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Foreword from Lower School Head

Early childhood (Junior Kindergarten–3rd grade) is a special age for children as they move from a sensory, self-centered, familial experience of the world to a more social and ever-expanding intellectual understanding. Young children learn best through exploration, practice, games, play and adult guidance. During this time of rapid brain growth, children develop skills of language and reasoning using their experiences as a foundation for further understanding. Lower School students are eager, curious, imaginative, driven, enthusiastic and inquisitive. Using these characteristics, teachers develop curriculum and activities that interest the students and support multiple ways to learn and develop lifelong habits. Students’ bodies need to move as they grow; therefore, outdoor play, exploration and recess are built into the curriculum for our youngest students. Within the curriculum and through the facilitation of their teachers, students construct meaning and develop skills through hands-on exploration, integrated learning, practice, relationship building, self-reflection and a love of learning.

Using structured and exploratory methods, Lower School teachers support and facilitate Parker’s mission of educating students “to think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens and leaders in a democratic society and global community.” The list below outlines many of the experiences that teach our students the skills they need as young citizens in a democratic society.

- Exploring relationships, experiencing cooperative learning situations and examining the viewpoints of others to expand multiple perspectives
- Debating and sharing ideas about fairness and justice and developing both individual and group responsibility
- Gaining confidence in basic school skills such as writing, reading and mathematics through practice, creative thinking and the use of children’s input and ideas
- Unpacking the code of reading and then using reading skills to explore topics and ideas
- Learning to write and use writing to express ideas, possibilities, voice and knowledge
- Exploring the concepts of mathematics, including problem solving and reasoning and the basic tenets of arithmetic
- Exploring the arts and connecting music, fine art, drama and woodshop to expand knowledge and self-expression
- Using scientific processes and investigative methods to understand concepts in life and earth and physical sciences
- Developing strategies to manage transitions and unexpected outcomes
- Exploring the sense of time, current and historical
- Using the English language to negotiate, share and communicate understanding
- Exploring the Spanish language to broaden understanding of human ways of being and developing an ear for Spanish sounds
- Building strong student habits such as concentration, stamina, risk taking and learning from one’s mistakes
- Expanding small and gross motor skills through play, physical education classes, recess, drama and the arts
- Examining identity and citizenship
- Sharing with and contributing to the world
- Participating in class projects and traditions that build a sense of unity and moral responsibility beyond themselves
- Using project-based learning and design thinking methods to explore content and technology tools

Kimeri Swanson-Beck
Head of Lower School
The Faculty

The Lower School faculty consists of classroom teachers, assistant teachers, department teachers and specialists. Students are fortunate to build relationships with a variety of teachers inside and outside their main classroom space. The classroom teacher, referred to as the Gradehead, provides the contained classroom experience and is the main contact for parent communication. This structure enables us to provide a safe, predictable and nurturing environment for young children and, at the same time, give access to specialists in the arts, physical education, sciences, technology and library. Our accomplished teachers are both inspired and inspiring lifelong learners themselves who readily share their joy of learning and discovery with their students.

Following are JK–3rd grade faculty for 2019–20:

**Junior Kindergarten**
- Jeremiah Howe
- Lisa Nielsen
- Tisha Johnson

**Senior Kindergarten**
- Dana O’Brien
- Kirkland La Rue
- Nanci Moore

**1st Grade**
- Alexandra Bearman
- Beverly “Greenie” Greenberg
- Beth Joebgen

**2nd Grade**
- Cathy Davidson
- Kathy Wild
- Sarah Willett

**3rd Grade**
- Nadia Pardesi
- Amy Przygoda
- Ashleigh St. Peters

**Art Department/Woodshop**
- Anne Blasko
- Christopher Turner

**Drama**
- Leslie Holland Pryor

**Spanish**
- Daniel Baltierra
- Karen Liszka

**Music**
- Maria Foustalieraki
- Alec Synakowski
- Kingley Tang

**ILIS (technology/library)**
- Sarah Beebe
- Mary Catherine Coleman

**Nurse**
- Jessi Mather
- Anne Nelson

**Physical Education**
- Willie Banks
- Terry Davis
- Tyler Heidtke
- Pat Pagnucco
- Kara Turpin
- Jan Zoufal

**Science**
- James Audrain
- Heather Sheahan

**Reading Specialist**
- Heidi Brynes-Cloet

**Math Specialist**
- Denise David

**Support Services**
- Allison Kimball (Learning Specialist)
- Kaela Rowe (Counselor)
- Jennifer Lira Turner (Counselor)
- Lynn Wyckoff (Learning Specialist)

**Director of Studies (JK–5)**
- Barbara Hunt
Francis W. Parker School Philosophy

Since 1901, Francis W. Parker School has provided Chicago with a compelling educational experience, encompassing the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and moral development of the individual student in the context of community life.

In its 118th year, Parker maintains its commitment to the potential of each student. Guided by a profound educational philosophy, Parker’s distinction lies in its desire to foster the self-worth of individuals so students can become active citizens in a diverse, democratic society and changing world. Through a variety of methods, teachers encourage students to think independently by developing skills in making judgments and inferences based on what they have observed or experienced, all with an aim to help them act confidently in their efforts to learn and improve the quality of life for others.

When an intimate setting meets a diverse community of passionate teachers, parents and peers:

- Our small class size and interdisciplinary approach to teaching produces a challenging and meaningful educational experience.
- As the only independent school in Chicago where students from 14 grades share a single building, our campus functions as a model home, offering collaborative opportunities among grade levels.
- Both traditional academics and programs in creative areas and emerging technologies are essential.
- We cultivate dynamic and critical thinking in all academic and artistic disciplines, filling students with a joy for learning that has proven to last a lifetime.

Parker’s faculty, administrators and staff work as a team to help students find their ideal places in the world by providing them with compelling content, academic skills and engaging educational experiences through relationships that nurture self-confidence and optimism.
Parent Involvement:

Parents play a vital role in the Parker community. There are many ways to volunteer talents and energy to Parker. Examples include:

- **Classroom volunteering**: support teacher projects in Junior and Senior Kindergarten, make bookmarks for County Fair with the Second Grade, supervise activities for Third Graders on Woodland Activity Day
- **School Volunteering**: serve as a grade chair, participate in the Parent SEED (Seeking Educational Equity or Diversity) group, serve concessions at Homecoming, host an AFS (youth exchange program) student or new Parker family.
- **Fundraising**: volunteer for the scholarship auction, host a dinner for Cooke and the Colonel Scholarship Dinner, sort books for the Used Book Sale

The Parker community values the talents and abilities of each parent. Examples include:

- Providing community opportunities such as working for politicians and theater groups
- Sharing knowledge and experience in the classroom; for example, native speakers leading a classroom in a language class, slide shows of travels, or talking about a personal and professional experience.
- Sponsoring an internship for a summer or school vacation
- Mentoring students who share similar passions

Civic Engagement and Cross Grade Community Connection:

Parker is a private school with a public agenda. We are proud of our urban setting in the heart of Chicago, a large diverse metropolis. We plan our curriculum to offer students opportunities to actively participate in the school community as well as the broader world. We believe one of the hallmarks of a first-rate education is the capacity to understand complex questions and issues through a schema that incorporates multiple perspectives. How do we accomplish this? On a fundamental level, it begins with the way we teach. We continually help students attempt to walk in someone else’s shoes and consider a problem from a new vantage point through the questions we pose, the voices we listen to and the complex variables we consider.

There are many opportunities for the development of relationships across grades in a JK–12 school. The whole community comes together in the auditorium or gym to share experiences throughout the year, and frequently, JK–5th graders share classroom activities with each other. Students also interact with each other across grade levels formally and informally.

Teachers contact each other throughout the year with opportunities for meaningful connections:
- Senior Kindergarteners exploring planes and levers with blocks may meet with Upper School physics students, or 2nd graders learning to listen and respond in book clubs may observe older students discussing a novel.
- Classes establish “buddy” relationships with other grades to read together, play games or run around outside.
- Each senior serves as a Big Brother or Sister to a class in JK–8th grade, visiting monthly during a Morning Ex and spending time as their schedules permit. Seniors help their younger counterparts with lessons, play games and talk.
- Through the community service project, K-Walking, 4th graders walk Junior and Senior Kindergarteners from their vehicles on Webster Avenue to their classrooms, providing safe passage as well as meaningful interactions that help the youngsters transition smoothly into their school day.
Parker Traditions:

Students, faculty and parents eagerly anticipate the school’s annual traditions. Several events originated at the school’s founding in 1901, and many more are additions from more recent years. They are powerful forces for establishing the complete community for which we strive.

- **Morning Exercise**: is a tradition as old as the school and is the forerunner of assembly programs at other schools. Morning Ex is a period during which many, if not all, of the school’s grade levels share what they are learning in their classrooms or learn from an outside individual or group presenting or performing. Both the presenter and the audience share the responsibility to make this community space productive and enlightening. Morning Ex is Parker’s educational crossroad, our civic sanctuary, where students and teachers throughout the school come together to create a learning community. Morning Ex meets for an extended interval three days each week.

- **Big Brothers and Sisters**: is a tradition almost as old as Morning Exercise. The seniors enter to the strains of bagpipes and sit facing the rest of the school. Two to four seniors at a time come forward to serve as the elder “siblings” for each class in Junior Kindergarten through 8th grade. During the rest of the year, it is not uncommon to observe a senior with a younger “brother” or “sister” listening to a story, reading, tutoring, or assisting on a class trip.
Lower School Curriculum and Pedagogy

*Junior Kindergarten–Grade 3*

We determine curricular decisions and instructional practices based upon the mission of Francis W. Parker School. Our mission states that we aim to educate “students to think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens and leaders in a democratic and global community.” Our civic minded approach permeates our structure, pedagogy and curricular decisions.

Additionally, the Lower School assumes that curriculum development and pedagogy will take the following into consideration:

- An inquiry based, problem-solving approach to teaching allows children to be actively involved in their learning.
- Curriculum is integrated across disciplines, which allows for greater opportunities for student engagement and possibilities for meeting the needs of all styles of learners.
- Appreciation of diversity and multiple points of view helps to develop empathy, confidence and integrity.
- There is a focus on identity and being part of a group.
- Trust and respect are essential components of the learning community. Flora Cooke, the school’s first principal, would begin assemblies asking, “What is the great word?” The students would respond, “Responsibility.”
- The importance of validating the student voice.
- Classroom organization promotes students’ construction of knowledge and ownership of learning.
- Use of student interests, cooperative group activities, time for individual reflection and rich content areas prepare students to develop self-discipline, independence of mind and collaborative spirit.
- Students benefit from a variety of experiences, whole to part, part to whole, and opportunities to use different modalities to support individual learning.
- Experience, reflection and discussion impact educational decisions. We welcome new perspectives and information and keep abreast of educational research; however, we avoid jumping on the bandwagon of educational fads that come and go.

Teaching and learning is accomplished with both the mind and the heart.

In the words of our founder Colonel Francis W. Parker, “A school should be a model home, a complete community, an embryonic democracy.” Parker is a place where students are taught to do, “Everything to help and nothing to hinder” the progress and development of the individual and society at large. A Parker education encourages students to help make the world a better place through civic participation.
Lower School Literacy

Junior Kindergarten–Grade 3

As a progressive school, we believe students of all ages learn best by doing—by having opportunities to explore, to play with language, concepts, physical materials and ideas. This is particularly important for our youngest students, so we design our classrooms to be rich play environments that encourage curiosity, ingenuity and reflection and problem solving.

Students in the Lower School immerse themselves in an environment integrating and embedding skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in everything they do. We aim to not only teach mechanical skills, but encourage a lifelong appreciation of oral and written language and their many purposes. Through daily opportunities to read, write and discuss, students learn how to apply skills to decode and make sense of written texts, compose in a variety of written formats and express themselves orally, using words to communicate effectively.

The following is a listing of just some of the topics, skills and processes we explore at each developmental level. Literacy includes reading, writing, reflecting and speaking. As reading skills grow, children move from “learning to read” toward “reading to learn.” To facilitate learning in these areas, we often use reading and writing workshop models in our classroom environments.

Junior Kindergarten

- Student names as an introduction to letters and words
- Environmental print and its meaning
- Uppercase letters of the alphabet
- Concepts of the printed page
- Rhyming
- Read-alouds to preview texts, think within and beyond the text, use illustrations to enhance meaning, visualize action and make connections
- Dramatic play, dramatization of stories, puppet theater
- Discussion and sharing to develop communication skills
- Noticing and describing sequential order and patterns
- Dictation of labels, sentences and stories to a scribe to see writing as purposeful

Senior Kindergarten

- Uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet
- Environmental printing to identify some common words
- Letter-sound relationships
- Segmenting sounds in words
- Rhyming
- Read-alouds to preview texts, activate and use prior knowledge, retell a story, summarize information, identify main ideas, predict outcomes, think about the text, use illustrations to enhance meaning, visualize action, formulate questions and make connections
- Dramatic play, dramatization of stories, puppet theater
- Sharing of information, questions and opinions and discussing to develop communication skills
- Identification of the beginning, middle and end of stories
- Seeing writing as purposeful
- Dictating sentences and stories to a scribe
- Labeling of pictures
- Stringing of words together to form ideas, using phonetic spelling
First Grade

**Oral language**
- Opportunities for sharing about families and personal culture
- Discussion of events, books and personal experiences
- Expansion of reading comprehension strategies through read alouds
- Expansion of ability to sit and listen for longer periods of time
- Learning discussion skills
- Introduction to appreciation of multiple perspectives

**Reading**
- Reading daily schedules, charts and other material posted around the rooms
- Using spelling patterns for word recognition
- Read-alouds to discuss thinking before reading, using clues, making predictions and connections
- Word recognition skills (sight words, decoding strategies, using context)
- Reading groups to develop reading comprehension skills
- Reading in a wide range of genres
- Sharing books and word cards with families for additional practice
- Repeated reading to texts to develop reading fluency
- Readers’ Theater presentation for parents for students to share their developing skills

**Word Study, Handwriting and Editing**
- Using spelling patterns when writing
- Handwriting instruction in upper and lower case letters, adapting handwriting to a variety of papers
- Capitalization and end of sentence punctuation
- Writing with phonetic and conventional spelling
- Introduction to keyboarding skills

**Written Composition**
- Writing in a variety of genres
- Writing introduced as a recursive process of brainstorming, drafting sentences, editing and illustrating

Second Grade

**Oral language**
- Reflecting on the needs of an audience
- Listening and responding with an increasingly critical lens
- Learning how to express opinions and disagree
- Listening to and following multi-step directions

**Reading**
- Expansion of high frequency word recognition
- Discussing reading strategies through read-alouds
- Guided reading in flexible groups
- Lessons in word recognition and comprehension skills, particularly character development, connecting with and studying the causes and effects of a character’s personality, motivation and tendencies on the outcome of a book
- Choosing “just right” books
- Reading regularly at home
- Exploring various genres, including fiction, informational texts, biographies, fairy tales and poetry
- Developing empathy through literature integrated with the Central Topic: putting oneself in another’s shoes
Word Study, Handwriting and Editing
● Spelling patterns, prefixes, suffixes
● Applying knowledge of spelling patterns, sentence construction, punctuation, capitalization and handwriting when editing
● Development of keyboarding skills and introduction to word processing features

Written Composition
● Connecting reading and writing, students read in a genre and then write in that genre (personal moments, realistic fiction, fairy tales, biographical pieces, nonfiction informational texts, poetry)
● Writer’s Workshop model, understanding that revision is an integral part of the writing process
● Lessons for adding dialogue, description and action to writing
● Using author studies as craft models

Third Grade

Oral language
● Daily conversation and discussion about current events, stories and content-related information
● Preparing and presenting information related to their studies at the Thanksgiving program for the whole school

Reading
● Comprehension strategies (making connections, asking thick and thin questions about the text, inferential thinking, using visual/sensory images, reading fluently, decoding accurately, using genre features and reacting to books)
● Self-selected independent reading at home
● Discussing comprehension strategies through read-alouds
● Literature discussion groups, supporting thinking with evidence from the text (realistic fiction, historical fiction, mysteries)
● Reading texts related to the Central Topic study of Chicago, developing ability to learn from text

Word Study, Handwriting and Editing
● Continuation of pattern work from 2nd grade, comparing words that fit the patterns with words that fall outside the rules
● Developing an understanding of syllabification
● Developing greater independence in the editing process
● Introduction to and practice of cursive handwriting formation
● Further develop word processing and application skills through computer projects integrated into interdisciplinary studies

Written Composition
● Writing complete sentences
● Process framework for writing (realistic fiction, historical fiction, nonfiction reports) in a Writer’s Workshop model
● Using contextual information to write creative historical fiction through Fort Dearborn diaries
● Writing to convey information
Lower School Social Studies and History

Junior Kindergarten–Grade 3

Social studies and history in the Lower School are embedded in the Central Topic in each grade and reflect the school’s diversity, equity and inclusion mission. A rich curriculum that interweaves social justice themes aims to promote self-examination in relation to others, building a community where trust and respect allow students to question, reflect, sustain effort and act with empathy and integrity.

Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten Social Studies

Our youngest students immerse themselves in issues of social justice every day. As they learn to navigate the social milieu of their classroom, they explore identity and power through dramatic play, recess choices and literature. Students think about their skin, hair and eyes. They explore ideas related to gender, thinking about situations, for example, “Can you wear a dress and be an astronaut?” Or “Can you be a girl and not wear a dress?” Attention focuses on fostering an appreciation for what we have and recognizing the ways good deeds benefit the community.

Families, school and the media are all socializing factors influencing the ways in which young children navigate and make sense of their world. Gender, race, money, religion, sexual orientation, family structure and age are but a few social constructs that four- five- and six-year-olds are developing curiosity about and question in their identity development. This growing curiosity requires honesty, compassion and preparedness from the adults in their lives. In responding to questions from children, adults must balance developmental appropriateness with candid, thoughtful responses. Responding to questions about identity for four- five- and six-year-olds is rarely about preparing a dissertation-level answer. Still, these questions from children often require adults around them to do some of their own “homework” beforehand. Four- five- and six-year-olds are able to think critically about issues of empathy, culture, fairness, inclusion, justice and equity, and require adults who are willing, able and prepared to “lean in” and do the same. Our kindergartens are places that strive to prepare and empower children to become active citizens in the world. Our classrooms offer children mirrors to see their experiences reflected back to them and windows where they can begin to see the spectrum of the human experience. To this end, classroom teachers curate diverse classroom libraries, engage students in self-portraiture work, explore world languages, compare similarities and differences in people, celebrate family traditions and facilitate rich, nuanced show and tell activities.

We support students as they learn to cooperate, deal with conflict, understand comparison and find resolutions. To do this, they need to develop their sense of self and a beginning awareness of others, diversity and the concept of responsibility. Through classroom routines, they learn about time and schedules. A blend of free play and guided learning allows children to take risks and expand their roles within a community of learners. Our kindergarten programs challenge children to high levels of group awareness and responsiveness. Helping students to be self-reflective and self-monitoring aids their ability to assess their own progress at school, reflecting the goals of our school mission.
First Grade Social Studies and History

In 1st grade, the main thread is the study of self as a member of multiple communities. Through literature, voluntary family sharing of cultural heritage and holidays/events throughout the year, 1st graders develop appreciation of diversity within the classrooms and grade by embracing sameness and difference. They learn about both the benefits and responsibilities they have as members of their classroom communities and a larger 1st grade community of learners. This work is expanded as students begin to understand that they are members of multiple communities, including families, Parker School, Lincoln Park and other Chicago neighborhoods. Through literature and discussion, students understand that there are many different interpretations of family. They appreciate that families share languages, customs, traditions, and values. Through walks and mapping activities, 1st grades begin to develop spatial vocabulary and learn to orient themselves in space. They learn to observe their surroundings and see that people in different neighborhoods and situations have similar needs.

Second Grade Social Studies and History

By 2nd grade, students are developmentally ready to begin turning their attention further from themselves. Throughout the year, the 2nd grade Central Topic of developing the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another provides students with the opportunity to look at the world with a lens larger than personal experience. This study supports and gently encourages the students to step further outside themselves, developing empathy and compassion as they begin to recognize and understand perspectives different from their own. At this age, children are beginning to have a greater understanding of duality and are able to approach sameness and difference as partners, rather than opposing forces. The social studies curriculum supports children in this developmental process.

In the fall, 2nd graders are exposed to maps as geographical concepts to help them understand the magnitude of the world and our place in it. Later, 2nd graders study the life and stories of Hans Christian Andersen. Through biography and literature, children step out of their shoes and travel back in time to another place, where they discover how one boy learned to overcome feelings of isolation and difference and found his voice as an author. The study allows students to begin to understand historical context, as well as inform their knowledge of geography as they learn about a country on another continent.

In the winter, 2nd graders examine situations of fairness and unfairness and freedom and justice in our society now and in the past. They learn about individuals who have succeeded in making a difference, people whose empathy led to an effort to make change in the world. They read biographies of famous leaders and learn to understand their passions, hopes and dreams, as well as how they helped make positive changes in the lives of others. Children discuss scenarios that illustrate fairness and unfairness. In each case, teachers encourage students to put themselves in the place of another person, taking on the context of another life and exploring how they would feel in that situation.

The study of Japan takes this learning a step further by immersing children as completely as possible in a culture different from their own. In the spring, students study Japan, a country that is distant geographically. The children learn how tradition has shaped the country but, at the same time, tradition does not fully represent the experience of Japanese people today. The study weaves and builds through many disciplines, including reading, math, writing, art, drama and music. Through this integrated unit of study, children learn how the cultural developments of the Edo period continue to be reflected in the culture of Japan today. Each child has the opportunity to spend time in a “tea room,” a special little nook in the classroom where yukata-dressed partners disappear for a day behind shoji and take part in traditional Japanese activities. The study culminates with a simple Japanese performance for parents including a Noh play, traditional songs and recitations of student-written haiku.
Third Grade Social Studies and History

Third graders are developmentally ready to delve deeper into historical contexts. Their Central Topic is the site of Chicago, the changing landscape, culture and economy of a single place, the place we inhabit. As they study the history of Chicago, they explore issues related to conflicts created by human migration and the competing motives of different groups of people occupying the same space, the ramifications of decisions based on the needs of one group of people and the devastating effects that incursion can have on indigenous populations. Throughout their historical studies, 3rd graders are learning to understand the complexity of political, social and cultural relationships.

They learn the history of this place we call Chicago from the inside out by making models, role playing, reading and engaging in a series of hands-on activities. In the fall, students explore the people and cultures indigenous to this area during the Late Woodland Period, learning about the craft skills and knowledge these hunters and farmers needed to be successful in their environment. Through the study of the early European explorers and voyagers in this area, students use maps, timelines and diagrams to help increase their awareness of this space and how actions affect people and places. They learn what it was like to be a European-American settler in the Midwest and how conflicts about land occurred. Third graders use multiple resources to explore the central region of what becomes the United States. They learn about the War of 1812 and the involvement of Fort Dearborn, developing an understanding of the sources of conflict among the European-American frontier people, the British military and the Native Americans of the area.

In the spring, 3rd graders move on to the development of Chicago as an industrial city. As they progress through defining events, such as the Chicago Fire, the massive influx of immigrants and the African-American migration at the beginning of the 20th century, students struggle with the greater complexity of a modern, economically driven, urban society. They end the year looking at Chicago today, understanding that many Native Americans live here today and that immigration continues to contribute to the vitality of the city, but that immigration and migration patterns often change with time. They come to understand that people came here from many places for many reasons. The curriculum structure deepens each student’s appreciation of the city’s history and the wonderful diversity of human experience embodied within it.
Lower School Mathematics

Junior Kindergarten–Grade 3

We believe students should learn mathematics with deep understanding. They should make sense of problems and use a variety of mathematical strategies as they persevere in solving them. We believe mathematical understanding involves the ability to reason clearly, communicate effectively, draw connections and solve real problems. Reflection is important in mathematics. Estimation is an important tool, and we encourage students to think about a reasonable estimate before solving a problem. Developing automaticity of a sufficient number of computational facts to aid efficient calculation is a core component of our program, but we strive to help students understand that arithmetic is a tool in math, not the ultimate goal. Students construct models, explore patterns and structure, experiment with new strategies and tools, explain their thinking, critique the thinking of others and rely on mathematical argument to support their conclusions.

The mathematics classroom at Parker is a place to explore, learn and share, not a place to perform. We view mistakes as learning opportunities.

Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten

Our Kindergarten students explore counting. They count all kinds of things and develop their understanding of one-to-one correspondence. Taking attendance, setting out or cleaning up materials and sharing snack are just some of the ways they dive deep into numbers and learn organizational strategies to count accurately. They learn how to identify and write numerals. Students build all kinds of patterns. They discuss the attributes of objects and sort them into various categories. They collect data and explore ways to represent the information (the weather, student likes and dislikes). The calendar presents many opportunities to count forward and back and look at relationships between numbers. They play games using dice, cards and other numerical tools. As real problems emerge (“How many more blocks do we need to finish this bridge?”), they explore ways to represent numbers and compute.

First Grade

First graders continue counting, learning to read and write numbers through 100. They begin to understand the relative size of numbers and used comparison language. As the year progresses, 1st graders begin to understand how our base-10 system bundles numbers into groups of 10 and develop skills to add or subtract 10 to or from any two-digit number. They learn mathematical notation for writing equations and comparing quantities. Using visual models, they develop strategies for adding and subtracting, counting all, counting forward and counting back. They explore composing and decomposing numbers in different ways. They solve problems using a variety of tools (drawings, number lines, cubes, fingers) and practice representing their process clearly. As the year progresses, they gradually work with larger numbers and more complex problems. In Geometry, 1st graders carefully observe, describe and compare 2D and 3D geometric shapes and develop their geometric language. Students practice foundational skills for accurate linear measurement (starting and ending points, no gaps or overlaps, moving in a straight path). They use all kinds of materials (string, cubes, paper clips) as units. When measuring, students encounter lengths that are not a whole number of units and begin to develop an understanding of halves. Students collect data and discover several standard forms of representations, including picture graphs and tables.
Second Grade

Second graders review counting strategies, extending their knowledge of the number system to 1,000. They work with coins and explore place value of two- and three-digit numbers with models. They play games to help them become fluent with their addition and subtraction facts and make sense of and solve a variety of story problems involving addition and subtraction. They use a variety of tools (drawings, number lines, hundred charts and numerical notation) to model and solve problems and work on skills to show their processes in ways that make sense to them and communicate effectively to others. They explore addition problems involving more than nine ones or 10s and subtraction problems that require them to break apart a hundred or a 10. Students discover how to approach these place value situations with true understanding. They apply equations to represent their processes. Students work with models adding equal groups to lay the foundation for multiplication. They expand their knowledge of geometric shapes, applying more mathematical vocabulary to their descriptions (vertices, faces). They investigate halves, thirds and fourths of shapes and learn about fraction notation. They work with time and money, compare linear units and measure in non-standard units (e.g., shoe-lengths) and standard measures. They solve addition and subtraction problems related to linear measures. Students work with more complex data and consider how to group data into categories in a variety of ways, seeing how to use the same data to draw different conclusions.

Third Grade

Working with a variety of physical models, 3rd graders visualize multiplication and division contexts, unpacking the number of groups, the number in each group and the number in all the groups. The array model, a rectangular arrangement of equal rows and columns, is one of the key representations for building multiplicative understanding. They use their developing understanding to solve multi-step problems that involve more than one operation. Third graders extend their knowledge of place value and the base-10 number system with a goal of adding and subtracting fluently within 1,000. They compute by decomposing numbers, using number lines, rounding to multiples of 10, changing to more “friendly” numbers and adjusting and using common algorithms. As they solve problems, they discuss, refine and compare strategies. Students use area models and number lines to represent and compare halves, thirds, fourths, sixths and eighths. They work with different polygons and see relationships between categories. Third graders begin to explore area and perimeter and consider how different shapes can have the same perimeter or area. Students organize data on line plots to understand the shape of the information, concentrations, outliers and change over time.
Lower School Science

Kindergarten students explore science with their classroom teachers. Beginning in 1st grade, students spend two periods each week in the Lower School Science Lab under the direction of specialized science teachers.

Daily, from 8 to 8:25 a.m., the Lower School Science Lab is open to 1st–3rd grade students to encourage casual but meaningful science-based interactions and investigations around informal projects and activities that include coding, as well as times with classroom animals. The Lower and Intermediate School Science Fair, usually scheduled in March, is another opportunity to explore and investigate science topics of interest and present their learning to the Parker community. We invite 1st through 5th grade students to participate in this event, which encourages them to pursue and share interests and nurture curiosity about the world around them. This non-juried fair is a time for them to explore and enrich their science thinking outside the classroom.

Junior and Senior Kindergartens: The science curriculum emphasizes inquiry and independent discovery. Children acquire new information and strengthen thinking skills through questioning, testing, observing, recording and discussing. Students actively create questions to investigate and design experiments to test hypotheses. Teachers work to build a common “science language” with the class and an appreciation for diverse ideas and approaches to solving problems. Scientific units of study act as an anchor for all aspects of our curriculum. The main focus is on cycles we see in the world around us. Teachers integrate this engaging “big idea” throughout language studies, mathematics, art, music and socio-dramatic play, providing an experiential introduction to the idea of Central Topic in the Lower School.

1st: The 1st grade science laboratory experience is an introduction to inquiry that provides students the opportunity to study, invent, explore and create. A primary focus in 1st grade science is to foster the ability to observe and formulate relevant and meaningful questions that stem from those observations. We nurture inquiry as a means to develop insights into everyday phenomena. We teach core concepts in 1st grade science through investigations that emphasize scientific process skills, metric measurement, balances, the physics of toys, properties of water, microscopes, sound, light and environmental sciences. We help 1st graders cultivate their scientific perceptions of the world around them and appreciate what they experience from new perspectives. We foster such skills as following procedures and working collaboratively with partners. Activities include classifying and sorting objects; measuring distances, masses and volumes; constructing toys to assess how they work; investigating water surface tension and capillary action; observing through microscopes; and creating toys based on the principles of sound and light. Students learn the steps involved in pursuing extracurricular investigations that stem from essential questions, and they are encouraged to participate in our Lower and Intermediate School Science Fair. The curriculum integrates current events and environmental sciences. A number of projects cross departments to enhance the project-based learning experience among 1st graders. For example, the jump rope project is an art, science and PE connection, and the tumble toy is an art and science connection. First graders attend science twice a week.
2nd: Learning through active exploration is the primary emphasis of science class. We promote and measure student growth by encouraging and evaluating skill development and work habits. The 2nd grade science laboratory experience is a hands-on exploration of weather, seasons, botany, engineering, magnets and insects. A primary focus in 2nd grade science is to foster the ability to accurately describe observations and learn to craft questions that guide future study, while working to differentiate observations from inferences. Students spend time exploring, experiencing, studying, inventing, creating and communicating learning, promoting scientific literacy. They learn about the natural environment as they measure weather conditions, engineer tools for measurement, observe and examine the life cycle of plants, dissect different parts of plants, conduct experiments on plant needs and functions and study the habitats of animals, plants and trees in the vicinity of Parker. A wealth of activities that guide students to identify specific plant attributes and note similarities and differences strengthen observational skills. These activities naturally lead to an appreciation of special plant adaptations and botanical classification. As a part of our studies, 2nd graders take local nature walks and a field trip where they immerse themselves in a natural environment to better understand and appreciate the importance of a forest ecosystem with an emphasis on direct interaction and exploration. Students conduct experiments with magnets to explore polarity and test fields of strength. They explore electric circuits through constructing and engineering small projects. Investigations and creating models help introduce students to the form and function of insect anatomy, and they learn to work through scientific process to design and conduct humane insect behavior tests. Second grade students attend science twice a week.

3rd: Learning through doing, exploring, experimenting and collaborating is the primary emphasis of 3rd grade science. We promote and measure student growth by encouraging and evaluating skill development and work habits. In 3rd grade science, students work through a variety of experiential studies to help them develop skills and gain a better understanding of transportation, movement, animals, buoyancy, computer coding and scientific process. Students experience science through the approach of a paleontologist, zoologist, entomologist, biologist, researcher and engineer. We begin by exploring the topic of movement and the forces involved in movement. Students investigate, engineer, construct and test vehicles that model and explore forces and how simple machines help facilitate easier movement. During our buoyancy studies, students test a variety of materials and engineer designs to test the physics behind why and how some objects float in air and water. During our animal studies, we look at Ice Age animals, dinosaurs, fossils and classroom and zoo animals, as well as raise birds and trout from eggs. Students develop and interpret systems of classification, evaluate animal needs and investigate animal form and function through a variety of techniques that highlight specialized physical characteristics and behaviors of various animal species. To help direct and define purpose to our animal studies, there is a multidisciplinary cross-curricular project of designing a Parker zoo model that includes investigating the mission and design of the Lincoln Park Zoo as well as correspondence with other zoos. Embedded in the curriculum are three cross-grade themes of study: current events, environmental stewardship and innovation. Third grade science meets twice a week throughout the year.
Lower School Integrated Learning and Information Science (ILIS)

The Integrated Learning and Information Science Department (ILIS) is a collaborative department combining the library and technology education departments and faculty. Research shows that technology skills, research skills, literacy and maker projects resonate deeper with students when they are integrated into their classroom curriculum. The ILIS Department strives to create project-based learning experiences in collaboration with the classroom and departmental teachers. Classroom teachers and often science teachers also blend reading, writing and research with technology education. The curriculum at each grade level is ever-changing and developed collaboratively alongside classroom and departmental teachers. Students participate in ILIS activities in both the library space and with technology in the school several times weekly. Many of the recent projects are available to view in the ILIS section of our website.

Lower School Music

**Junior Kindergarten:** In this introduction to the musical art form, there is truly something to excite every student as they take their first steps into a lifetime of musical creation. Students learn the joy of expressing themselves through music, movement and sound. In each class, they use their bodies and voices to experience firsthand the excitement of sonic exploration. Students explore a new musical instrument during each class—from banjos to bass drums to bouzoukis. They sing authentic folk songs from around the world—from England, France, Ghana, Morocco, Ireland, Scotland, India, China and more. Students experience music in their classrooms once a week.

**Senior Kindergarten:** Children in Senior Kindergarten discover the joy of making and listening to music. Through guided exploration and discovery, children develop some fundamental skills and concepts necessary to perform music and to be an appreciative listener. Through hands-on activities such as expressive speaking and singing, listening and moving to music of various styles, playing simple percussion instruments and creating music at their level, students develop not only skills in these areas but also various musical concepts.

We lay the foundation of Music Concept Development in Senior Kindergarten when we direct students’ attention on some of the elements of music. The materials we use are rhymes and chants natural to young children; songs appropriate for this age; materials that follow and honor the various holidays and seasons of the year; singing games to reinforce social conduct, rules and group work; and music of various cultures and styles, including art music selections by famous composers. Throughout the year in their twice-a-week sessions, children in Senior Kindergarten explore, discover and problem-solve under careful teacher guidance in the Lower School Music Room. Through active making and listening to music, they acquire and expand their musical vocabulary, skills and concepts.

**1st:** In 1st grade, we extend and build upon the music skills and concepts we introduced in Kindergarten. First graders work on improving the quality and intonation of their singing voices, using breath-supporting posture, simple warm-ups and repertoire that includes traditional and seasonal songs and extends around the world. Their listening skills expand with increased musical vocabulary to describe world music and western art music. We incorporate techniques from the Dalcroze Eurhythmics approach, which uses movement to enhance and reveal perception of expressive musical elements. In large and small groups, students learn to play simple percussion instruments (such as maracas, rhythm sticks, drums and guiros) and the barred instruments designed by Carl Orff (xylophones, metallophones and glockenspiels) with proper technique. Students begin to read music in 1st grade as they learn that symbols can represent sound, although at this level they read mostly icons (pictures) rather than traditional notation.
As with skills, the children build upon their previous experiences to continue their Music Concept Development. In rhythm, we add melodic rhythm and gradual changes of tempo. Dynamics includes gradual as well as sudden changes. The children identify and produce high, middle and low pitch as well as upward and downward moving sounds. They expand their knowledge of tone color to include American folk, Mexican Mariachi and other Latin-American instruments. We add phrases, verse-chorus and interlude to the category of form. Students attend music class twice a week.

2nd: The overall goal of our music program is to create in the students a level of musical independence that will help them interact with music at a more personal level. The students must develop tools that lead to independent musicianship, appreciation of musical diversity and more fulfilling musical experiences. When students develop the tools to perceive and articulate what they perceive in the music they hear, create or perform, their understanding of music deepens, greatly enhancing their enjoyment of it.

During 2nd grade, children refine and further develop their musical skills and concepts as they continue on the path of becoming independent performers and discriminative listeners. Singing continues to develop as children perform seasonal and other songs from the traditions of North America, Africa, Japan and other world nations. They refine discriminative listening skills through music of different styles, including multicultural music and historically significant repertoire from the western art musical tradition. In all aspects of listening, the students use music vocabulary to describe the music in terms of the concepts they have developed. The skill of playing instruments, both classroom percussion and the barred, pitched instruments designed by Carl Orff, grows as students improve their technique, gain greater precision, develop some independence in playing a specific part and enhance their performance of songs and dances. Music Reading includes traditional notation and comparison of our western musical notation to the notation on a Japanese musical score.

In the area of Music Concept Development, we extend the study of rhythm from beat to accent, beat groupings and meter and from melodic rhythm to rhythmic ostinato. Major, minor and pentatonic (Japanese) scales are new aspects of pitch. We explore more subtle changes in dynamics. Various tone colors receive focus in orchestral pieces and in the study of traditional African and Japanese instruments. Musical phrases, call and response and various combinations of repeated and contrasting sections of pieces comprise the study of form. Students explore a variety of musical styles, such as spirituals, ragtime, blues, jazz, American folk and traditional African and Japanese music. Students attend music class twice a week.

3rd: Third grade music class explores the different roles music plays in history and students’ everyday lives. In preparation for Woodland Activity Day, the Thanksgiving Morning Ex and Pioneer Day, students study the music of American Indians, Shakers and American settlers. They also prepare music for the Holiday Morning Ex, featuring different instrumental and singing parts. Other activities this semester include composing melodies on Orff instruments and improvising rhythms on percussion instruments.

In the second semester, students study music such as “John Henry” and “The Erie Canal,” learning about the meaning and historical context of these songs. The 3rd grade also continues to learn music that relates to the study of Illinois state history. We introduce the recorder in the second semester as another tool for musical self-expression. Students learn the basic techniques of playing the instrument and how to read music. Students attend music class twice a week.
Lower School Physical Education

**Junior Kindergarten:** The curriculum introduces simple patterns, basic locomotor movement, spatial awareness, concepts, rhythms and related games and activities. Children have frequent and meaningful age-appropriate practice and opportunities and play that enable individuals to develop functional understanding of movement concepts and skill development. Focus is on their self-concept and confidence level as they gain competency and demonstrate cooperative play. Their learning experience comprises individual, small group and entire class forums. Children attend P.E. class twice a week.

**Senior Kindergarten:** The physical education curriculum continues building simple movements introduced the previous year. The movements become more complex patterns, skills and knowledge. Children have frequent and meaningful age-appropriate practice opportunities and play that enable individuals to develop a functional understanding of movement concepts and skill development. The focus is on self-concept and confidence level as they gain greater competency and demonstrate cooperative play. Individual, small group and entire class forums are part of their learning experiences. Children attend P.E. class meets twice a week.

**1st:** The 1st grade curriculum continues in building simple movements into more complex patterns, skills and knowledge that children learned in previous years. First graders continue to improve in their self-concept and confidence level as they gain greater competency and demonstrate more mature forms of cooperative play. Team play introduces two goal games. Children begin to apply skills and knowledge in game situations. Individual, small group and entire class activities incorporate rules, skills and reaction time. Children attend P.E. class three times each week.

**2nd:** The curriculum continues to build simple movements into more complex patterns, skills and knowledge that children learned in previous years. Second graders continue to improve in their self-concept and confidence level as they gain greater competency and demonstrate more mature forms of cooperative play. Two goal games continue to be present in the classroom, as well as introducing game strategies and sportsmanship. Individual, small group and entire class activities incorporate rules, skills and reaction time. Children attend P.E. class three times each week.

**3rd:** The 3rd grade curriculum continues to build simple movements into more complex patterns, skills and knowledge that children learned in previous years. Third graders continue to improve in their self-concept and confidence level as they gain greater competency and demonstrate more mature forms of cooperative play, individual and team skills. Children attend P.E. class four times each week.
Lower School Spanish

The Language and Cultural Studies Department in the Lower School offers instruction in Spanish from Junior Kindergarten through 3rd grade. In keeping with the school’s mission and goals, the Lower School Spanish program strives to introduce students to the Spanish language as well as cultural awareness and sensitivity. Students continue their study of Spanish through 8th grade. Students use class time to begin acquiring oral, aural and visual skills in developmentally appropriate ways. Emphasis on oral communication from this young age provides a strong foundation in language learning. We also make connections of culture and language between language and each grade’s Central Topic. One of the primary goals in the Lower School Spanish program is to build confidence and give increased exposure to the target language.

Junior Kindergarten: Junior Kindergarten meets twice a week. Students in this grade listen as the teacher presents core vocabulary. The class participates in total physical response (TPR) activities to reinforce basic vocabulary and students interact with it. Teachers often use visuals to accompany specific stories or topics to enhance understanding and conversation. Materials include games, puppets and dolls from the target language and culture. Some of the topics include basic greetings, numbers, songs and games.

Senior Kindergarten: Students in Senior Kindergarten meet twice a week and listen as the teacher introduces core vocabulary (as appropriate by language) including greetings, numbers and colors. The class members participate in total physical response (TPR) activities to reinforce basic vocabulary. Teachers often use visuals to accompany specific stories or topics to enhance understanding and conversation. Some of the topics include basic greetings, numbers and colors.

1st: In 1st grade students listen to contextual material with oral and visual clues to expand vocabulary. The class participates in total physical response (TPR). Students listen to stories, rhymes and songs. First graders also learn about Mexican culture: Las Posadas, Day of the Dead, el maíz (corn history) tortillas and more. Topics of study include greetings, phonetic awareness of numbers from 1 to 20, colors, calendar (days, months and weather), school objects, songs and rhymes in the target language. Students enjoy Spanish twice a week.

2nd: In 2nd grade, the program provides students with a gradual development of linguistic skills. Activities primarily focus on skills of listening, speaking and reading in an informal and relaxed environment and introduce students to the culture of Spanish-speaking people. Second graders have an opportunity to study Japan and make a comparison with the Spanish culture in the way both cultures prepare rice. Some topics include review (greetings, school objects, colors, numbers, calendar and body parts), body parts (second part), animals, songs and rhymes in the target language. Cultural awareness studies include Las Posadas, Day of the Dead and el arroz (rice). Students enjoy Spanish twice a week.

3rd: Third grade students meet three times a week. This program seeks to develop listening, speaking and decoding skills through a communicative and experiential-based learning environment. Lessons are based upon themes, with each theme including vocabulary, conversations and listening to model instruction, accompanied by oral or visual clues. This class integrates all components to provide the students with immediately applicable language related to people, places and things around them. Third graders have an opportunity to study Native Woodland cultures as their grade theme and make a comparison with the Spanish culture of the Aztecs and Mayas in the Spanish classroom. Some of the contexts include family (expand vocabulary), animals (expand vocabulary), opposites (basic adjectives such as pequeño/grande), songs and rhymes in the target language. Students explore Las Posadas, Day of the Dead, Aztec and Mayan culture to expand cultural competence.
Lower School Drama

Drama class begins in 1st grade and meets weekly in half groups, allowing small-group exploration and focus in the areas of curriculum.

1st: Creative Drama is a group activity in which children explore and communicate their thoughts and feelings in dramatic form and expression, beginning in 1st grade through the use of improvised action and dialogue. Students test their ideas as they interact with their classmates while exploring their senses, ability to move expressively and appropriately and cooperation with their classmates while exploring, developing, expressing and communicating their thoughts and feelings. The multifaceted focus of the curriculum includes using oral language to communicate ideas and feelings, exploring student imagination, problem solving, understanding and having empathy for others, increasing creative expression and understanding and appreciating the art form of drama. First graders specifically work on listening attentively, following simple directions, sharing space with others and cooperating with others by sharing and taking turns.

2nd: In 2nd grade, students continue to explore and communicate their thoughts and feelings in dramatic form and expression. They continue to use pantomime as their primary form of expressing action and dialogue. Students continue to explore their senses. They continue to work on moving expressively and appropriately, cooperating with others and exploring, developing, expressing and communicating their thoughts and feelings primarily through movement. The multifaceted focus of the curriculum includes listening attentively, following directions carefully, sharing space with others, cooperating with others by sharing and taking turns and contributing relevant ideas and/or comments.

3rd: In 3rd grade, students continue to explore and communicate their thoughts and feelings in dramatic form and expression. In addition to using pantomime to express ideas, they begin to explore the use of dialogue. Students continue to explore their senses. They continue to work on moving expressively and appropriately; cooperating with others; and exploring, developing, expressing and communicating their thoughts and feelings through movement and dialogue. The multifaceted focus of the curriculum includes using oral language to communicate ideas and feelings, exploring student imagination, problem solving, understanding and having empathy for others, increasing creative expression and understanding and appreciating the art form of drama. Third graders also continue to work on listening attentively, following directions carefully, sharing space with others, cooperating with others by sharing and taking turns and contributing relevant ideas and/or comments.
Lower School Visual Arts

Junior and Senior Kindergarten: The kindergartens explore art in their classrooms as a natural extension of learning and play. Group projects and individual expression and exploration occur in various mediums throughout the year.

1st: First grade students explore a variety of materials and techniques in both two and three dimensions in the art room. The main objective is to build basic skills in the areas of drawing, painting, cutting, pasting and forming. Students create simple toys such as a rocking bird and tumble toy to connect with their studies in science. We introduce students to ceramic clay by forming and glazing a pinch pot, reinforcing their sense of three-dimensional art. Students also work on basic elements of drawing trees and adding an ultimate tree house and mixing and applying paint for a painting of a sun. We also work on a cross-curricular jump rope project that involves making the jump rope and handles in art/shop, using the jump rope in P.E. and exploring jump ropes in science.

Students meet in half-groups twice a week for art, which rotates with woodshop during the school year approximately every nine weeks. After nine weeks, the groups switch. This allows students to have experiences in each of the classes twice during the year in small groups.

2nd: In 2nd grade, students continue to build art skills, creativity and craftsmanship in the art studio. During the first semester, concepts include painting techniques, shading, symmetry and proportion. Students work with clay, printmaking and, circuits with fun explorative projects. Students work on large paintings of sweets, learning how artist Wayne Theobald applied paint like frosting a cake and used the brush to blend colors.

Art takes place in nine-week segments throughout the year to half the class. The other half of the class is in woodshop during this time. After nine weeks, the groups switch. This allows students to have experiences in each of the classes twice during the year in small groups.

3rd: In 3rd grade, students continue to build skills, creativity and craftsmanship in a larger group in the art classroom. As with all drawing and painting projects, we encourage students to draw large, add details and fill the space/background of the page. Some projects include working with weaving on small cardboard looms and a large four-harness loom, painting watercolors, drawing still life pieces and creating a still life painting on canvas. As a cross-curricular project integrating art, shop, music and core curriculum studies, students construct, decorate and learn to play a dulcimer, a 1900s three stringed instrument.

Third grade art takes place in nine-week segments throughout the year to the whole class. After nine weeks, the class switches to woodshop. This allows students to have experiences in each of the classes twice during the year.
Lower School Woodshop

The Lower School woodshop program emphasizes an appreciation for handicraft and explores old and new practices in basic woodworking. Happy craftsmanship builds character, focus and a respect for the work of others in the community. Short group projects and skill-building exercises reinforce the value of collaboration. The woodshop experience provides a well-balanced creative time for children to explore their unique artistic spark and enjoy the wonderful medium of wood. The woodshop program begins in 1st grade. Students meet twice a week during their time in woodshop, which rotates with art during the school year approximately every nine weeks. First and second grades attend in half-groups and 3rd grade in a whole-class format.

1st: First grade starts with the basics of measuring, rasping, sanding and attaching. Students learn how to use the table vice, riffle files and sandpaper to create original balsa wood bug specimens. They also craft small structures for the classroom community and build a Tic-Tac-Toe game box. They learn about hard and soft wood and make their own jump rope handles. They develop confidence when working with the shop tools.

2nd: Second graders work with self-assurance and master new tools and techniques. Students craft musical projects, small bookshelves, salt and pepper shakers and a veneered sketchbook filled with drawings of the tools they know and use. The curriculum concentrates on building things of a practical nature. Students focus on improving techniques with the coping saw and gain strength and stamina when using the American cross cut and the Japanese saw. Students use a variety of wood types and continue to boldly express ideas and refine skill in planning and craftsmanship.

3rd: Teachers encourage third grade shop students to work with increased independence and purpose as they create projects that focus on the theme of movement. Students continue to engage in inspired thinking as they develop original plans and acquire fine motor skill with basic woods, handsaws and drills. Students follow a simple blueprint and craft a unique toy sailboat made from pine. In other projects, they experiment with spinning tops and other fun moving creations. They learn to bend and weave wood and create a unique wooden basket. They use a variety of wood types and finishing techniques and continue to express ideas and refine a sense of craftsmanship.
Counseling

The Counseling Department views each student as a complex learner embedded in multiple and changing contexts. In addition to being learners, students are developing as emotional, social and physical members of a larger community that includes home, school and society.

The purpose of Parker’s Counseling Department is to support and help students to succeed and thrive. We use a team approach and work very closely with the Learning Resources Department and teachers. We carry out our mission by developing an understanding of the educational, emotional, social and physical needs of students and by helping faculty, students and parents teach students the skills they need to cope successfully with school life. We believe every student is capable of learning and relating, and every student wants to learn and grow.

In addition to functioning in the traditional roles of counselors, the Counseling Department members also function as educators, coordinators of services, assessors and consultants. The Lower School has the support of two counselors.

During the course of a normal week, the Lower School counselors help provide the following services:

- Coordinate staffing for individual students
- Consult with teachers and families
- Present and facilitate workshops on parenting and mental health issues
- Counsel individuals—usually on a “short-term” basis, but on occasion, in “long-term” supportive therapy
- Facilitate self-help and support groups (e.g., new student groups, divorce groups, social skills groups)
- Coordinate services within the school between teachers, Learning Resources staff and other professionals
- Coordinate services with school officials and outside professionals (e.g., tutors, therapists) when appropriate
- Refer students and families to outside providers
- Provide crisis intervention for individuals and, occasionally, for the entire school.

The Counseling Department also exists to help the school, as a whole, become an environment where staff, faculty and students can flourish. In addition to helping students directly, we believe in educating for healthy living. This education includes not only informing students how to help themselves, but also how to assist each other and become concerned and responsible citizens within the Parker community and in the world outside. Overall, the objectives of the counseling program are closely tied to the mission of Francis W. Parker School, which aims to “cultivate in its students qualities of character and citizenship that can guide them through life as resourceful, thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society.”
Learning Resources

Parker’s Learning Resources Department supports JK–12 students with learning differences throughout the school. In Lower School, the department often provides instructional support inside and outside the classroom, conducts informal assessments when necessary and implements appropriate recommendations. We support students in becoming active learners by helping them understand and communicate their learning styles, as well as by teaching them strategies that will work best for them. There are two Learning Resource Teachers for 1st–4th Grades and an Early Childhood Specialist for JK and SK.

Learning Resource teachers work in the classroom setting and in pull-put groupings in quiet rooms. Skill building in reading and math are the primary focus for Lower School students who qualify for this extra support.

Additionally, the Learning Resources teachers consult with classroom and department teachers about their students. Prior to making a recommendation for a formal evaluation, the student’s learning style is discussed with parents. Once a formal evaluation is completed, we share information and support teachers in implementing classroom recommendations. LR Teachers also offer instructional support in classroom settings and recommend appropriate professional development opportunities.

Serving as liaisons between home and school, the Learning Resources teachers aim to help parents understand and address their children’s challenges, providing outside referrals for testing, tutoring, speech/language therapy, occupational therapy or in-house counseling as necessary. As students reach ages where testing is appropriate, we guide families through the assessment process and help them interpret diagnostic data. In addition, we assist parents in setting realistic expectations for themselves and their children by making recommendations regarding schedules, home routines, summer programs and other educational opportunities.
Examples of Daily Schedules

The Junior Kindergarten daily schedule includes:

- **Arrival/Entry Time** - informal greetings with teachers & classmates; attending to personal responsibilities.
- **Meeting Time** – schedule review, calendar routine, group discussion, and announcements
- **P.E.** – twice a week for 40 minutes
- **Spanish** – twice a week for 30 minutes, in the classroom.
- **ILIS (Integrated Learning and Information Science)** – once a week for 30 minutes in the library
- **Teacher planned activities** – read-alouds and shared reading, introduction and development of language and math concepts, hands-on experiences surrounding science themes, handwriting
- **Independent Work/Centers/Choice Time** – activities may include board games, puzzles, socio-dramatic play opportunities, art projects, construction activities, sensory experiences (e.g. sand play, exploration of light and shadow), reading and writing activities, math manipulatives.
- **Supported Sharing** – opportunities with the guidance of the teacher to develop expressive and receptive language with a whole group.
- **Outdoor Play** – socializing, problem solving, exploring nature, exercise and physical skill building.
- **Emergent Curriculum** – Throughout the year, various themes emanate from the students and teachers and become part of the schedule, too.
- **Chill Time** – a time for relaxation and rejuvenation of growing bodies and brains.
- **Family-style Lunches** – Learn to eat in a group, sharing, counting and food-taste development

The Senior Kindergarten daily schedule includes:

- **Arrival/Entry Time** – informal greetings with teachers and classmates; attending to personal responsibilities.
- **Meeting Time** – schedule review, calendar routine, group discussion and announcements
- **P.E. and Music** – twice a week for 40 minutes, plus one additional 30-minute P.E. and one additional 30-minute music during Ex-Day
- **Spanish** – three times a week for 30 minutes, in the classroom
- **ILIS (Integrated Learning and Information Science)** – once a week for 30 minutes in the library, plus one additional rotating “flex period” every six weeks during Ex Day
- **Teacher-Planned Activities** – read-alouds and shared reading, introduction and development of literacy and math concepts and skills, hands-on experiences surrounding science themes
- **Independent Work/Centers/Choice Time** – activities may include board games, puzzles, socio-dramatic play opportunities, art projects, construction activities, sensory experiences (e.g., sand play, exploration of light and shadow), reading and writing activities and work with math manipulatives
- **Sharing** – opportunities to develop expressive and receptive language and to increase confidence addressing the whole group
- **Outdoor Play** – socializing, problem solving, exploring nature, exercise and physical skill building; throughout the year, various emergent curricular themes are woven into the above morning structure
- **Lunchtime** – independent eating days with lunch from home and family-style lunch based on schedule
- **Kaleidoscope** – once weekly small group exploration of a variety of classes such as drama, Spanish, science and sports
Choice Time incorporates special all-school events and holidays. For example, in preparation for a holiday, children might transform the dramatic play area into a butterfly garden, study butterflies, bees, birds, worms and spiders and create stories and songs about them. Through experiences like these, children practice working cooperatively with class members, articulating ideas to others, listening to other children’s thoughts and feelings, creating project plans, gathering materials and developing action plans.

The First Grade daily schedule includes:

- arrival/ classroom entrance time – greeting of teachers, attending to personal responsibilities of putting belongs in locker (cubbies). Deciding on before school activities (recess or Science room)

- Departmental classes that include the following (not in any order):

  • P.E. – 3X a week for 40 minutes
  • Science – 2X a week for 40 minutes
  • Music – 2 X a week for 40 minutes
  • Drama – 1 X a week in 1/2 groups – 40 minutes each group
  • Art – 2X a week for 1/2 groups for 50 minutes
  • Shop – 2X a week for other 1/2 groups for 50 minutes
    (these groups switch every 6 to 8 weeks to have both experiences)
  • ILIS (Library) – 1X a week for 30 minutes
  • ILIS (Tech Lab) – 1 X a week for 40 minutes
    (these groups sometimes use both times to work on the same project that focuses on design thinking)
  • Spanish – 2 X a week for 30 minutes
  • Super Flex (social and emotional learning) – 1 X a week for 30 minutes

Subjects taught by grade head, assistant, and literacy specialist:

  • Reading – students do a variety of whole group, small group, and independent work
  • Writing – whole group, small group, independent
  • Math – whole group, small group, independent
  • Social Studies – whole group, small group, independent
  • DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) discussions on-going that include use of literature, videos, conversations, and learning how to relate to a variety of cultures through presentations by children and parents from various ethnic backgrounds

Units of study and all school events as well as holidays are part of the first grade curriculum and may include extended projects and learning that also underscores use of skills in reading, writing, and math.

Outdoor Play – Recess four times during a variety of times of the school day – before school, morning recess, lunch recess, afternoon recess (depending on weather conditions and individual classroom needs)

Lunch – Students bring their own lunches and eat in the Sheridan Café. They are supervised by the assistant teachers.

Dismissal – Grade Heads dismiss students in the following ways:

  In School: Down the hallway for pick-up, Parker P.M, and Parker Plus Classes
  Outside: To the car pool line for outside pick-up
The Second Grade daily schedule includes:

- Arrival/ Classroom entrance time—greeting of teachers, attending to personal responsibilities of putting belongs in locker (cubbies). Determine before school activities (recess or science room)

- Departmental classes that include the following (not in any order):
  
  - **P.E.** – 3X a week for 40 minutes
  - **Science** – 2X a week for 40 minutes
  - **Music** – 2 X a week for 40 minutes
  - **Drama** – 1 X a week in 1/2 groups – 40 minutes each group
  - **Art** – 2X a week for 1/2 groups for 50 minutes
  - **Shop** – 2X a week for other 1/2 groups for 50 minutes
    (these groups switch every 6 to 8 weeks to have both experiences)
  - **ILIS (Library)** – 1X a week for 30 minutes
  - **ILIS (Tech Lab)** – 1 X a week for 40 minutes
    (these groups sometimes use both times to work on the same project that focuses on design thinking)
  - **Spanish** – 2 X a week for 30 minutes

Subjects taught by grade head, assistant, math specialist, and literacy specialist

- **Reading** – students do a variety of whole group, small group, and independent work
- **Writing** – whole group, small groups, independent
- **Math** – whole group, small groups, independent
- **Central Topic** – whole group, small groups
- **DEI** (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) discussions on-going that include use of literature, videos, conversations, and learning how to relate to a variety of cultures through presentations by children and parents from various ethnic backgrounds

**Outdoor Play** – Recess three times during a variety of times of the school day – before school, morning recess, lunch recess, afternoon recess (depending on weather conditions and individual classroom needs)

**Lunch** – Students bring their own lunches and eat in the main cafeteria. There is a one day a week meal option from our food service. They are supervised by the assistant teachers.

**Dismissal** – Grade Heads dismiss students to classes in the building and walk students going home to the carpool lane on Webster Ave.
The Third Grade daily schedule includes:
- arrival/ classroom entrance time – greetings, attending to personal responsibilities of putting belongs in locker (cubbies), classroom meeting.

- Departmental classes that include the following (not in any order):
  - P.E. – 4X a week for 40 minutes
  - Science – 2X a week for 40 minutes
  - Music – 2 X a week for 40 minutes
  - Drama – 1 X a week in 1/2 groups – 40 minutes each group
  - Art or Shop – 2X a week for for 50 minutes
  - ILIS (Library) – 1X a week for 30 minutes
  - ILIS (Tech Lab) – 1 X a week for 40 minutes
    (these groups sometimes use both times to work on the same project that focuses on design thinking)
  - Spanish – 3 X a week for 20 minutes
  - Morning Ex – 3X a week for 40 minutes, with grades 3rd-12th

Subjects taught by grade head, assistant, math specialist, and literacy specialist
- Reading – whole group, small group, and independent work
- Writing – whole group, small groups, independent
- Math – whole group, small groups, independent
- Central Topic is the study of Chicago – whole group, small groups
- DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) discussions on-going that include use of literature, videos, conversations, and learning how to relate to a variety of cultures through presentations by children and parents from various ethnic backgrounds

Outdoor Play – Recess occurs twice during the school day – before school (½ hour) and lunch recess (½ hour)

Lunch – Students can bring their own lunches and eat in the Sheridan Cafe, or there is meal option from our food service. They are supervised by their teachers during lunchtime.

Dismissal – Grade Heads dismiss students to classes in the building and walk students going home to the carpool lane on Webster Ave.
Lower School General Information

School Day Hours

Daily Schedule: 7:30 am (Building Opens)
Families can walk in with their child starting at 8 a.m. or use the 4th Grade K-Walkers

Junior Kindergarten: 8:30 a.m.–2:45 p.m.
8 a.m. Doors to JK classrooms are open to receive students

Senior Kindergarten: 8:30.–2:45 p.m.
8 a.m. Doors to SK classrooms are open to receive students

Grades 1–3: 8:30 a.m.–3:10 p.m.

Snack Policy

As part of our commitment to the health and well-being of students at Parker, the school, guided by our Wellness Committee, has established goals with respect to the snacks provided for students in JK–3rd grade and in Parker PM. These goals, which are outlined in the school’s Wellness Policy, include providing snacks that:

- are nutritious and minimally packaged
- include whole fruits and vegetables, whole grain crackers and breads, dairy products and non-nut proteins
- have low to no sugar added

All regular school snacks for grades JK–3 will be provided by Quest, our food service provider.

Parker is a Peanut/Nut Allergy Aware School. For grades JK–3, no one should send peanuts, nuts or derivatives (peanut butter, peanut oil) to school for lunch, snacks or treats. In addition, each classroom has children with specific allergies.

Food Service

The school serves breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria. Families accompanying their children to school are welcome to join them for breakfast.

- **Snacks:** The school provides snacks for students in JK–2nd grades during the morning and SK–1 in the afternoon.
- **Lunch**
  - JK eat lunch in their classrooms, family-style, provided by the school’s Foodservice team.
  - SK students bring their lunches three times weekly and eat in the Sheridan Family Cafe. Two days weekly they will eat family-style like JK.
  - 1st and 2nd grade students bring their lunch and eat in the cafeteria. Parents may order milk from food service.
  - 3rd grade students may pre-order lunch from the cafeteria or bring lunches from home. Parents sign up for a year of lunches or Wednesday-only lunches created especially for 3rd graders.
  - Beginning in 4th grade, students may buy their lunches in the cafeteria line.
Allergy Policy

Francis W. Parker School is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all students. Our goals are always: safety and inclusion. Communication is vital to the safety of students with allergies, and we require families share all types of allergies with the nurse and the teachers. In turn, we will communicate with parents at each grade level about food for special events and student travel so they have the information they need to either help us develop alternatives that will include all students, or provide a safe alternative themselves depending on the circumstances. Teachers and staff are trained in the use of epi-pens and other safety measures to support students with allergies to food and insect bites. Students with epi-pens keep them in backpacks or classrooms or both. Additionally, there are extra epi-pens in the nurse’s office. Teachers with students who have epi-pens bring them on field trips and outings.

With food allergy incidents on the rise throughout the United States, Francis W. Parker School is a Peanut/Nut allergy Aware School. While no school can guarantee that its campus is “Nut Free,” we ask every member of our community to help us maintain as safe and inclusive an environment as possible by refraining from bringing nuts, nut products or products made with nut derivatives into classrooms. Please be aware that some foods that do not contain obvious nuts may contain trace amount of nuts that could also cause a severe allergic reaction in some children. We believe adhering to these guidelines is the responsibility of all in our community, those with food allergies and those without, because we all share the responsibility for keeping one another safe and included in all in classroom activities. As Colonel Parker himself wrote, “responsibility of each for all and all for each” is integral to sustaining a true community.

Bullying Prevention Policy

Bullying will not be tolerated at our school. Bullying occurs when a student is the target of negative actions, usually in the form of intentional, repeated, hurtful acts, words or other behavior. Any student who believes that he/she has been the victim of bullying shall report the incident to a teacher, the counselor or the Lower School Head.

We will investigate each situation and make every effort to clarify facts and give due process to the student. By communicating expectations strongly and enacting consequences, we send a strong message of protection for the victims and inform the children behaving in an unkind or cruel way that we know they are capable of behaving respectfully.

Seeking help or advice, or letting an adult know when someone could get hurt, property could be damaged or there is potential for serious wrongdoing, is justified, legitimate and encouraged. We also help children understand they can be positive bystanders by reporting something inappropriate to an adult and standing up for their peers. Teachers and parents help children by letting them know we expect kind behavior at all times. We teach children that only they are in control of their own behavior. And we teach them to look for solutions that diffuse upset feelings instead of escalating anger.
After School Enrichment: Parker PM and Parker PLUS

Parker’s Extended Day programs provide students JK-5 with the opportunity to extend their school day in a stimulating, safe and nurturing environment. Program staff work closely with teachers, parents and students to create a healthy transition from school to home and back again. Many students attend Parker PM throughout their JK through 5th grade years, developing wonderful relationships and a strong sense of belonging.

Parker PM offers flexible but structured afterschool time complete with projects, snacks, naps, and supervised playtime with peers. Students wishing to pursue specialized activities can sign up for one or more of our many offerings. Parker P.L.U.S. provides students in grades JK–5 with opportunities to attend a wide variety of mini-classes in multi-week sessions. JK and SK P.L.U.S. include offerings like photography, soccer, judo, yoga and coding AND 1st–5th grade P.L.U.S. classes include offerings like clay, wall-climbing, dodge ball, Minecraft, improv and shop.