

**Transition from Montessori**

The lower school provides a smooth transition from the Montessori program.

While the academic program in the lower school is not Montessori based, the Montessori methods influence instruction. We make learning intrinsically motivating and provide students with opportunities to lead, teach, interact and learn by observing others. Students are challenged to achieve their highest potential. Children are encouraged to explore their own interests in journal writing and self-selected reading, and they solve real life problems in math.

**Mathematics**

Students use the *Everyday Mathematics* series from the University of Chicago School Math Project (UCSMP). The program was developed to correspond to the NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. The five goals of the NCTM are that students will (1) value mathematics, (2) communicate mathematically, (3) reason mathematically, (4) be confident in the ability to do mathematics, and (5) become mathematical problem solvers. The program focuses on partner and small group activities such as concept games, and utilizes hands-on projects and explorations in order to focus on higher-level thinking and problem solving. Math concepts are taught in a spiral approach so that important concepts are revisited up to five times in a two-year period. Each grade level has a specific focus.

**Language Arts and Reading**

The Woods lower school language arts program emphasizes a strong developmental literacy foundation of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The balanced program emphasizes the necessary foundational skills of reading through small and large group directed lessons, while immersing students in a variety of literary genres. The program also emphasizes that writing is a process. A continuum of language skills and strategies are taught from phonemic awareness to advanced word study. Through class discussions, oral presentations--including library theatre--students' speaking skills are strengthened. Listening skills are developed through a variety of activities, including read-alouds. In addition to focused lessons, language arts and reading skills are developed in all subject areas.

**Science**

The science program is designed to allow students to think like scientists and engage in scientific inquiry.

The program emphasizes an exploration of scientific concepts in the areas of biology, chemistry, physics and earth sciences. The curriculum spirals through each area in a progression that is in alignment with recommendations from the National Science Teachers Association. Science is hands-on with a strong laboratory component and uses materials from the National Science Resource Center's *Science and Technology Concepts for Children* Program.

Upon completion of the science program at The Woods, students will be scientifically literate. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), "literacy involves the ability to design and carry out experiments and investigations of the natural world. It includes communicating those results to others in meaningful ways and relating knowledge of science principles to concrete examples in one's everyday life and the world of work."

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## **Social Studies**

The Social Studies program focuses on education for civic participation and global understanding. It draws upon the fields of economics, geography, history, political science, religion, and sociology. Students come to a better understanding of the complexities of human interaction and organization including local, state and national governance. Topics including culture, history, government, global connections, time, continuity and change are explored.

## **Religion**

The religion program is designed to introduce students to the Catholic faith and traditions while inviting them to deepen their appreciation of other faiths. Students examine the life and teachings of Jesus and stories from the Old and New Testaments. They reflect on their own lives as they grow in their spirituality. Promoting ethical decision-making is a cornerstone of the program. Community service and character development enrich each students' faith life.

## **Technology Integration**

Students use and learn about computers and related educational technologies. Students develop proficiency in a variety of software programs. They edit graphics and create original art. As they grow, students create curriculum-related projects and reinforce concepts taught in the classroom. Students develop keyboarding skills using *Type to Learn* and desktop publishing. Students are introduced to spreadsheets, create graphs, and produce and edit videos using digital video cameras.

## **Guidance**

In the lower school guidance program, the focus is on prosocial norms and community building. Students learn how to express their feelings, prevent social cruelty, solve conflicts, be kind, and communicate effectively. In addition, students learn to value diversity, think optimistically and morally. At each grade level, media literacy is taught.

## **Physical Education**

The lower school physical education program follows the guidelines developed in "Moving into the Future" National Association for Sport and Physical Education National Standards and Appropriate Practices. Units such as Movement Concepts for Body, Space, Effort and Relationship Awareness, Motor skills (locomotor, non-locomotor and manipulative) are implemented. Emphasis is placed on safety, skill development and movement concepts (rules and strategies), individual physical fitness level, teamwork, sportsmanship, character development. Through introduction, refinement and mastery of motor skills and movement concepts the students are highly encouraged to exhibit a physically active lifestyle. The students participate twice a year in the President's Challenge – a series of physical fitness tests.

## **Art**

The Art Program for lower school students is a hands-on experience and helps students gain a better understanding of themselves and those around them. Students at all grade levels study works created by artists representing cultures and periods different from their own, and making them aware of the beliefs, ideas, and feelings of people of various ethnic origins, religions, and cultures. Students are exposed to a variety of media including drawing, printmaking, architecture, sculpting, painting, and ceramics. Students develop their skills in an environment that emphasizes creative expression and an appreciation for the contribution of others. This also includes the study of art history, analysis,

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and aesthetic discussions. Students are encouraged to experiment, take risks, developing their creativity, skills and imaginations.



## **Music**

The Music Program is designed to engage students' minds, bodies, and spirits through singing, song-games, and instrument playing. Based on the Kodaly and Orff methods of music teaching, the ultimate aim of the program is to instill in each student a love and appreciation of all types of music.

As students progress from First through Fourth grade, they work together to decode the rhythmic, melodic, and expressive elements of music, ultimately learning to read and write standard music notation. Students explore rhythm and melody through percussion instruments, Orff xylophones, and recorders. Using songs from traditional folk and classical repertoire, students develop their singing voices. To reinforce aural skills, students learn solfege body signs and hand signs. These hands-on, skills-based music classes encourage students to fully participate in music-making.

Frequent performing opportunities give students a chance to expressively share the music they have studied. Students participate in school performances such as Grandparent's Day, Christmas Concert, school masses, chapel, lunch-time recitals, and class showcases. In addition, Upper School students may choose to join the extra-curricular Chorus or Instrumental Ensemble. Through studying and performing music, students develop poise, personal expression, confidence, and a life-long love of music.

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## **Modern Language – French and Spanish**

Language instruction begins with an emphasis on listening and speaking skills. Students learn songs and poems and play games that reinforce communicative skills. Activities that focus on vocabulary, grammatical structures, and expressions help students develop dialogues about everyday topics. As language study progresses, greater emphasis is given to reading and writing. In addition, students are exposed to various aspects of French/ Francophone or Spanish/ Latin American culture including geography, weather, holidays, customs and traditions.

The fourth grade students participate in the *American Association of Teachers of French* National French contest at the FLES level.

## **Library**

Through weekly library visits, students develop literature appreciation by listening to stories and selecting books to borrow from the library. The students learn about the organization of the library material and the parts of a book. Students practice finding books on shelves and are introduced to the dictionaries and encyclopedias in book form. In addition, they locate library material using the card catalogue and find information in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases. Above all, independent reading is encouraged.

Students in grades 1 and 2 participate in Library Theater.

## **Transition to Upper School**

During their elementary school experience, students develop the study skills necessary for future success including note taking and organization skills. Students develop the habits of mind and character such as independence and self-reliance that will ensure a smooth transition to the upper grades.