explore various methods, including digital means, to produce, publish, and collaborate

## Fourth Grade

Students begin the year reviewing the expectations and procedures of Reading and Writing Workshop, including the continuation of selecting “just right” books and growing ideas or seeds in their Writer’s Notebooks. This process involves formal reading assessments, reading comprehension exercises and evaluating appropriate guided reading groups. Our reading and writing program is interdisciplinary, most closely connected to our Social Studies curriculum. Many of the fourth grade reading projects center around historical fiction, nonfiction, and biographies which are also studied closely in Social Studies. Another element of the reading curriculum involves literature circles with students placed in appropriate groupings. These literacy circles challenge them intellectually by encouraging them to dig deeper into written works and successfully discuss their readings in a group setting.

The writing process is emphasized and reinforced through written work including narratives, essays, journal writing, and poetry. Drafting, revising, and editing are emphasized and reinforced through daily mini-lessons. Finished works are celebrated and published in a variety of ways including oral readings, speeches, and often incorporate technology. Grammar and spelling are taught in a spiral manner using the Rebecca Sitton and Sadlier Common Core Progress book and Grammar book, as well as through targeted supplements. Vocabulary is integrated into the curriculum throughout the school year, and explicitly taught through the Wordly Wise and Sadlier Vocabulary programs.

Units of Study Include:

### \*Phonics/Spelling

- know and correctly spell core words 1-240
- identify and apply correct spelling (qu/kw; ise/eyes/ize)
- identify hyperbole, palindromes, anagrams
- understand quotation marks and use them correctly

- demonstrate understanding of relative pronouns and adverbs
- form and use the progressive verb tenses
- use modal auxiliaries
- identify and use grade level appropriate Greek and Latin root words and affixes
- \*Writing Foundation
  - identify and correct sentence fragments and run-ons
  - correctly form and use prepositional phrases and multiple adjectives in a row
  - differentiate between contexts that call for informal and formal discourse
- \*Reading Foundation
  - apply grade level phonics and all learned word analysis skills in decoding
  - demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings
    - use context clues
- read grade level text, prose, and poetry independently with purpose and understanding
- \*Writing Application
  - opinion piece; minimum five-paragraph supporting a point of view
  - informative/explanatory piece; minimum five-paragraph to examine a topic
  - narrative; minimum five-paragraph to develop real or imagined experiences or events
  - all writing should be clear and coherent in which the development, organization, vocabulary, and technique are appropriate to grade level task, purpose, and audience
  - increase writing knowledge and stamina by writing routinely
    - revising and editing skills on all written work
- \*Reading Application: Literature and Informational texts
  - read and comprehend grade level material independently and proficiently
  - provide in-depth analysis that indicates understanding
  - compare and contrast texts by same author
  - compare and contrast similar texts by different authors
  - re-tell key elements provided by text, visuals, or read-aloud
- \*Collaboration/Presentation
  - read grade level text, prose, and poetry orally with appropriate fluency, accuracy, volume, and expression
    - actively engage in collaborative discussions on grade level texts and topics
    - come to all discussions prepared
  - recount an experience or tell a story using appropriate and accurate facts and descriptive details, speaking clearly with proper pace and expression
  - paraphrase a text or part of a text that has been presented orally, visually, or textually
  - with guidance and support from adults, explore various methods, including digital means, to produce, publish, and collaborate