

BUCKINGHAM BROWNE & NICHOLS LOWER SCHOOL



**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW
BEGINNERS
2011-2012**

Beginners Teachers

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*** Includes Language Arts, Mathematics and Social Studies instruction**

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Beginners Curriculum Overview

Homeroom

Discovering the joys of learning is a primary goal in this first year at school. The world of this age group is ever expanding. Learning is viewed as both a creative and a constructive act. Process is emphasized over product. Children are encouraged to ask questions and to explore their surroundings; with value placed on active, hands on learning. The Beginners curriculum provides a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters the social and emotional, cognitive and healthy physical development of young children. Activities assist the young child in acquiring the skills and competence appropriate to his or her individual development.

The curriculum is developed in accordance with the theoretical principles of child development and learning based on the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and other leading child development researchers. Core principles that guide lesson planning are:

- Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure.
- Children construct knowledge as a result of dynamic interactions within their physical and social environment. Children learn to construct their own knowledge through experimentation and physical/mental manipulations.
- Children learn best in a social context that promotes positive social interaction with other children and adults. The Beginner teacher's role is one of supporting, guiding and facilitating development and learning.
- Children learn through play. It is through play that children develop their imaginations and creativity. Play provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and manipulation that are essential for the construction of knowledge and contributes to the development of representational thought.
- Human development and learning are characterized by individual variations. Each child has an individual pattern of development as well as a unique learning style. In our developmentally appropriate classrooms, teachers identify what intrigues their children and develop activities based on the children's interests. This fosters a love of learning, curiosity, attention, and self-direction.

All of the basic concepts in language arts, mathematics, physical development, science and social studies are presented in an integrated framework. This allows the children to make important connections across all disciplines.

Language Arts

Emergent literacy (pre-reading and pre-writing) is an on-going developmental process. Literacy develops in young children when they can observe the functional uses of reading and writing in real life settings such as home, school, and community. Beginners experience language through authentic and meaningful experiences that are designed to meet children at their developmental level.

In Beginners:

- Children are surrounded by a print-rich environment that cultivates interest in language and words.
- Writing is modeled through charts, stories, songs and poetry, and recording weekly activities.
- Teachers encourage and support student writing by creating many opportunities to draw, copy, trace, and dictate stories.
- Student authors share their writing with the class and receive encouragement and feedback.
- Children learn to be a part of an audience by listening to their peers share personal items, anecdotes and stories.
- Children listen and respond in numerous ways to stories, informational books, and poetry.
- “Reading” individually, with friends, and to adults is encouraged daily.
- Children play with sounds through rhyme and alliteration to increase phonemic awareness.
- Children learn to listen to group instructions, individual instructions and to each other.
- Children are taught to ask and answer thoughtful questions related to the topic at hand.
- A reading specialist works with the Beginner team to plan consistent, interconnected lessons and language experiences.

Mathematics

Beginner teachers plan rich environments and offer developmentally sequenced opportunities that allow children to explore math concepts in the context of play. Math experiences are everywhere in the Beginner classroom, emanating from the daily experiences in sand/water play, block building, dramatic play, cooking, science exploration, manipulative games, and cooperative play. Using the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards as a guideline, some of the math concepts that are scaffolded during the year are:

Mathematics (continued)

Number and Number Sense

- Count, recognize and order the numerals 0 to 12
- Demonstrate knowledge of quantity (few, many, less, more)
- Use manipulatives to solve problems
- Learn to share individual critical thinking process with the group
- Understand 1:1 correspondence and accurately counts objects 1-20
- Use positional language and ordinal numbers in everyday activities

Classifying, Sorting and Patterning

- Sort and classify objects by different attributes
- Recognize simple patterns in the environment
- Originate and extend patterns

Geometry and Spatial Sense

- Recognize, and name basic shapes
- Demonstrate ability to complete puzzles using perceptual strategies
- Explore and identify space, direction, movement, position and size

Measurement

- Use non-standard units to measure length, weight and quantity
- Use measurement terms appropriately such as longer, shorter, bigger and smaller
- Use estimation in meaningful ways

Data and Analysis

- Organize and draw conclusions from collected data, such as creating and discussing surveys and graphs

Social Studies

Social studies in the Beginner's classroom are designed to foster a democratic social learning community. Teachers facilitate this growth with books, films, discussions, cooperative projects and through the buddy program with their sixth grade partners. As part of the Responsive Classroom curriculum, students begin each year involved in group discussions to develop rules for their classroom. They learn about our rights and their responsibilities as members of the community.

These civics ideals and practices include:

- What is a community?
 - Why do communities have rules?
 - How are communities different around the world?
 - How can we be good citizens in a community?

Social Studies (continued)

As Beginners start to understand and learn about their place in the world, they will investigate what are continents as a foundation for finding their place on the map. The essential questions they will address in these lessons will include:

- How are we alike and how are we different?
 - Why is it important to recognize differences and similarities in each other?
 - How are we the same/different from people in other communities throughout the 7 continents?
 - What are the 7 continents?

Science

When science is integrated into an early childhood curriculum, it helps to replace "magical thinking" explanations for phenomena with very logical information. Our goal is to help children to learn about the natural environment by organizing materials so that they can discover concepts through their own active involvement and reasoning powers. We will discover science through a multi-sensory, hands-on approach that emphasizes observing, interpreting, collecting, recording, and predicting information about scientific topics and concepts.

Our main goal in science is to nurture the children's natural curiosity while their disposition to inquire is encouraged. If curiosity and exploration are valued, children's quest for deeper meaning and greater insight about the world around them is fulfilled.

Visual Art

In Beginners the process of doing art is a hands-on experience in exploration and discovery. The process of creating through sensory-based exploration provides a developmental tool needed in the acquisition of cognitive and physical growth.

Open-ended, sensory-based exploration stimulates a child's brain to grow and develop neural connections that establish links to other areas of learning. The process of creating helps a child to grow cognitively by building skills in numeration, sequencing, cause and effect, and literacy. Our goal is to also develop an aesthetic appreciation of art that applies to all areas of life.

Library

Students visit the library in the Morse building where they listen to stories, select books to take home and begin to develop their library skills. The read aloud time provides an opportunity to:

- help children discover the joy of reading
- enrich students' vocabulary and develop listening skills
- talk about the role of the author and the illustrator
- read books that may relate to what is being studied in the classroom

When signing out books, students are able to choose from a variety of titles and genres as well as learn the responsibility of borrowing and returning a book within a given period of time. As the year progresses, students will learn:

- how the library is arranged by categories
- what types of books can be found in the library
- how the card catalog is organized by title, author and subject.

Parents are invited to visit the library and borrow books to read at home.

Music

Each Beginner attends music class in the Morse Building Music Room. The main objective is for children to enjoy the experience as they learn to participate as part of a group and become familiar with class routines.

Beginners music activities focus on the child's musical experience through singing, moving, listening, and playing unpitched percussion instruments. The principles of Responsive Classroom are incorporated in each class to create a safe and nurturing learning environment for everyone.

Rhythm

- Experience pulse in movement/body percussion
- Play unpitched percussion instruments
- Experience moving to a variety of meters

Melody

- Differentiate between high/low
- Experience up/down as well as singing in a limited range
- Explore vocal tone production
- Develop a repertoire of songs related to classroom themes/seasons/special days
- Explore creating songs by singing
- Explore the scale on pitched instruments

Harmony

- Experience tonality differences
- Sing/chant with teacher-accompanied Ostinato

Music (cont'd)

Form

- Experience same/different
- Experience verse/refrain in songs and cumulative form in songs
- Experience form in movement/listening activities

Expressive Qualities

- Explore space
- Experience tempo, dynamic contrasts, and timbre contrasts
- Experience unpitched percussion technique
- Create movement/music to accompany stories, rhymes, and poetry

Physical Development

Physical development is an important component of a healthy four and five year old's overall growth and development. Developing and practicing the fine motor and gross motor skill sets are an integral part of the daily Beginner curriculum.

Some of the **gross motor** skills the children will work to develop are:

- skipping
- running with increased control over direction and speed
- jumping over objects
- using large muscles for balancing
- developing eye-hand coordination for catching and throwing
- riding and steering a tricycle
- climbing up or down equipment
- jumping rope and jumping with one foot/ two feet

Some of the **fine motor** skills we will refine are:

- developing visual motor skills (e.g., assemble puzzle pieces that are increasingly difficult, string beads, use scissors)
- using fine motor skills for cutting, painting, drawing, sewing, gluing, tracing, copying, designing, constructing and working with clay
- using fine motor skills for self-help skills (e.g., pouring, using eating utensils, working zippers, buttons and ties)
- manipulating objects with increasing control
- using writing and drawing tools with increasing control and confidence
- beginning to develop strength and control for a tripod pencil grip

Physical Education

The Beginner physical education class introduces students to ways they can manage their bodies through movement exploration. This movement education helps the student to develop both mind and body through safe physical activity.

Play:

- An integral component of a child's physical, mental and social development; Beginners are given time to play with and experience a variety of balls and playground equipment

Manipulative activities:

- Balls and objects are used to introduce the skills of throwing, tossing, catching, kicking, bouncing, striking and rolling.

Loco-motor activities

- Patterns of walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, and sliding as the students move around, over, under, between and through various objects and apparatus while changing force, direction and shape

Non-loco-motor activities

- Bending, twisting, stretching, reaching, lifting, raising, turning, curling, changing their body shape

Rhythmic Activities:

- Exploring, moving, dancing, creating and warming up to music

Gymnastics

- Creative movement, animal walks, and balance stunts. Development of the upper body through climbing and swinging on the rope ladder, climbing up the cargo net, and work on the low balance beam

Group games

- Animal and color themes provide the central focus as we introduce games with simple rules and limited equipment. Changing speeds, levels or shapes with a limited equipment

Spanish

Beginners are introduced to the Spanish language program and will be exposed through activities and lessons in the target language which are integrated into daily classroom routines. The focus will be on exposure to:

- Sound recognition and pronunciation
- Basic greeting and conversational phrases
- Vocabulary that connects classroom content
- Music, dance, and games from Spanish speaking countries

Technology

Teachers use computers for collaborative writing projects with students and for documenting children's language for display in the classroom. There are a variety of reading and math programs available for Beginners at the computer centers in the classrooms.

The use of computers in the classroom fosters:

- connections to classroom curriculum
- creativity
- cooperation and communication
- motivation for a wide range of students with different learning abilities and styles
- knowledge of the basic parts of the computer in developmentally appropriate language

During a weekly technology period the technology teacher may take small groups to the Lehner Computer Lab to show them how to use various programs. These programs are also installed on the classroom computer. Once students learn how to use the programs in the Lab they can work on them independently during classroom choice time. Students may also receive one-on-one support in the classroom setting, to develop their computer skills and literacy as they play computer programs they have learned.

Responsive Classroom

Responsive Classroom is part of a school wide program to support the development in each individual of a core of important habits of mind that build the positive social emotional components for positive communication, character development, interpersonal relationships and responsibility to the broader school community. In the Beginners program we focus on the following skills.

- Build class rules and explore what it means to be part of a learning community.
- Learn to sit and positively participate in morning meeting; to share, greet, engage in all activities and be a respectful listener.
- Practice working with a partner and with small groups of peers.
- Accept and understand consequences for actions or comments that may disrupt or hurt others' feelings.
- Show proper use of classroom materials and following class/school rules.
- Become a supportive friend and teammate in games and lessons.