

# A Parent's Guide to the Washington Township Elementary Curriculum

## General Overview

This synopsis can be used by parents to gain an understanding of the concepts, skills, and topics of the instructional program that will engage students during the elementary grades. Although curriculum is unique to each district, the progressions are created in alignment with the Common Core State Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The concepts presented enable the students to develop the skills necessary for today and to prepare them to succeed in the future.

## Reading and Language Arts

Reading acquisition is the strongest indicator for student success at the elementary level and beyond. ~~Students can best gain this~~ foundation through a curriculum that is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades. Students learn the importance of reading independently and reading critically, which are essential skills to their future success. Considerations for grade level retention are reading achievement as well as other social and emotional development milestones. While retention is not a consideration for Kindergarten, students may be recommended for placement in the district's Transitional First Grade (T-1) class.

## Mathematics

Mathematics is taught using a hands-on approach in which students use various manipulatives ~~to formulate and~~ understand mathematical concepts. Students arrive at the realization that there are multiple ways to solve a problem. Various math games are used to practice mathematical concepts. Slate boards are also used by students to solve math problems and allow for the teacher to check for understanding. Written assessments are administered at the completion of each unit.

## Social Studies

The challenges of the 21st century are complex, have global implications, and are connected to ~~people, places, and~~ events of the past. The study of social studies focuses on a deep understanding of concepts that enable students to think critically and systematically about local, regional, national, and global issues.

Authentic learning experiences that enable students to apply content knowledge, develop citizenship skills, and collaborate with students from around the world prepare New Jersey students for the 21st-century workplace. The natural integration of technology in social studies education allows students to overcome geographic borders, apply scientific and mathematical analysis to historical questions and contemporary issues, appreciate cultural diversity, and experience events through the examination of primary sources.

Through authentic learning experiences, literature, primary sources, and the natural integration of technology, students explore historical events, documents, and individuals that led to the

development of the United States. In addition to the ratification and guiding principles of the Constitution and United States Government, students learn about the colonization and slavery in New Jersey. Through problem-based learning, students are introduced to basic economic principles, financial decision-making, and the impact of ideas, inventions and prominent figures throughout history.

In grades **K-4**, students learn fundamental concepts about government, citizenship, geography, economics, and history. The focus of instruction is on developing an understanding of core democratic values, the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, and how key people and events contributed to the development of the American heritage. Exploration of cultural universals enables students to realize how the availability of resources, the changing environment, and innovation impact everyday life.

In grades 5-8, students build upon K-4 foundational content. Through instruction in U.S. History and World History/Global Studies, students begin to analyze the implications of government structures and economic policies for individuals, communities, nations, and global relationships. The study of migratory patterns and belief systems that in the past led to cooperation and conflict among groups of people enable students to realize the significance of cultural transmission in today's global society. Relevant activities that help students connect content knowledge to current issues and that promote service learning empower students to become civic-minded and socially active.

## Science

Students develop scientific literacy as well as the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes through an inquiry-based, hands-on, problem-solving approach. Our students are provided enriching, meaningful experiences in Science which promote opportunities to make real-world connections in science using 21<sup>st</sup> century tools. Science topics are extended through informational texts which are part of the literacy reading selections.

## Art

The elementary art curriculum focuses on eight major goals:

- Instill in students an enjoyment of the creative process by encouraging individual expression in two- and three-dimensional visual art activities.
- Develop an appreciation of art through the study of artists throughout art history
- Enable students to analyze works of art critically through the study of art elements, organizational principles, expressive qualities, and subject matter.
- Develop an appreciation for art of various cultures and recognize art as a form of cultural expression.
- Develop perceptual ability through the study of the components of art (elements, principles, expressive qualities, and subject matter) and utilize the components in art production
- Develop the language of art through the study and application of terms and specific vocabulary as it relates to art.

- Develop an understanding of the relationship between the use of tools, techniques, materials, and the visual statement, including awareness, application, production, health and safety
- Develop an enjoyment and appreciation of the student's own art work and the art work of others.

#### Aesthetics

- Develop the capacity to perceive and respond imaginatively to works of art.
- Examine work by various artists with distinct styles to demonstrate techniques, approaches, historical relevance, or artists appropriate to specific units of study (i.e. a specific unit emphasizing drawing, printmaking, etc.)
- Various artists are studied at each grade level. The following artists are representative of those studied. This list is not exhaustive, and other artists may be used in place of those mentioned here. Examples of representative artists at each grade level may include:
  - Grade One: Piet Mondrian, Leonardo da Vinci, Jackson Pollock, Marcel Duchamp, etc.
  - Grade Two: Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Michelangelo Buonarroti, etc.
  - Grade Three: Vincent van Gogh, Rembrandt van Rijn, etc. Students will study Surrealism through the works of Spanish artist, Joan Miro, among others. Students may create their own self-portraits incorporating the artistic styles of various artistic periods.
  - Grade Four: Henri Matisse, Alexander Calder, Paul Klee, etc.
  - Grade Five: Georgia O'Keeffe, Georges Seurat, Pablo Picasso, the Surrealists, etc. Students will learn about the neo-impressionist period through the works of French artist, Georges Seurat and his "pointillism" technique. Students will also study American artist, Georgia O'Keeffe who specialized in realism as well as abstraction in her unique vision of flowers and bones flowers particularly in the American West. Each student will abstract a flower or other "O'Keeffe motif" into a design or drawing. Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso and his Cubism period will inspire a student creation in "cubism". Other schools of art such as Surrealism may be revisited for extension of concepts explored. All students will have the opportunity to engage in each of the techniques studied during the year.

#### Design:

- Gain and use knowledge of design elements and principles in the appreciation and creation of visual art.
- Identify the seven elements and principles of design, exploring the various ways of utilizing these elements in their work.

#### Drawing:

- Develop skills and concept understanding in drawing, based on the study of artists and individual artistic expression.
- Use elements of art, color, value, line, shape, form, space and texture through varied drawing activities.

#### Painting:

- Develop skills and concept understanding in painting, based on the study of artists and individual artistic expression.
- Study and experiment with painting techniques and themes, using various media and techniques: dyes, watercolor, ink, gouache, acrylic, painting pens and markers, crayon resist, tempera, etc.

#### Printmaking:

- Develop skills and concept understanding in various methods of printmaking, based on an understanding of printmaking techniques and the proper and safe use of tools and media.
- Use the following design principles: repetition/pattern, overlap, composition, perspective, abstract, harmony/variety experimenting with various printmaking techniques.

#### Crafts/Sculpture/3-Dimensional Art:

- Develop skills and concept understanding in various types of crafts, including sculpture, ceramics, and other forms of three-dimensional art. Students will learn and employ the proper and safe use of tools and media.
- Engage in various three-dimensional activities such as: found object art, weaving, ceramics, sculpture, additive forms, masks, puppets, and three-dimensional forms.

Students will focus on several major artists who have contributed to art history. They will study the art elements of line, shape, color, and value, along with abstract works such as those of Mondrian and Pollock. Each child will have the opportunity to create his or her own “masterpieces” of art based on the styles of the focus artists.

### Music

All students will learn the basic elements of Music: Rhythm, Dynamic, Melody, Harmony, Tone Color, Texture, and Form. Elementary 'General' Music K- 5, is the setting that provides Melody, Rhythm and Movement. Melody installs oral/ auditory comprehension to decipher Pitch; relating to all sound (high or low), whether singing or speaking. Rhythm; aligning comprehension for consistency throughout Music and maintaining a steady beat, for reading and literacy development. This objective also provides Mathematical skill and formulates proportion, as seen in beats for playing or singing. Finally, Movement; moving with a 'kinesthetic' organized approach, confirms the ability to perform Melodic and Rhythmic tasks using patterns, gross /fine motor skills, applied for all of the levels. Music, a performing art, not only evokes motion through space, but is the realm for creativity. It is an explored art having infinite parameter dominating self expression, desire and love through all senses of humanity. Critical thinking along with freeform expression, builds a foundation for every student to prosper in self confidence.

### Library

Library instruction is an essential part of the elementary educational program. Serving all grade levels, ages and content areas, the program has a unique outlook on the needs and abilities of all of the members of the school's learning community. One of our goals is to create interest in and foster appreciation of reading and encourage self-selection of materials, while becoming independent users of any library. In addition, the rapid change in communication technology requires quality library media programs with a variety of resources and skills, enabling students to access, evaluate, interpret and apply information from print and nonprint materials. The students will understand, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply ideas and information with competence and confidence.

The elementary library curriculum focuses on four major themes:

- Information Literacy
  - Reference Materials: electronic and print
  - Internet Usage
  - Web 2.0 Participation
  - Digital Literacy
  - Parts of a Book
- Research Skills
  - Use of Research Information
  - Note-Taking
  - Works Cited
  - Plagiarism
- Literature Application
  - Authors, Illustrators Study
  - Genre Study
  - Fiction vs. Nonfiction
  - Caldecott and Newbery Awards
  - Cultural Celebrations/Recognition
- Library Organization and Procedures
  - Circulation Procedures
  - Care of Library Materials
  - Physical Organization of Library
  - Use of Electronic Catalog

## Physical Education

The goal of the elementary physical education program is to promote and encourage a healthy lifestyle through physical activity.

Movement Skills:

- All students will participate in a wide range of developmentally appropriate games, sports, dance, and lifetime recreational activities that will help students develop and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle. They will become competent and proficient in various movement forms in a wide variety of activities.
- All movement skills will carry over to all aspects of everyday life.

Rhythmical Activities:

- Using a wide variety of rhythmic activities, the students will be able to interpret and respond to changes in music, to move in rhythm with music, with or without equipment.
- By learning and performing rhythmic activities, these skills will be used and enjoyed beyond the students' school years and throughout life.

Eye-hand and Eye-foot Activities:

- With the use of various pieces of equipment, the students will develop the necessary skills to perform proficiently in eye-hand and eye-foot activities.
- Becoming proficient in these skills will give the students' the confidence to pursue and participate in activities throughout their lifetime.

### Gymnastics:

- Students will develop and maintain strength, coordination, flexibility and agility. Students will develop body control, and spatial awareness (general and personal). Stunts, tumbling, and apparatus provide an excellent opportunity to apply and practice flexibility, agility, strength, and power. The students will learn that when you stick with a task and accomplish it, it requires dedication and hard work.
- Becoming proficient in these skills will give the students the confidence to pursue and participate in activities throughout their lives.

### Fitness:

- The students will be introduced to health and fitness-related components which will be used to promote a healthy active lifestyle.
- Students will develop and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle and apply health-related and skill-related fitness concepts that will carry over throughout life.

## Health

### Instructional Topics

- Self-Esteem/Social and Emotional Health
- Safety and Accident Prevention
- Family Life/Human Sexuality
- Body Systems
- Interpersonal Skills
- Personal Health/Hygiene
- Nutrition/Wellness/Fitness
- Alcohol/Tobacco/Other Drugs
- Disease Prevention
- Safety Outdoors

## Computers

The elementary computer education program empowers students to become life-long learners and effective users of information, ideas, and technology. Students use digital tools to access, manage, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to solve problems individually and collaboratively and to create and communicate knowledge across the curriculum.

Grade 1: Students are introduced to the features and functions of computers. Students will be able to navigate successfully through and use developmentally appropriate computer technology.

Grade 2: Building on grade 1 goals and expectations, students are introduced to using developmentally appropriate digital resources to solve problems individually and collaboratively. Keyboarding Software, Word Processing Software, Drawing Software, and websites will be used to solve problems individually and collaboratively. Students will also be introduced to cyber safety, cyber security, and cyber ethics when using existing and emerging technologies.

Grade 3: A greater emphasis is placed on keyboarding skills and use of the home keys. Students use the correct names and functions of computer hardware, basic Windows operation, keyboarding and word processing. The Internet is used for research and the

use of web sites. Interactive software is used to enrich and extend the curriculum. Students also become practiced in desktop publishing and computer drawing.

Grade 4: Students will build upon third grade skills by further exploring applications including MS Office Suite. Students will continue keyboarding to enhance word processing skills. As the Internet is used for research, Cyber Safety is reinforced. Presentation software, such as PowerPoint will be utilized.

Grade 5: Skills previously taught are refined and built upon during fifth grade. Students will demonstrate the ability to use developmentally appropriate digital tools (e.g. Keyboarding Software, Word Processing Software, Drawing Software, websites) to solve problems individually and collaboratively. Skills previously taught are refined and built upon during fifth grade. Focus is placed on cyber safety, bullying, social net-working and the district Acceptable Use Policy.

## **Basic Skills Instruction (BSI) as Supplement to Math and Reading/Language Arts**

The BSI Program is tailored to meet the needs of identified students at each grade level. In the **Pull-Out Setting**, students leave their classroom to receive small group instruction.

The **Team-Teaching Model** allows the students to remain in their regular classroom setting. Both the classroom and basic skills teacher assume responsibility for all students and plan accordingly based on the needs of the students.