

## LOWER ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The following is an overview of the core academic areas for the early elementary classroom and how they are taught in the mixed age group of 6-9 year olds. Children develop at different paces in different areas, so this overview is not presented in terms of age or grade level, but instead presented as a scope of the materials they will progress through in each area of study over the year or years they will attend.

We have separated the areas of study below in order to give a more in-depth overview of each area, but it is important to understand that all these skills (and more) are interconnected and overlap throughout the children's day, which is often referred to as cross-curricular.

### **READING and WRITING** (*decoding & encoding*)

Reading begins with a strong foundation in knowing the most common sounds of each letter. Sounds are introduced using sandpaper letters and objects that correlate to each sound. The sounds of each letter are reinforced through repetition, object sorting, and many letter sound games and activities.

Through the Royal Road to Reading materials, children are taught how to segment words into sounds, how to identify the symbol that is attached to each sound they isolate, and how to blend sounds together to make words.

Once they have mastered these foundational reading skills, the child will move onto the Waseca Reading Program. This program provides a systematic and sequential presentation of various phonetic elements. These are beautifully designed materials that offer the child a consistent four-step approach to mastering each phonetic element. In each phonetic grouping, the child will build words with the Moveable Alphabet (a set of wooden alphabet letters) to describe pictures, match pictures to words, practice reading words without picture clues, and then physically write out the words that belong to that group. Coupled with this reading program, the children will begin by reading short books that match the phonetic elements they are working on mastering. Our classroom library, as well as our new school library, contains many different early readers, as well as books that hold interest for the children. There are many times throughout the day that they have the opportunity to read independently, with a partner, or with the teacher. The importance of literature is communicated in many ways, through times carved out in the day to read, as well as the beautiful spaces set aside just for the purpose of reading.

Along with this Reading Program, the children will also engage with the Waseca Sentence Building work. These materials follow the same color-coded system as the Reading Program and each grouping focuses on the same phonetic element. With this material, the children will build sentences with the words given to describe a beautiful illustration. After building each sentence, they will then practice writing the sentence on their own, and creating their own illustration. As the the children progress through this work, and their understanding of sentence construction increases, they will learn to identify the parts of speech in each sentence. This sentence building work also introduces the children to new vocabulary and reinforces commonly used words, punctuation at the end of sentences, spaces between words, and the use of capital letters.

As well as working through the Waseca reading materials, the children will engage in a stream-lined approach to learning phonics called Reading Simplified. The Reading Simplified resources are designed to maximize time and focus concentration on each skill required to develop strong and confident readers. The resources include reading passages and poems, as well as interactive games led by the teacher that are presented to individuals and in small groups. These games are meant to strengthen skills of manipulating sounds to build words, sound symbol processing, and a blend as you read approach to decoding words.

Reading comprehension is taught through engaging in daily read-alouds of high quality literature followed by rich discussion of setting, characters, plot, and themes. These elements of story are further explored through creating story maps, retelling stories in various ways, and as children get older, answering written comprehension questions or completing book reports.

With the Waseca materials, students will learn how to build words and sentences. As they become more confident and comfortable with these skills, students will use other Montessori materials to learn the mechanics of writing: capitalization, punctuation, abbreviations, and sentence structure. And they will do word study work, covering parts of speech, along with alphabetizing, categorizing, compound words, prefixes, suffixes, antonyms, synonyms, plurals, singular and plural possessives, contractions, homophones, homographs, homonyms. At a developmentally appropriate time, accurate spelling is taught by introducing and practicing various spelling patterns and rules through the Language Works program.

The goal of writing in the early childhood years is to encourage children to become comfortable expressing themselves through written word. To this end, students will also engage in writer's workshop. This will encourage them to explore different elements of writing through mini lessons where various writing strategies are modeled for them. They will have the opportunity to implement these strategies in different writing pieces throughout the year, including narrative, opinion, and informational writings.

## MATH

The Math area follows concepts from simple to complex, concrete to abstract. As the child's mathematical mind develops, concepts are presented in an increasingly abstract way. Montessori materials are used to introduce each new math concept in a hands-on way which gives children a meaningful, multi-sensory experience and adds to their rich understanding of the concept. As the older children move to more abstract understanding of these concepts, we will incorporate the use of Singapore Math workbooks to reinforce and practice skills in a more traditional way.

Concepts taught and materials used:

- linear counting: *using one-to-one correspondence* (short bead stair, teen beads & boards, tens beads & boards, 100 board, bead chains)
- skip counting: *laying foundation for multiplication, squaring, and cubing* (short & long bead chains)
- place value: *understanding thousands, hundreds, tens, & ones* (golden beads materials, bank game, stamp game)
- addition & subtraction: *gaining a strong understanding of concepts and then fluency of facts* (equations, number bonds, and word problems)
- concepts of multiplication & division
- fractions
- time
- money
- 2 & 3-dimensional shapes: *names & attributes*
- measurement: *length, weight, height, capacity*

## SCIENCE

Our science curriculum is heavily influenced by the rhythms of nature and the natural world. Each theme is explored in a hand-on, experiential way based on observation and exploration of the world around us and additional research done through nonfiction books. These are some themes we will investigate and explore throughout the year, as well as leaving room to follow the students' interests that emerge naturally.

### September/October

- hatching chicks and understanding the development of chick embryo
- salamanders and frogs
- learning to identify leaves of deciduous trees

### November/December

- companion planting (Native American 3 sisters: corn, beans, & squash)
- animals preparation for winter
- coniferous trees

### January/February

- moon phases (in connection with Chinese/Lunar new year)
- science of snowflakes
- forms of matter

### March/April

- maple sugaring (carrying over knowledge from forms of matter)
- water cycle
- identifying different types of clouds

### May/June

- flowers, plants, and seeds
- life cycle of a butterfly
- insects

Science is a great example of how the areas of study overlap each other. Children are using so many different skills to understand a topic of interest. They learn to observe, identify, compare, and ask questions. They might measure and weigh to learn more about something. They use reading to research more about a topic, and then writing to record their findings and make predictions. They also learn to create bar and line graphs to analyze their data.

## **GEOGRAPHY & CULTURAL STUDIES**

Children will begin by studying the globe and the world map, learning the names of continents and oceans. This general overview will include learning about different types of land and water forms. After this, they will learn to locate famous land and water forms on the map in various continents around the world.

Students will go more in depth with different continents during their time at Deep Roots. The children are exposed to different types of maps and have the chance to make their own maps. The continent puzzle maps are political maps, with each country as a puzzle piece. The children will begin to learn the names and locations of the countries in each continent. A more in depth study of the continents' physical geography will be taught using the [Waseca biome materials](#). These rich materials dive into the various biomes that make up the physical geography of each continent. The children will learn about the plants and animals that inhabit each biome, along with the cultural traits of the people that live there and how they are influenced by and adapt to the environment around them.

In addition to learning about the physical geography and biomes of different continents, the children will learn about the history and culture of their own family, as well as that of their classmates' families. Over the year, each child will be creating and presenting their own family tree. As the children hear each other share about their family, they will learn to appreciate and celebrate the differences in cultures and traditions. We are excited to see where this study will take us!