



May School Curriculum Overview Intermediate Level (Grades 5-8)

Intermediate School Philosophy

May School's Intermediate program empowers students to be successful, confident learners who recognize the importance of communication, collaboration, and community. Our Intermediate program emphasizes honing the skill of communicating clearly and respectfully with others, appreciating the delicate balance between strength of conviction and appreciation of perspectives different than our own. At this particular developmental stage, students are striving for authentic connection with others, and May School's curriculum provides real-world based problem-solving opportunities for learning collaboration skills. Through an emphasis on our responsibilities to ourselves and to others, students develop an understanding of their role as an individual in a community.

Our 6:1 student/teacher ratio ensures that our students maximize how they learn best with focused, individualized instruction. An emphasis on reading comprehension, vocabulary building, and developing critical thinking skills is present across the curriculum. We strive to empower students to develop internalized motivation to learn through explicit instruction in executive functioning skills. Our goal is that students leave May School with the academic and self-regulation skills necessary to succeed in the high school environment of their choice.

Graduates of May School have successfully matriculated to a wide range of secondary schools in Santa Fe, including Santa Fe High School, Santa Fe Prep, St. Michael's High School, New Mexico School for the Arts, Santa Fe Waldorf School, Mandela International School, Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences, Desert Academy, and more.

Language: Reading and Writing

Reading

Many of May School's Intermediate 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 50 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, students study morphology, academic language, and specific reading comprehension strategies. 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 Intermediate 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. We employ multi-sensory strategies such as using manipulative to teach abstract concepts through the concrete, and to ground students in a real world application. Most May School Intermediate students use the My Math series as a primary textbook, which is aligned with Common Core standards, supported with Montessori materials and Math U See curriculum as needed. In addition to daily lessons that are systematic and cumulative in nature, students also do daily fluency practice and keep a math notebook, a personalized reference guide illustrating concepts, vocabulary, and other aspects of their mathematics learning.

Science

Our Intermediate 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. Students in grades 5 and 6 use Interactive Science as a textbook that guides their experimentation. In addition, these students utilize the Nature Connection curriculum to learn about the natural world around us. Our middle school students participate in the Santa Fe River Watershed program, engaging in a real world scientific study of the water quality. The class's data is included in the watershed wise database, where scientists, policy makers, and others can access it. Our Science curriculum is aligned with common core standards.

Social Studies

Our Social Studies curriculum follows a four year rotation that is aligned with common core standards and is also vertically aligned with our Elementary 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.

Visual Arts

Intermediate art students engage in an ambitious 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, plaster, clay, wire, wood-working, and digital media including film. Students learn to view art-making as a problem-solving process, and executive functioning skills are emphasized throughout the curriculum. Real world opportunities for problem-solving are presented, such as designing a marketing campaign for a local business.

Physical Education

Our physical education program draws on the resources in our community to give our intermediate students an opportunity to explore a number of different physical activities that promote coordination, flexibility, fitness, social and self-regulation skills. Offerings vary each school year and may include Santa Fe Climbing Center, Winter Ski/Snowboard or Winter Alternative Sports, Aikido, yoga, cross country running, tennis, and traditional team sports.

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.

Executive Functioning Skills

Executive Functioning skills are taught both explicitly, through a curriculum developed by Rush Neurobehavioral Institute, and implicitly, as an embedded part of the classroom environment. Skills like using a planner, time management, anticipating the expectations of a given environment, planning a multi-step project, study strategies, and test-taking are taught explicitly through seminars and in-class

practice. All Intermediate students are provided the opportunity to internalize EF skills through the structure of the classroom and the strategies modeled by teachers.

Social/Emotional Skills

Explicit lessons in the development of social-emotional skills are critical for Intermediate students. Weekly social skills groups address topics like how to make and keep friends, how to tell others how you feel, and how to manage stress.

Homework Philosophy

At May School, our homework philosophy is grounded in research over the last 25 years that demonstrates that piles of academic homework do not typically translate to significant gains in student learning. Given how hard our students work during the school day and the difficult history with homework that many of our students have, we are committed to using homework time in the best interest of the whole child.

Our homework policy focuses on research on what works for developing self-confidence, resilient children. This research includes the importance of building executive functioning skills through tasks that involve a sense of time, sequencing and planning, initiation and task completion, and fine and gross motor development. Tasks that build these skills allow a child to become better at self-regulation, something necessary for all areas of life. In addition, we ask our students to engage in independent reading nightly, focusing on students developing their own preferences/identities as readers.