

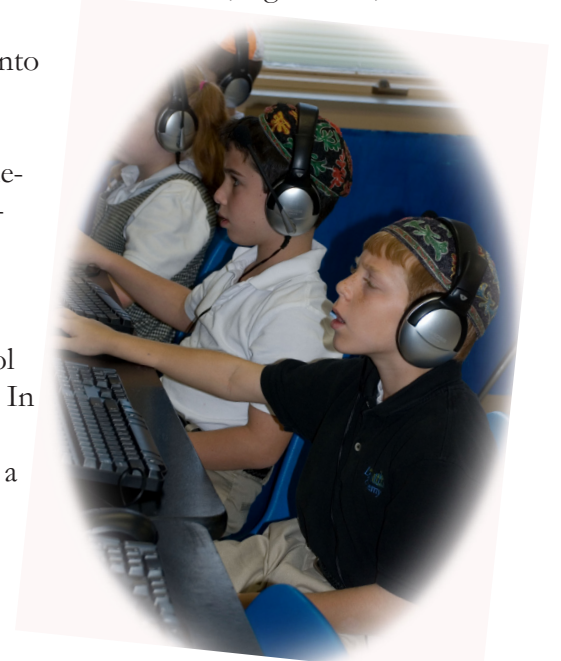
Ann and Nate Levine Academy Janet and Jeffrey Beck Lower School Curriculum Guide

The academic programs at Ann and Nate Levine Academy are second-to-none. Every child receives personalized attention as he or she is guided through a continuum of study that covers basic skills for success as well as in-depth studies and hands-on learning opportunities. Our small classroom sizes and tried-and-true methodologies have continually produced graduates that have proven to be well-equipped for success in high school, college, and beyond.

The Lower School and Middle School curriculum balances academic challenges, social awareness, ethical values, and the developmental realities of childhood. Language Arts, Social Studies, and Jewish Studies offer challenging analytical and application opportunities, while delving into novels, poetry, and writing. Science, Math, and Hebrew language focus on the steps necessary to solve life's puzzles: following the scientific method, algorithms, and the requirements of thinking in a foreign language. The entire Lower School uses a study and organization system designed around brain research: how children learn, how information is more easily put into long-term memory; how to organize materials for easiest retrieval, both literally and figuratively.

The physical education program provides an opportunity to refine skills and compete within appropriate guidelines, while the choir, art, and technology departments provide an outlet for the more creative side of our students.

Social service is an important part of the Levine Academy program. In Lower School, grade level programs are organized for the greater community, in addition to service completed within the school day. Lower School students participate in a Be the Change Club, learning first hand how to make positive changes in their world. In Middle School, students have mandatory minimum individual community service requirements, in addition to the service completed within the school day. With numerous larger school opportunities being offered within a smaller school setting, leadership opportunities abound for the Levine Middle School student.



Kindergarten

Overview

In Kindergarten it is our goal to provide a stimulating, nurturing learning environment where the children are encouraged to work towards:

- Developing self-awareness, inter-personal skills and responsible behaviors, which will enable them to be successful in school and life.
- Developing literacy skills that enable students to progress in reading, comprehension, writing and oral communications.
- Laying the foundation for students to explore, conjecture, and reason logically in mathematics.
- Realizing they can learn about their world by asking questions and conducting experiments.

Language Arts/Reading

Kindergarten literacy instruction begins with a sound-symbol program that employs visual, auditory and kinesthetic activities and encourages children to take ownership of their learning of decoding strategies. We integrate reading aloud, shared reading, reading centers, guided reading, independent reading and shared/interactive writing. It is our goal that each child sees him/herself as a competent learner who is able to realize his/her potential.

Mathematics

The math curriculum is built around Kindergarten Everyday Mathematics, a program created through the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. We present the concepts in clear, concrete ways. After presentation manipulatives area given to the children to reinforce the skills just learned. The children are given materials and time to explore, develop, and refine their understanding of the math they use in real-life situations. Students enjoy playing games and doing activities that provide experience and practice that lead to a growing understanding of number theory and mathematical skills such as counting, computing, measurement, geometry, patterns, and the collection and interpretation of data.

Science

The Kindergarten science curriculum takes advantage of the natural curiosity children have about the world around them, as well as their love of experimentation. Students use hands-on activities to address concepts related to life, physical and earth sciences, as well as the nature of science. It is our goal that Kindergarten students experience science in meaningful, fun ways that will help them deepen their understanding of science and how it relates to them.

Social Studies

Our work in Social Studies revolves around national and religious holidays. It is through these touchstone events that we provide the students with opportunities to understand that being a good citizen in a community involves acting in certain ways. We introduce the concept that history relates to events, people, and places of other times. We want the children to become aware of the difference between needs and wants. It is our goal that they become well-rounded individuals who can fulfill a positive role in the community.

Jewish Studies/Hebrew

Kindergarten students are introduced to Torah study through stories and celebration of Jewish holidays. Students are introduced to prayer (tefilah), emphasizing blessings (brachot) for the day, food, and various occasions. Kindergartners are also introduced to Hebrew language through an immersion curriculum called Chalav U'dvash. Units include phonetics, the aleph-bet, numbers, colors, parts of the classroom, and foods.

First Grade

Overview

First Grade is a year of growth and change. All units of study incorporate four major areas of development: language, mathematics, science, and social studies. First grade also focuses on four main goals: expanding students' appreciation for our world and natural environment; developing as independent learners; realizing the natural consequences for one's actions; fostering a sense of respect for themselves and others.

Language Arts/Reading

Reading and Language Arts instruction is taught through a combination of phonics instruction and whole language. Reading is an integral part of the daily language arts program and is integrated within all units of study. First graders use formal and informal writing processes. They begin to express their creative thoughts in a written form through the use of journals and story writing. Students also begin understanding basic sentence structure and write stories that have a beginning, middle and end. They apply the steps of the writing process to their stories to become expressive and imaginative writers.

Mathematics

In first grade, we use Everyday Math developed by the University of Chicago Mathematics Program. Everyday Math starts with basic concepts and builds on the fundamental strands such as numeration and counting, operations and relations, and problem solving. Also, students are expected to master basic math facts in the areas of addition and subtraction, and students will receive enrichment and extension as appropriate.

Science

The Science curriculum is organized around the three main areas of the natural sciences: physical science, earth science, and life science. Science is integrated with the language arts and social studies program. Emphasis is placed in the areas of scientific knowledge, processes, manipulative skills, and thinking.

Social Studies

The Social Studies curriculum teaches the students about their relationship to the classroom, school, and the community. Students will begin to understand concepts of time and chronology, distinguishing between past, present, and future. Students will also begin to recognize the continents and the habitats of natural wildlife. Each unit of study incorporates reading, writing, critical thinking, and problem solving skills that focus on a specific content area.

Jewish Studies/Hebrew

Jewish studies and Hebrew are integrated through a curriculum called TaL AM, which includes a survey of the stories of the Torah in the book of Genesis. Emphasis is placed upon learning the characters in Genesis and the primary themes, such as God, Israel, and morality. TaL AM also helps students build their Hebrew abilities, especially proficiency in reading and writing. Students are immersed in conversational Hebrew, and holidays are emphasized.

Second Grade

Overview

The overall curriculum goals in second grade are appreciating others and their differences, and being responsible for personal actions. These goals, as well as the values of the Ethical covenant, are incorporated throughout each unit of study: community/bats, mall, five senses, water. (NEED TO CHECK THESE)

Language Arts/Reading

Second grade language arts is taught through a combination of whole language and phonemic methodology. The curriculum focuses on reading comprehension, writing, spelling, and grammatical skills. Second grade uses a basal series along with novel studies. This provides an enriching reading curriculum. The language arts component also involves writing, spelling, and grammatical skills.

Mathematics

Second graders use the Everyday Math Program, developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. This curriculum builds on fundamental mathematical strands such as numeration and counting, operations and relations, and problem-solving. The component of basic fact mastery is continued for addition and subtraction, as well as beginning mastery of multiplication facts. The focus of the program is on higher-order thinking skills, as well as application and analysis.

Science

Second grade science introduces the students to the natural world, living and nonliving organisms, and the five senses. This is done through various hands-on and demonstrated experiments. Additionally, the children produce various class projects and participate in their first dissection experience.

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum in second grade includes studies of communities, basic economics, and water as a resource. Through these units the students develop an understanding of the importance of their roles in society.

Jewish Studies/Hebrew

Jewish Studies and Hebrew are integrated through a curriculum called Tal Am, which builds upon what was taught in first grade. Tal Am includes a survey of the stories from the Torah in the Book of Genesis, continuing through much of Exodus. Students discuss themes from the Torah and take part in activities built around those discussions. Hebrew studies emphasize proficiency in reading and writing, and students are immersed in conversational Hebrew. Hebrew language also includes the study and identification of fundamental aspects of grammar. Holidays are also emphasized.

Third Grade

Overview

The global curriculum goals for third graders all involve organization, both personal and societal. We learn how all living creatures organize themselves in varying ways and how all members of these organizations depend upon one another. These observations permeate every unit taught in Third Grade.

Language Arts/Reading

Third grade language is taught using a multi-pronged approach. Separate curricular areas include reading, creative writing, spelling, vocabulary and grammar. Third Grade reading uses a research based program to teach a wide variety of comprehension strategies. These skills are later reinforced through the reading of grade level appropriate novels. This dichotomy provides both an entertaining and enriching classroom experience for young readers.

Mathematics

Levine Academy's Beck Lower School has adopted the SRA Real Math program, developed and published by the McGraw-Hill Companies for grades three and four. This comprehensive program teaches basic math skills in a real world context, encouraging learners to think mathematically. Students are encouraged to reason through problems and to engage themselves in a wide variety of math related activities. The curriculum includes such diverse components as computation, algebraic function, decimals, fractions, and geometry. An emphasis is placed on the mastery of multiplication facts 0-12.

Science

Third grade science continues the exploration of the natural world, concentrating on both plants and animals. The students explore these concepts through the Houghton Mifflin Science series. They enrich their understanding of a wide range of related topics by engaging in hands-on investigations and observations.

Social Studies

The social studies program in third grade includes units focused on maps, pioneers, and the middle ages. These units reinforce the concept that all successful societies are reciprocal.

Jewish Studies/Hebrew

Jewish Studies and Hebrew are integrated through a curriculum called Tal Am, which builds upon what was taught in second grade. Tal Am includes a continuing survey of the stories from the Torah in the Book of Genesis and some of Exodus. Students discuss themes from the Torah and take part in activities built around those discussions. Hebrew studies emphasize proficiency in reading and writing, and students are immersed in conversational Hebrew. Hebrew language also includes the continued study and identification of fundamental aspects of grammar. Holidays are also emphasized.

Fourth Grade

Overview

The major goal of Fourth Grade is to ensure students are aware of how changes impact our world. This touches all areas of the curriculum, including but not limited to a study of American government and geography, the human body, forces that shape the earth, Texas, and inventions. Emphasis is placed on students becoming independent learners to ensure they have the necessary skills to be successful in middle school, such as:

- Using a variety of note taking techniques
- Displaying ability to recognize and extract relevant information from text
- Develop study skills to prepare for examinations
- Research independently
- Acquisition of organizational and time management skills with target dates
- Implementing reading strategies and writing skills

Language Arts/Reading

In Reading and Language Arts, we are reinforcing the comprehension reading strategies taught in lower grades and introducing additional strategies to enable the children to comprehend higher level material. By utilizing short stories, newspaper articles, novels, and other instructional materials that are both fiction and nonfiction, we are building on previously obtained skills. Strong emphasis is placed on the six traits of the writing process and the Ethical Covenant. Students are expected to apply the varied steps of the writing process and write specific assignments.

Mathematics

Fourth grade students are taught to think mathematically so they can reason, understand, and apply mathematics meaningfully in order to identify, solve and communicate about real-life problems. Students will be engaged in math in order to see its use and understanding in our environment.

Science

In Science, students will explore the three states of matter, skeletal system, natural disasters, and inventions. Students will hold their own Invention Convention where they present their product and discuss the problem it solved. Additionally, students will participate in a dissection experience.

Social Studies

In Social Studies, students will be learning the branches of government, the election process, past presidents, as well as, state and local officials. Students bring current events into the classroom and participate in the News Bowl.

Jewish Studies/Hebrew

Jewish Studies and Hebrew are integrated through a curriculum called Tal Am, which builds upon what was taught in third grade. Tal Am includes a survey of the stories from the Torah in the Book of Exodus. Students discuss themes from the Torah and take part in activities built around those discussions. Hebrew studies emphasize continued proficiency in reading and writing, and students are immersed in conversational Hebrew. Hebrew language also includes the continued study and identification of fundamental aspects of grammar. Holidays are also emphasized.

Music

The primary focus of the Music curriculum is to help students learn how to enjoy and use the power of music wisely throughout their lives. Students are exposed to many different styles of music, including classical and pop, so they can develop their own personal preferences, be able to recognize “world-class” excellence when they see or hear it, and choose music and entertainment that reinforces positive values and behaviors. Students are encouraged to become life-long music makers, even if it is just singing or playing a musical instrument for their own personal enjoyment. Opportunities are provided to enable students to express themselves creatively with special music projects or by writing their own original songs, which can be incredibly fulfilling and developed just like any other talent or skill.

Students in Middle School have the option of taking General Music or Band for their music component. Band consists of one weekly rehearsal with other grade level students during the school day. When students reach the seventh grade, after two years of Concert Band, they have the option of remaining in the band program and entering the Honor Band. Additionally, seventh and eighth grade students have the option of auditioning for the Lab Band, a smaller elite group that plays jazz, rock and fusion music using a more contemporary instrumentation. The Concert Band, Honor Band and Lab Bands perform for athletic events, concerts, regional competitions and special events for the school. All band students are required to take an additional private lesson during the week, scheduled beyond the school day. Students have the choice of playing flute, clarinet, saxophone, coronet/trumpet, trombone, tuba and percussion (drums). Students in the band programs, not only learn how to read and perform music, they learn how to work together as a group. Discipline is a key factor in their success. Upperclassmen learn to become leaders and bring the underclassmen along in becoming good musicians and leaders.

For many of our students, general music class is a welcome “change of pace” from their normal academic routine. They get to experience a variety of fun activities that include speaking, acting, singing, reading music, counting, clapping, conducting, moving, dancing, and playing instruments. Fun drills and “boys vs girls” competitions are used to help them learn the fundamentals of music in a creative, enjoyable way. All students have the opportunity to participate in exciting and memorable performances each year whether it be in the annual Zimriyah Song Festival, talent show, spring revue, school band, jazz-rock combo, or show choirs.

Physical Education

The Physical Education curriculum takes a whole child approach to physical fitness. Students have the opportunity to experience a wide range of team sports, enhance skill development, engage in teamwork, experience a competitive environment, build self-esteem, develop appropriate sportsmanship, and instill a life-long enjoyment of physical activity.

Middle School P. E. builds on what was learned in Lower School, continuing the development of gross motor skills and coordination, and targeting specific skills needed in team sports. Team work, appropriate sportsmanship, an understanding of the rules of the game, and the spirit of competition

Information Technology

Information Technology at Levine Academy focuses on having students think creatively, develop innovative products using technology, and build upon their knowledge as they move from skill to skill. Students utilize existing knowledge to generate new ideas and products, creatively express themselves, use systems thinking to explore complex systems, and work toward identifying trends and forecasting possibilities.

Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others. They collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and others employing a variety of digital media and formats.

It is important for our students to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences utilizing a variety of media and formats. They must develop a cultural understanding and global awareness by engaging with learners of other cultures and contribute to project teams to produce original works.

Research and information retrieval is an essential part of the curriculum, requiring that students access, retrieve, manage, and evaluate information using digital tools. They locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and use information from a variety of sources and media. Additionally, students learn to evaluate and select information sources and technological tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks. Finally, they process data and report results.

Critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making are all parts of the information technology curriculum. Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems and make informed decisions using appropriate technology tools. They also identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation and plan strategies to guided inquiry, plan and manage activities to develop solutions and complete projects, collect and analyze data to identify solutions and make informed decisions, and use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions.

As a Jewish Day School, Levine Academy insists that students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior. We advocate and practice safe, responsible use of information and technology, exhibit positive attitudes toward technology uses that support collaboration, learning, and productivity, demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning, and exercise proactive leadership for digital citizenship.

Art

Levine Academy Fine Arts curriculum is based on national art education standards, art history, cross curriculum, and the creative process. Students are taught about famous artists, genres, history, and mixed media art. Vincent Van Gogh, Chuck Close, Leonardo Da Vinci, Marc Chagall are just a few of the many artists students study. They are shown examples of famous artworks, and often recreate artworks in their own imaginative way. Emphasis is placed on creativity, learning how to use supplies, and the actual process to create a work of art. Students spend several weeks working on one project to fruition. The goal is to encourage students to have a meaningful relationship with the arts throughout their lives.