



The Harley School

Established 1917

Lower School Curriculum

The Harley Lower School experience begins with a Nursery program for 3 and 4 year-olds that includes full time and part time options. The Primary program includes a combined full-day Kindergarten and Grade 1.

The Lower School curriculum teaches math, reading, writing, and science through thematic, integrated, and hands-on lessons. Lower School students learn what it means to be a civic person through active participation in classroom community meetings, service projects, and tending the organic micro-farm. Throughout the Lower School, specialists in art, music, literature, library, performing arts, world languages, physical education, sustainability education, and technology work with students to enrich and extend the academic program. All members of the Lower School community, including many parents, gather to share songs, stories and projects at a weekly Assembly, an experience that fosters community, encourages risk-taking, and builds confidence.

Nursery (3- and 4-year olds)

Our Nursery program encourages 3- and 4-year olds to develop a love for learning. With a play-based philosophy and play as a vehicle for cognitive, social/emotional and physical development, children are involved in a variety of daily activities, providing a balance between individual and group experiences. These activities include group projects, dramatic play, art, music, gym, and outdoor play. Students also participate in school assemblies and field studies. We emphasize the importance of language arts and provide a strong foundation for future language development through group discussions and storytelling.

Our experienced Nursery teachers are committed to working with you and your child. Our program is a full day and includes a rest after lunch. Parents have a choice of a three-day or a five-day plan. Our low student-faculty ratio allows teachers to give individual attention to each child in a small class setting. In addition to the regular class activities, a creative arts specialist incorporates dance, language arts, music, and creative dramatics into her daily sessions with the children. All Nursery students receive instruction in Spanish. Students also attend physical education classes that include swimming as part of the curriculum. Lunch is also served daily in the classroom.

Primaries (Full Day Kindergarten and First Grade)

Our Primary program offers a unique approach to educating five and six-year olds. A two-teacher team works together providing individual, small group, and large group instruction to help meet each child's needs.

With an integrated approach that provides students with a context for learning, our curriculum focuses on the basic academic areas: reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Beginning early in the year, Primary students are encouraged to think of themselves as authors. As phonic knowledge develops, they use invented spelling, along with drawing, to compose stories and record information independently. Children are able to select pieces of writing to be published as books for the classroom library. Through our literature-based program, we individualize reading materials and use methods best suited to each child's learning style. In our math program, children work in small groups. We use manipulative materials to help children see relationships and interconnections, and to enable them to deal flexibly with math ideas and concepts. These concepts are reinforced through games and everyday problem-solving situations. Science and social studies are taught in a unit approach where topics such as undersea life and Native Americans are explored. The approach to these topics incorporates the integration of all subject areas.

The Primary program provides experiences that foster independence and self-confidence. Teachers assist students in choosing from a variety of activities including art, dramatic play, games, science experiments, STEM, technology, woodworking, computers, interest centers, and construction area. In addition to providing a strong academic foundation, we encourage children to have confidence in themselves as learners, to take risks and learn from their mistakes, to respect others, and to show concern for their classmates and community.

Because we believe in educating the whole child, students attend special classes in visual arts, technology, performing arts, literature, physical education, and Spanish.

Sample Primary Schedule

Settling in time-morning basket work

Morning meeting

Reading

Writer's workshop

P.E.

Visual or Performing Arts

Technology

Lunch

Math or Literature

Spanish

Choice time or special projects

(math, science, social studies packets)

Playground

Story

Second Grade

Second Grade is designed to meet the developmental needs of children. Most instruction is individual or in small groups after a large group introduction and exploration. Classrooms are organized with activity centers which include art, computer, math, science, games, and blocks.

Using the process approach to writing, students work to refine their skills in Writer's Workshop. They begin to revise and edit their rough drafts before their books are published. Students continue to use invented spelling, but a formal spelling program is added in Second Grade. We teach reading at different levels of challenge, depending on each child's capabilities. Students are involved in a manipulative-based math program and learn to reason, solve problems, and compute in a meaningful environment. The theme approach to science, health and social studies is continued at this level. Topics might include: birds, life cycles, stream life, other social cultures, and life in other times. Field studies often complement science and social studies units.

Students attend classes in visual arts, performing arts, technology, literature, physical education, and Spanish. They also participate in a sleep-over at the school at the end of the year. This is one highlight of their Second Grade experience.

Sample Second Grade Schedule

Morning meeting

Visual or Performing Arts

Math

Reading

P.E.

Lunch

Science or Social Studies

Writer's workshop

Spanish or Technology

Story or quiet reading

Playground

Third Grade

In Third Grade, we help children develop responsible work habits, study skills, competence in academic areas, independence, a positive sense of self, and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of other people. Teachers continue to encourage students to think independently, as well as collaboratively in small groups, and help them express ideas in written form.

Third Graders learn to read for meaning, define details, discuss inferential questions, refine word attack skills, and develop vocabulary. Students read literature to form a foundation for developing class discussion, literary appreciation skills, and integrating curriculum subject areas. Various topics are presented in which the children choose books to read independently; the teachers also read aloud to the children, and students complete a variety of activities and assignments related to the topic in their literary

circles. The children are immersed in poetry, fiction and nonfiction, biographies, tall tales, science, and history books. Third Graders continue to develop the craft of writing during Writer's Workshop. They learn about punctuation, grammar and proofreading by using their own published stories which they share with family and friends. These audiences insure that the children will value the importance of applying proper English usage to their own writing. The children are encouraged to use a variety of genre in their writing, especially those they have studied in their reading units. Third Graders also learn cursive writing.

Students develop critical and analytical skills while studying math, science and social studies. Math includes basic problem solving and computation, as well as an introduction to geometry, fractions, and unit conversions. In science and health, students learn to observe, inquire, investigate, experiment, and keep records as extensions of their weekly work in the organic garden. Social studies includes the study of the different aspects and responsibilities of being part of a community, geographical terms, specific U.S. geography, and basic economics in their study of consumerism and applied entrepreneurship. A meaningful unit on abilities culminates in a presentation where our students and their differently-abled partners from the community connect through dance. We also offer signature programs such as Harley Garlic. Individual and group projects such as researching, writing reports, and learning to read and understand maps supplement classroom study.

As in other Lower School classes, Third Graders attend special classes in visual arts, literature, technology, performing arts, physical education, Music Plus, and French.

Sample Third Grade Schedule

Morning meeting

P.E

French or Literature

Math

Reading/Writer's Workshop

Lunch

Playground

Science or Social Studies

Technology or Music Plus

Visual or Performing Arts

Fourth Grade

Fourth Grade continues to provide the nurturing and creative environment of the Lower School and, at the same time, emphasizes those skills necessary for successful academic achievement. Students learn to establish priorities, manage study time, and organize their work, and they are challenged to achieve to their potential. As well as working toward becoming self-motivated, responsible, independent learners, students learn the importance of building a productive community.

The curriculum includes reading, Writer's Workshop, math, health, science, social studies, spelling, and cursive handwriting. Teachers emphasize reading as a means of communication through the use of novels

and other literary works. Children write thoughtful responses about their readings in a journal, and assume different roles for discussion in their literary circles. Vocabulary development, comprehension, study and research skills, and literary appreciation are all included in the Fourth Grade program. Students refine cursive writing skills and develop a legible, individual style. In Writing Workshop, students write daily and rehearse, draft, revise, conference, edit, and publish their own writing. Mini-lessons are used to introduce the structure and grammar of our language; the student's own writing provides the basis for practicing these skills.

In math, the basic number operations are reviewed and further refined. There is a heavier concentration on word problems, division, mental math and related applications. In Fourth Grade, science students gain a better understanding of the Scientific Method as they follow the process through the completion of individual and class investigations. A highlight of the program is working on their individual experiments to share at the Science Fair in February.

The social studies curriculum begins with a study of the people and culture of the Eastern Woodland Native American Indians. The focus then shifts to the study of people who have made important contributions to the development of our city, state, and country. In order to celebrate the diversity of our multicultural community, we include men and women as well as people from different religions, races, and cultures in our study. Students then begin an intense study of New York State geography, industry, history and culture. A respect for and celebration of diversity is fostered through all of these units. Gathering data about each of these topics provides experience in research and working on long-term assignments.

Similar to other Lower School grades, Fourth Graders attend special classes in literature, visual arts, technology, performing arts, physical education, Music Plus, and French.

Sample Fourth Grade Schedule

Morning meeting

French or Literature

P.E.

Math

Reading/Writer's Workshop

Lunch

Playground

Science/Social Studies

Technology or Music Plus

Visual or Performing Arts

Lower School Specials

In addition to their own intrinsic value, specials also serve to reinforce the curricular content in the classrooms.

Creative Arts

Nursery students attend Creative Arts everyday for 30 minutes. They learn to sing, move, dance, improvise and play instruments creatively. Students enjoy a variety of group activities designed to tap into their imaginations and give them different modes of expression.

Literature

The literature specialist works with children to develop their literary and thinking skills, and their capacity to enjoy and learn from the world of books. In the context of the literature program, children learn about their literary heritage, the themes, patterns, and language of literature, and the connections among diverse literary selections. They engage in narrative analysis and composition. Reading and writing are integrated in the literature program. The Literature Specialist also works with classroom teachers and other specialists to use literature across the curriculum.

Music Plus

Third and fourth grade students meet once a week to learn the language of music. They work with our music specialist to develop listening skills, learn basic solfege, compose music, and read music with understanding. Students sing and play Orff instruments to demonstrate their emerging musical literacy. Fourth Grade students also meet once a week for choir.

Performing Arts

Performing arts is a unique integration of music, dance and drama. The specialist works with children to help them gain a basic understanding of musical concepts through singing, improvisation, listening, and playing instruments. Students also experiment with the different elements of dance, learning about tempo, movement through space, and qualities of energy. Children develop physical abilities, social skills, reasoning, aesthetic awareness, and creative expression. Students develop creative imaginations and enhance their awareness of the world as they learn to appreciate people and cultures. The students work to prepare for class plays, the annual holiday pageant, and assembly presentations. Creative dramatics is a means of self-expression. The children are encouraged to develop keen observation skills, use critical thinking, make decisions, and strengthen their language skills. All children in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade attend performing arts classes.

Physical Education

The P.E. teachers help our students develop a healthy and energized approach to activity and athleticism. From developing basic coordination and skills to actual scrimmages in specific sports, the students are challenged to build overall fitness, effort, and sportsmanship. Three and four-year old students learn about coordinating movement as they practice running, walking, skipping, galloping, rolling, stretching, and curling. Kindergarten, first, and second grade students develop concepts of discovery and problem

solving. They learn to dodge, balance, turn, stop, and start. Third and fourth grade students develop more advanced skills and learn rules and strategies for familiar sports. Classes meet twice a week (four times a week for Third and Fourth Graders) and include three units of instructional swimming.

Student Support Program

Two Student Support Program teachers provide evaluation, consultation and individual instruction for children who need additional help in reading, writing, math or organization. The SSP teachers meet regularly with the classroom teachers to develop strategies for students who need focused support for remediation or extension. The SSP program in the Lower School also provides academic challenge to students beyond the differentiation that is done in the classroom. Individual support services are available on a fee basis.

Technology

Students learn to appropriately use technology as a tool for learning and communicating. In the Primaries, children learn about the computer, its parts, uses, and its care. They learn to share their reading, writing, math and artistic skills through a variety of programs. Group and individual projects give them familiarity with many digital tools. Second grade students learn to keyboard and explore more complicated programs and procedures, while also learning about their digital footprint. By Third Grade, students are using technology to research, connect, and communicate their ideas with a broader audience. Media literacy is a primary focus as students create blogs and comment on each other's work. Fourth Grade students further develop their use of technology, discerning the most appropriate tool for what they want to communicate and demonstrate. Design thinking is fostered through collaborative projects that reinforce the broader curricular units of study.

Visual Arts

The visual art specialist works to develop each child's creative expression through a variety of media and approaches. Projects are designed to teach an understanding of basic art concepts, while providing children with an awareness and appreciation of art. Children learn to use basic tools and techniques to expand from early experimental stages toward increasing refinement. Each year there is also a unique hands-on approach to studying art history with emphasis on both the process and joy of creating. Children study the work of many important artists and create their own master-inspired art. Knowledge of process serves to facilitate the natural unfolding of creativity.

World Languages

Students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade meet twice a week for one-half hour with the world language instructor (Spanish for K-2nd, French for 3rd and 4th). Nursery students also receive instruction in Spanish. The content of these sessions is designed to develop an appreciation for the culture and language through art, music and games, as well as a growing facility with vocabulary and conversational exchanges in the target language.