



May School Curriculum Overview Elementary (Grades 1-4)

Language: Reading and Writing

Reading

Many of May School's Elementary students have a learning difference that impacts their language development in some way. All May School teachers are trained and undergo a certification process in Multi-Sensory Language Teaching, an Orton Gillingham based approach to teaching reading and writing skills. All May School students participate in 40 minutes of MSL therapy each day, working on an individualized curriculum in small groups of 1-5 students. In addition to working on decoding skills, reading fluency, auditory discrimination, and spelling. May School teachers are trained in the following MSL programs: Sequential English Education (through Shelton School of Dallas), LyndaMood Bell Seeing Stars and Visualize Verbalize, Sounds and Syllables, Take Flight (through the Scottish Rite), Orton Gillingham, and others.

During the Reading Comprehension period, students engage in the study of literature in order to understand how texts are structured, the use of literary devices, concepts of theme, point of view, and character development, and stylistic choices such as prosody and tone. Students learn active reading strategies such as how to effectively mark the text during reading to improve comprehension and set ourselves up to write about what we've read.

Writing

The May Way is an approach to teaching writing that emphasizes the processes and structures necessary to be a successful writer. Many beginning writers struggle because their working memory is still holding the mechanical aspects of writing such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and handwriting, leaving little room for the higher order processes of planning, organization, creative vision, flexible thinking, and making meaning. The May Way gives students the tools to use move much of this thinking out of their heads and into an "external holding pen", thereby allowing them to express their thoughts in a coherent way.

In addition, The May Way demystifies the process of writing, helping students understand that there are concrete and predictable constructions on both the sentence and paragraph level. Once they learn these structures, they can choose the structure that logically supports the meaning they want to convey. Throughout this process, a writer must be constantly open and flexible to a change in the original plan. The May Way explicitly teaches executive function skills such as planning, organization, cognitive shift, self-talk and sustained attention, which translate to all aspects of academic and practical life.

In essence, students learn that writing is construction, and that we choose the tools we should use based on the type of composition we are building. In this way, students become writers who can tell stories, formulate ideas, synthesize and analyze information, interpret data, persuade, and solve problems.

Wild Reading

Reading in the Wild is a program designed by Donalyn Miller that fosters a love of reading through choice, meaningful peer to peer conversation about the books they read, feedback from teachers regarding reading habits, and structured, personal reflection on the reading experience. Students read books they love, communicate about these books to others, and develop executive functioning skills related to reading. Students with language-based learning differences are encouraged to use Learning Ally as a tool to support their engagement with books of interest.

Mathematics

May School Elementary students are placed in an individualized math curriculum based on their needs. Our mathematics curriculum emphasizes building a solid foundation of skill necessary to succeed in higher level mathematics. Our students engage in a Montessori math curriculum which uses manipulatives to teach abstract concepts through the concrete. May School students also use the My Math series as a primary textbook, which is aligned with Common Core standards. In addition to daily lessons that are systematic and cumulative in nature, students also do daily fluency practice to work toward automaticity.

Cultural

Our Social Studies curriculum follows a four year rotation that is aligned with common core standards and is also vertically aligned with our Intermediate school curriculum. Using the text The Story of the World, students embark on an in depth study of a particular time period through reading, writing, and hands-on projects. Each student is a member of a society, a group focused on a particular aspect of the social studies curriculum, becoming the experts in that field, in addition to their other social studies lessons. For example, the Philosophers focus on the philosophical train of thought during that particular time period and share that knowledge with other classes. Through our arts integration program, students engage in arts projects that relate to their learning in social studies with an emphasis on developing problem solving and design skills.

Science

Our Elementary Science program emphasizes developing the foundational skills of scientific inquiry. Students engage in the scientific process: they observe natural occurrences, ask questions, develop experimentation and research skills, and test their hypotheses. Like May School's Social Studies curriculum, the Science curriculum follows a four year rotation. Topics include: Energy, Living Things, Human Body, the Solar Systems, the Earth's Atmosphere and Hydrosphere. Our Science curriculum is aligned with common core standards.

Visual Arts

Elementary art students engage in an arts curriculum that focuses on building a strong foundation in the visual arts. Students engage in projects that teach the fundamental concepts of art, including value, balance, structure, and composition. Students have the opportunity to work with a variety of mediums, including charcoal, paint, paper, clay, and wire. Students learn to view art-making as a problem-solving process, and executive functioning skills are emphasized throughout the curriculum.

Physical Education

Elementary students participate in a regular physical education class that promotes coordination, flexibility, fitness, social and self-regulation skills. In addition, our physical education program draws on the resources in our community. Offerings vary each school year and may include Santa Fe Climbing Center, NDI, Wise Fool, and seasonal recreation opportunities.

Practical Life

Practical Life is any physical activity that helps a child grow in fine and gross motor skills, confidence and independence. Practical Life activities range from spooning, tweezing and pouring to sweeping the floor, washing tables and displaying acts of grace and courtesy towards others. These multi-stepped and sequenced activities also support development of sustained attention, executive function and problem solving skills.

Sensorial

The purpose and aim of sensorial work is for the child to develop an awareness of finer distinctions between sensorial impressions. Sensorial exercises were designed by Montessori to cover every quality that can be perceived by the senses such as size, shape, composition, texture, loudness or softness, matching, weight, temperature, etc. These activities support the child's visual/perceptual and vocabulary development that will support a more clear expression of the individual's experience.

Mindfulness

Our mindfulness program explicitly teaches self-regulation skills through brain education and a regular mindfulness practice. Drawing from the Mindful Schools and Mind-Up curriculums, May School's mindfulness program teaches skills such as mindful breathing, having a mindful body, identifying and working with emotions, applying mindfulness to our interactions with others, and practicing gratitude.