Welcome to Kindergarten!

It is often said that play is the work of the young child and in kindergarten opportunities abound for students to explore and learn through play. They are also introduced to the structures and routines that bridge the early childhood and elementary programs.

Kindergartners see Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop on the daily schedule for the first time. Here we provide a balanced literacy approach, which begins by creating an appreciation for good literature and an ability to speak clearly, listen carefully and write with purpose. Balanced literacy includes phonological awareness, letter–sound correspondence, genre study, and lots of time reading, listening to and talking about many different types of texts. Students work independently, in small groups and as a class. Units of study include the home/school connection; routines and expectations of reading workshop; reading and telling stories through pictures and words; and becoming independent readers.

In kindergarten there is an emphasis on story, as it is largely through story we nurture early literacy development while allowing students to connect literacy to play, thus protecting the kindergartners special place in early childhood.

Kindergartners are already writers, filled with stories to tell and ideas to express. All they need to grow is a nurturing teacher who recognizes what they can do and can help them with what they are ready to learn next. Kindergarten writing includes talking, planning and drawing, as well as more formal print work. They learn about print – upper and lowercase letters, formation of letters and more, through the Handwriting Without Tears curriculum. We also focus on nurturing a writing identity and building the confidence to share ideas using oral language, words, and pictures. We want our young writers to develop a sense of pride and ownership in this work. Writing units of study are grounded in Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study and include units in narrative, information and opinion writing.

Mathematics focuses on comparing whole numbers, initially with sets of objects and describing shapes and space. Students use numbers to represent quantities, count objects in a set and compare sets. They model joining and separating situations with sets of objects or eventually represent their process with equations such as \(5 + 2 = 7\) and \(7 - 2 = 5\). Our emphasis is on building students’ experiences, language and number sense as they construct their mathematical understandings. Units of study include comparing sets and numbers to 20; addition and subtraction; shape, pattern and size; numbers to 100; time and money.

Social studies begins with a study of ourselves and others in our classroom. Students learn what others bring to the community, what we have in common with one another, as well as how we are different. Students learn to articulate and ask questions, listen to one another, and build upon the ideas of others. In the spring students incorporate all they have learned as readers and writers into their study of animals and zoos. Students select an animal they want to learn about, and with support and scaffolding from teachers, find out about their animal and share what they have learned through words, artwork, play and oral language.

Students learn Spanish through a series of lessons called SALSA. These are based on stories, folktales and fables. Students learn Spanish words, phrases, songs and games and gain facility listening to and speaking Spanish. We have many cultural celebrations where we sing Spanish songs and learn food names.

Kindergartners are natural scientists. Using all their senses: touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing, they observe and learn about the world around them. They discover relationships of change and growth and cause and effect. Kindergarten students visit the science room once a week and learn about classroom animals and how to care for them, the environment around our school, and how to observe and describe scientific phenomena.
Kindergartners have formal art instruction once a week to learn about elements of color, line and shape while exploring basic concepts of drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, arrangement and related vocabulary. Students create collections of work to demonstrate their understanding of the medium and concepts explored.

The music program provides opportunities for students to perform, create, and respond to music. Twice a week kindergartners attend music class. Through singing, playing instruments, moving to and creating music, students acquire musical skills and knowledge by doing. They learn to match pitch, move to a beat, repeat a rhythm with their bodies and use small percussion instruments. They participate in a Valentine's Day Concert in which they perform traditional folk songs and songs from around the world. They also have a performance opportunity during "Grandparents and Special Friends Day" held in the spring.

Kindergarten is a magical time. We work hard to protect the kindergartners’ special place in early childhood while introducing the skills, routines and structures that will shape their experience as they move through the Lower School.