



## **Friends School Haverford Kindergarten Curriculum**

### **Language Arts**

*Balanced Literacy in Kindergarten:  
Reading, Writing, and Phonemic Awareness*

We provide a literacy program that incorporates reading, writing, and phonemic awareness activities into our daily and weekly schedules. The Friends School Haverford kindergarten program uses the following activities to support children's literacy development. The reading and writing workshop models are based on those developed by Columbia University's Reading and Writing Project.

1. Teacher Read Alouds  
Shared Reading Experiences  
Reading Workshop
2. Letter Name & Sound Work  
Word Work
3. Shared Writing Experiences  
Writing Workshop

The first group of experiences, *Teacher Read Alouds, Shared Reading, and the Independent Reading Workshop*, is designed to allow children to fall in love with books and reading. Teachers read books of all genres during *Read Aloud*, when comprehension is the main focus. *Shared Reading* is a time for students to read print with a teacher's support. Together, the teacher and students look closely at pictures, structures of print, and the meaning behind text. In this setting, teachers can help students move forward with their understanding about books and print.

*The Independent Reading Workshop* is a time for children to practice new skills on an independent level. Students now have a chance to read books on their own, and at an appropriate level for them. In the beginning of the year, many kindergartners learn to tell a story by "reading" the pictures in a book. As print concepts develop, children begin to use both pictures and words to understand text. Conventional reading progresses from there. Reading Workshop is also a time for teachers to work with small groups, or one-on-one with individual children. Small group work, and individualized attention, helps all children progress.

Phonemic awareness activities, the second group of literacy experiences, help children develop an understanding of print as it relates to both reading and writing. Letter/Sound

recognition and understanding is essential to developing literacy skills, and has a prominent role in the kindergarten literacy experience. As letter/sound understanding develops, children are able to begin to read and write sentences, always progressing toward conventional reading and writing.

The third group of literacy experiences focuses on the love of storytelling, writing, and authorship. Writing workshop supports the development of the child as an emerging author in the craft of writing. Writing in kindergarten includes both shared and independent writing in the form of personal narratives, class books, poetry, and nonfiction. Kindergartners develop relationships as authors with other authors in writing workshop experiences; teachers model the craft of storytelling and writing with mini lessons, kindergartners engage in independent writing pieces and share from their writer's portfolios with their peers. Writing workshop builds on the foundations of storytelling through a child's drawings and supports the development of writing that includes written language (symbols, letters, whole words, sentences). Writer's conferences occur between the teacher and children on a regular basis to support the development of the child's craft as a writer.

## **Math**

Kindergartners are curious and filled with wonder about the world around them. Five- and six-year-olds explore, observe, question, measure, experiment, and make discoveries in both the indoor and outdoor classroom. We believe that when experiential learning is balanced with independent exploration and cooperative investigation (led by an adult), children become knowledgeable about the world and versatile in expressing how they understand math in their everyday lives. In kindergarten, children learn by being mathematicians (i.e., using the tools of mathematicians to sort, graph, tally, count, and construct). Multi-sensory, hands-on activities encourage active participation of every kindergartener in both group and individual experiences, as well as cooperative service learning projects. Math in kindergarten is integrated across the components of a thematic-based academic curriculum, and outdoor classroom learning figures prominently in the experiences of our kindergartners in relating the experience of math to investigations of the natural world. Kindergarten at FSH is the children's first experience with the *Math Trailblazers* curriculum.

## **Social Studies**

Kindergartners experience diversity of thought and action as they expand their understanding of themselves, and develop relationships with others. The kindergarten curriculum supports the development of a child's growing awareness of self, and a child's ability to respond with kind regard to the thoughts and feelings of others. In a curriculum that reflects an appreciation of that of God in every child, children learn cooperatively as the classroom becomes the workspace for a child's growing sense of community. A spirit document, written by the children, is assurance that we share an understanding of how we will work together in kindergarten. Our butterfly and vegetable gardens become the canvas for community building work that is meaningful to a young child, as we design, till, weed,

plant, and harvest together. During times of upset or conflict cozy corners in the classroom provide children with a place to acknowledge feelings and expectation that conflicts will be resolved peacefully. Building social confidence includes learning to be independent, to take responsibility for ones own belongings, to be respectful of others' belongings and space, and to appreciate natural, logical consequences of action.

## **Quakerism**

Quakerism is the foundation of the kindergarten curriculum. Kindergarten students create the classroom environment each year, with guidance from teachers. The classroom environment, student expectations, management techniques, and thematic units all stem from the FSH mission statement, *Quaker Meeting for Worship*, and the idea of “that of God in everyone.”

From the first day of school, peaceful problem solving and conflict resolution are modeled and incorporated into daily classroom life. When children feel upset, angry, or mad, they are encouraged to take a break in a comforting place. Providing space for emotional energy allows students to settle themselves, and prepare for the hard work of peaceful problem solving. Once children are physically calm, their brains are often ready to address conflicts with peers, using the *Ice Cream Cone Model*, developed to support problem solving with a concrete model that children can visualize.

Kindergarten teachers also use terms, based on Quaker language, to express daily routines and schedules. For instance, Quakers term worship time together as *Meeting for Worship*, and time to talk about business as *Meeting for Business*. It is tradition for the kindergarten day to include *Meeting for Sharing*, a small, intimate gathering based on the concepts and purpose of a Quaker *Meeting for Worship*. Children and teachers gather into a circle on the floor. Teachers light a candle as the class settles into silence. A *Sharing Shell* or other object is passed around the circle, offering children a chance to stand and speak from their minds and hearts. This concrete object helps young students experience standing in front of a group and speaking, just as Quakers do when they are moved to speak in *Meeting for Worship*.

*Meeting for Learning* is a term used to describe what happens when children gather as a group to discuss a topic; reflect on a book; or concept; listen to each other's thoughts; or share ideas. *Cooperative Play* describes the expectation for kindergartners during playtime. We expect children to respect each other during all times of the day, challenging them to see “that of God” in each peer. This expectation is reflected in the children's words through the creation of a classroom *Spirit Document*.

## **Art**

Our Studio Arts Program is designed to develop self-confidence, pride, trust, and initiative in each child as well as the uninhibited freedom to create with expression. Curriculum balances the academic study of art history and cultural arts with the elements

and principles of design to cultivate a lifelong love and appreciation for art and art history and puts art works into perspective relative to the past.

Hands-on activities foster growth in fine motor ability, technical skill, creative thinking, independent problem solving, and observation. Cultivating creative, “out of the box” thinkers is emphasized by offering studio challenges that are sequential and meets each student at their developmental level and particular learning needs.

This developmentally based curriculum strengthens the skills of decision-making, critical thinking, visual communication, and evaluation. Viewing, analyzing, reflecting, group discussion, and writing about art encourages students to synthesize concepts. Through studio-based experiences, students develop an awareness of the relationship between themselves, others, the environment, and the world.

Kindergarteners are introduced to regular studio work and curriculum focuses on exploration of line, shape, texture, and color through varied experiences with materials. Skill development is an important focus as well as general development through the schematic stages of drawing.

## **Library**

A kindergarten student should be able to remember and follow the library rules; remaining quiet during the read-aloud and allowing classmates to listen, keeping questions and comments on-topic, coming to the table for renewals and questions, using shelf markers to replace browsed books, coming to the librarian to resolve any disputes about who gets to sign out a book first, and using book choice time appropriately.

A student at year-end should be able to choose a book and sign it out without help. Students should be able to disengage from book choice time, after suitable reminders, finish their sign-outs, and line up to have their books counted.

## **Music**

The main goal of kindergarten music classes is to experience music in a variety of ways, work on music competency skills [the ability to sing in tune and move independently to the beat of music], build a repertoire of music and musical sounds, and to help in cognitive, motor, emotional, and social development. In transitioning to skills learning, musical concepts are given names—not only in passing, but as an intentional part of a lesson. In that way, students have a framework on which to build musical skills in the future.

## **Physical Education**

### *Goals and Objectives for K-2:*

- 1) For each child to develop confidence in their physical abilities.
- 2) To learn to work cooperatively with a group, solve conflicts peacefully, and to share equipment with others.
- 3) To develop a sense of fair play and good sportsmanship.
- 4) To enjoy physical activity and have fun.

This program includes a wide variety of movement experiences, simple tagging games, body management, and fundamental skill building. We use various types of equipment in order to challenge each individual student. Emphasis is placed on cooperation within the group, individual and small group activities, sharing, and following directions.

Kindergarten classes meet for a half hour period three times a week. First grade classes meet five days a week. Second grade classes meet four days a week for P.E.

## **Science**

Kindergartners are curious, and filled with wonder about the natural world around them. Five and six year olds explore, observe, question, measure, experiment, and make discoveries in both the indoor and outdoor classroom. Learning about science happens for a child whose hands are holding, touching, manipulating, building, and pouring; for a child whose eyes peer through magnifying lenses, “butterfly eyes,” kaleidoscopes, and paper towel binoculars; and for a child who expresses his/her understanding of science through creative movement, song, drawings, collections, graphs, tallies, and mapping.

We believe that when experiential learning is balanced with independent exploration and cooperative investigation (lead by an adult), children become knowledgeable about the world, and versatile in expressing how they understand science and math in their every day lives. In kindergarten, children learn by being young scientists (i.e. using the tools of scientists to question, observe, magnify, collect, sort, graph, tally, count, and build). Multi-sensory, hands-on activities encourage active participation of every kindergartner in mini lessons, workshop experiences, and cooperative service learning projects. Science in kindergarten is integrated across the academic curriculum and fully integrated into our thematic units. Outdoor classroom learning figures prominently in the experiences of our kindergartners.