Intermediate School
Program of Studies 2021–22
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FORWARD FROM THE HEAD OF THE INTERMEDIATE AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Intermediate School at Parker honors and celebrates late childhood as a unique and beautiful state of human development. Grades 4 and 5 (9–11-year-olds) offer fertile ground for broadening perspectives, recognizing complexity, becoming self-aware and embracing new responsibilities. Children this age emerge from Lower School ready to embark, with the careful guidance of teachers in a broad but clearly defined structure, on those first tentative steps toward abstract thinking. Intermediate School students are earnest, available for learning, eager to connect with teachers and classmates and excited by new ideas and opportunities to demonstrate independence. They seek the time and space to learn through exploration, yet benefit from limits on that freedom to begin to discriminate and evaluate their thought processes. They are eager to take on greater responsibility for their own lives, perhaps even more eager than prepared. But with the thoughtful, consistent guidance of teachers who understand and appreciate the exciting potential of this unique age, students engage in activities in and out of the formal academic setting that provide hands-on practice at self-organization, prioritization and collaboration with others beyond their classroom. Intermediate School teachers create situations, intentionally, for their students to engage safely in activities that challenge them to practice these skills, followed by reflection, feedback and renewed efforts. At this stage, an integrated approach—with life beyond academics providing frequent opportunities to apply what has been learned intellectually—is crucial to promoting maturity and growth, to empowering every child to reach his or her full potential. As such, during this stage, the social-emotional and intellectual needs of students are equal in importance and, at times, even indistinguishable.

Within the context of 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,” our Intermediate School teachers challenge and empower students to:

- Apply the skills, concepts and processes they learn to new intellectual endeavors and to real-life situations; beyond understanding and retention, the emphasis shifts to transferring knowledge and skills to new aspects of their studies and lives
- Recognize and adopt new and broader perspectives on themselves, others and the world around them; daily reinforcement helps students see and begin to articulate different points of view on the same issue, and new responsibilities around the school help shift focus from self to others (and to the multiple communities to which we all belong)
- Think through and describe their own reasoning, discriminating between rational, sound opinions and simple preferences, as well as between supporting detail and broader conclusions; frequent practice at recognizing and describing context helps students see new perspectives
- Recognize, accept and grow comfortable engaging “the gray,” pivoting away from more concrete thinking (good and bad, the way to approach a mathematical problem, the spirit versus the letter of the rules to a playground game); teachers are explicit in instructing students how to change points of view and draw no arbitrary distinction between opportunities to attempt more complex thinking during academic lessons and in their everyday lives
● Demonstrate increased awareness of their personal responsibilities to themselves and their communities, understanding the many types of relationships in their lives; the important roles self-advocacy and effective communication play in their own learning and growth; and literacy around issues of identity, power and equity (drawn from the curriculum and connected to their own experiences of the world)

● Related to the item above, begin to embrace their responsibilities as involved citizens in a free, pluralistic and democratic society, seeking, always, to contribute to higher levels of inclusion for the greater good and committing to a lifetime of growing and circulating one's empathy and cultural competency

As a progressive school, we seek, hire and support the professional growth of educators who understand, appreciate and find joy and meaning in working with students at this stage of development, the so-called “wonder years” that precede adolescence. We hope you find the same joy, inspiration, humor and opportunities for growth in independence (even if they’re simply practicing independence), resilience and authenticity that we see in your children. And in late childhood, we ask parents/guardians to take two steps back, allowing students to practice functioning, increasingly, with less direct parent/guardian involvement during the school day and even in homework.

We also hope you will partner with us to help them, during the two years of Intermediate School, to no longer seek to hide their mistakes; expect themselves to be perfect; or find challenge, struggle or asking for help overwhelming emotionally (or even shameful). Instead, knowing what we know now about the human brain and the opportunities for growth that lie in struggle and collaboration, we want students to grow increasingly comfortable making their mistakes public, shared for their own and the greater good, so all can learn together from the mistakes of all. Science tells us we can literally wire our own brains to become better at tasks we find challenging, but only if we maintain a long-term positive attitude, a faith that we can eventually succeed, that keeps us from giving up. Science also teaches us that when a child does give up on something, or accepts an entire subject or activity as hopeless, our brains also undergo a physiological change—one that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, actually preventing us from growing in the area of challenge.

In late childhood, it is critical that, as the pace of school work quickens and the complexity grows (along with expectations for more independent functioning and openness in relationships with others beyond the family)—and relationships with peers grow more intense and unpredictable with the approach of puberty—we do all we can to help children maintain a growth mindset, begin to accept that they cannot be perfect and normalize the idea that learning and growth are not always predictable, comfortable or easy. If they were, no one would grow as an individual, or as a member of a group, seeking to make their communities healthier, more thoughtful and inclusive places for all. And so, in Intermediate School, we help students move increasingly toward fulfilling their potential as individuals and as citizens by challenging them to own, share and celebrate their mistakes. Ironically, it’s how resilience, self-esteem and confidence grow.

Vahn Phayprasert
Head of Intermediate and Middle Schools
THE PHILISOPHICAL APPROACH

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.

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 that our 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/guardians 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.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL PEDAGOGY AND CENTRAL TOPIC

Curricular decisions and instructional practices are determined with regard to 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.” This goal of civic mindedness permeates our structure, pedagogy and curricular decisions.

Additionally, the Intermediate 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 provides 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. Each grade contributes to our focus on identity and being part of a group.
- Trust and respect are essential components of the learning community. Flora Cooke, the first principal of the school, would begin assemblies asking, “What is the great word?” The students would respond, “Responsibility.”
- Classrooms are organized to promote 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.
- Education decisions occur as a result of experience, reflection and discussion. 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.

We accomplish teaching and learning with the mind and the heart. In the words of founder Colonel Francis W. Parker, “Everything to help and nothing to hinder.”

**Central Topic** in the Intermediate School provides an organized, yearlong approach to curriculum, creating a learning setting that becomes greater than the sum of the individual activities. The continuity of experiences allows for the growth of personal and intellectual power by providing a significant knowledge base, opportunities for self-expression and flexibility. While Central Topic provides a reasonable breadth of material to develop practical understanding of the subject, it aims further, offering an opportunity for students to construct profundity and secure their knowledge base for connections in the future.

Central Topic offers many chances to revisit concepts through layers, allowing for exploration from different perspectives. Students often learn from the inside out by imagining themselves in the context of the study and reflecting on their personal responses. The study creates a sense of community within the classroom and provides flexibility to meet diverse interests and needs. Integration with department disciplines gives greater meaning to each domain by weaving them together into a powerful tapestry. Students learn skills as part of something authentic. You can read more about the Central Topics embedded in the 4th and 5th grade experiences in the curricular descriptions for each grade detailed later in this booklet. These broad topics provide opportunities for students to make connections, approach learning through engaging interdisciplinary activities and learn and grow within an enriching and developmentally attuned framework.
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

It is the work of every student, faculty and staff member, administrator, parent/guardian and alum to collaborate with purpose to make Parker “a model home,” an inclusive community in which every member is known, understood, appreciated and valued—with equitable voice and agency, affording all the respect, dignity and safety necessary to bring their authentic selves to the community for the greater good. Our school-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department (co-chaired by Music Department Chair and music teacher Kingsley Tang and Lower School Dean of Student Life Ashleigh St. Peters) works to create opportunities for all faculty, staff and parents/guardians to grow their own cultural competency (and support one another in that process), with an eye toward reflecting on our educational practice and doing our own identity work so that we can, in turn, help students develop the cultural competency skills they need as engaged, successful citizens in the 21st century. Intermediate School Counselor Jenny Lira, Middle School Counselor Bonita Barnett and Intermediate and Middle School Coordinator and Director of Activities Tierra Moore are members of this department as our Intermediate and Middle School diversity coordinators, and, along with Intermediate and Middle School Dean of Student Life Albert Nascimento and Head of Intermediate and Middle Schools Vahn Phayprasert, work together as the divisional equity and inclusion team.

In addition to our commitment to professional development in cultural competency, it is our outstanding faculty and staff who integrate, in all subjects at all grade levels, themes and inclusive practices related to human identity and cultures (cultural competency), equity and social justice—essential aspects of thoughtful and empathic citizenship with a clear sense of the value in working for the greater good. Or, as Colonel Parker put it, the fundamental principle of democracy is “the responsibility of each for all and all for each.” In the Intermediate School, our grades 3–5 Students of Color Affinity group (SOCA) helps ensure that all students also find mirrors in the community beyond their classrooms. We seek to provide every child—in their classmates, school community and curricula—mirrors and windows: mirrors that reflect back to them affirmation and belonging and windows into identities, cultures and experiences that are unlike their own. Intentional work on topics in diversity, equity and inclusion is not ancillary to the Intermediate School curriculum, but an integral part of educating the “whole child.” Research supports that this work is linked in important ways to academic excellence.

Below are some of the identity, equity and inclusion themes integrated into the Intermediate School curriculum.

Fourth Grade Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Themes

Through literature, 4th graders explore conformity and individuality, discussing the interplay between finding a place within society and making individual decisions. Student understanding of stereotypes, prejudice, inclusion and understanding multiple perspectives expands. Literature for these discussions may include Riding Freedom, The Tale of Despereaux, Wonder, Number the Stars and Brendan Buckley’s Universe and Everything In It.
Students in 4th grade are developing their abilities to read people and situations and adjust their behaviors. As students work with the school counselor, topics that emerge are explored with a pre-adolescent, Intermediate School perspective.

**Fifth Grade Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Themes**

The 5th grade central topic of perspective leads to conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion in many areas of the curriculum. As they study the history of the western world, they come to understand the complexity of social structure and issues of power. These conversations weave their way into discussions of pertinent issues, such as what is happening on the playground, things that come up as a result of a Morning Ex or current events.

In the winter, the grade uses the framework of the Choosing to Participate curriculum. Through exploration of true stories from Choosing to Participate, the autobiographical writings of Ruby Bridges, *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* by Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick, and Sylvia Mendez’s book *Separate Is Never Equal*, students come to understand that people are participants in all situations, whether they choose to take active or bystander roles, and whatever role one chooses, there are ramifications. They ponder the words of Dr. King: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” As they look at the role of the government in civil rights, particularly as related to access to education, students begin to understand the complexity of state law versus federal law, challenging their views of fairness.
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

4th Grade
Diane Berin, Grade Head (4-B)
Stephanie Molden, 4-B Assistant Teacher

Maureen Cuesta, Grade Head (4-C)
Caleigh Koss, 4-C Assistant Teacher

Miriam “Pick” Pickus, Grade Head (4-P)
Taylor Schumann, 4-P Assistant Teacher

5th Grade
Mike McPharlin, Grade Head (5-M)
Melissa Jesser, 5-M Assistant Teacher

Jeff Stone, Grade Head (5-S)
Megan Philippi, 5-S Assistant Teacher

Scott Turner, Grade Head (5-T)
Morgan Kail-Ackerman, 5-T Assistant Teacher

Science
James Audrain

Drama
Leslie Holland-Pryor

Math Specialist
Denise David

Music
Kingsley Tang

Visual Arts
Kay Silva 4th Grade
Katie Palmer, 5th Grade

Learning Resources
Sheila Rintels, Corey Davis/Lynn Wyckoff

Spanish Language and Cultures
Karen Liszka

Physical Education
Willie Banks
Terry Davis
Tyler Heidtke
Madi Maldonado
Jan Zoufal

Library and ILIS (Integrated Learning and Information Science)
Seth Bacon, Technology Assistant
Sarah Beebe, Educational Technology Integration Specialist and TIDES Department Co-Chair
Mary Catherine Coleman, Librarian and TIDES Department Co-Chair
Adam Colestock, STEM and Coding Teacher

Counseling
Jenny Lira, Intermediate School Counselor

Divisional Leadership Team
Vahn Phayprasert, Head of Intermediate and Middle Schools
Albert Nascimento, Intermediate and Middle School Dean of Student Life
Barbara Hunt, Lower and Intermediate School Director of Studies
Tierra Moore, Intermediate and Middle School Coordinator
DAILY SCHEDULE SAMPLES AND ACTIVITIES

All students are expected to be in the Intermediate School hallway by 8 a.m. As this division focuses on helping students become increasingly self-sufficient problem-solvers, practicing independence and growing in self-advocacy, authenticity beyond the home and resilience, parents/guardians do not gather or wait in the Intermediate School hallway for classrooms to open; instead, an Assistant Teacher provides supervision beginning at 7:30 a.m. We ask that parents/guardians take a step back from this space, which enables students to begin working more independently (or collaboratively, with peers and faculty/staff) to cope and manage the start of their day. Fourth graders report by 8 a.m. because of their morning community engagement responsibilities (see below), while 5th graders use the time between 8 and 8:10 a.m. (when 5th grade classes begin promptly) to organize themselves for the day.

Here are sample schedules for a typical school day (note that not all departmental classes meet each day, so any class not listed in these samples simply meets on another day).

**Fourth Grade Sample Schedule**
- 8–8:30 – K-Walking (see Community Engagement below)
- 8:30–9:30 – Literacy
- 9:30–10 – Spanish Language and Cultures
- 10–10:50 – Art or Shop
- 10:50–11:50 – Mathematics
- 11:50–12:10 – Class Meeting (Social Emotional Learning); Organization/Planning Time
- 12:10–1 – Recess followed by lunch
- 1–1:30 – Social Studies
- 1:30–2:30 – Science (long block)
- 2:30–2:50 – Continue any activity in Literacy, Mathematics or Social Studies/Central Topic needing additional time
- 2:50–3:10 – Read-Aloud and Prep for Departure
- 3:10 – Students depart school (making their way on their own to the pickup point) or attend Homework Club or Parker PM

**Fifth Grade Sample Schedule**
- 8:10–8:30 – Mathematics or Literacy Warm-up Activity
- 8:30–9:10 – Science (short block)
- 9:10–9:50 – Mathematics
- 9:50–10:40 – Art or Shop
- 10:50–11:20 – Morning Ex in the Auditorium for Grades 4–12 (a guest speaker or a class sharing)
- 11:20–12:10 – Lunch followed by Recess
- 12:10–1 – Literacy
- 1–1:40 – Physical Education
- 1:40–2:40 – Social Studies
- 2:40–3:10 - Mathematics or Literacy continued
- 3:10 - Students depart school (making their way on their own to the pickup point) or attend Homework Club or Parker PM
In addition to the play and enrichment programming available in Parker PM and Parker P.L.U.S. (People Learning Unique Stuff), club activities open to all include Math Club, Martes Social (Spanish Club), Parker Pacers (running club), Creation Station (found-object art), Comic Club, Robotics, Cadet Orchestra, Colonel Choir and others. With the exception of Homework Club, which meets after school twice weekly, these activities typically run from 7:30 to 8 a.m. We strive to choose these activities thoughtfully and not over-schedule children at this age, knowing they continue to need plenty of rest and sleep, as well as plenty of less-structured play, to stay healthy and well. At Parker, interscholastic sports begin in Middle School (6th grade) for this same reason. In addition, students in the late childhood stage of development have a tendency toward over-competitiveness, with an emerging sense of proportion and perspective and often a still-concrete notion of fairness. Thus the school does not introduce interscholastic sports until Middle School, when children are generally more capable of grasping proportionality and context. All interscholastic athletics at Parker, Middle through Upper School, employ no-cut policies, with every child welcome to participate.

**HOMEWORK**

Homework is a component of our educational plan to guide our students to become confident and enthusiastic learners. In general, the purposes of homework at Parker include one or more of the following:

- To provide additional practice or reinforce skills or concepts learned in class
- To develop sound and more independent study habits
- To encourage independent thinking and self-expression

We intend that homework should not dominate the out-of-school life of any child. Intermediate School homework is generally intended to be done independently, without parent/guardian or tutor support. In 5th grade, students get their homework for the week in advance from their Grade Head. This way, students practice developing their own plans to complete the work, an important organizational skill they will need in Middle School. Reading for pleasure is a regular aspect of homework in Intermediate School. If homework ever becomes frustrating or overwhelming, or a parent/guardian encounters resistance to its completion, we ask that they stop the child from working on it that night and instead alert the Grade Head of the challenge.
DEPARTMENTAL CLASSES

Grade Heads and Assistant Teachers teach Literacy, Mathematics, Social Studies/History and Central Topic in self-contained classrooms of about 18 children. Subject-matter specialists teach departmental classes, which, with the exception of some ILIS activities, take place in another classroom suited to exploring each particular subject. While all teachers at Parker integrate cultural competency skills and social-emotional learning into their teaching, the Grade Heads, in particular—who spend the most time with Intermediate School students each week—help students in their self-contained classrooms create and sustain a positive, affirming and inclusive micro-community in which all are known, understood, appreciated and valued as individuals and as vital members of the community.

Fourth Grade Departmental Classes

- Science – meets twice weekly, one one-hour class and one 50-minute class
- Spanish – meets three times a week for 30 minutes per session
- ILIS – meets twice weekly (length varies depending on the project)
- Physical Education – meets four times a week for 40 minutes per session
- Art/Shop – meets twice weekly for 50 minutes per session
- Drama – meets once weekly for 40 minutes per session
- Music – meets twice weekly for 40 minutes per session

Fifth Grade Departmental Classes

- Science – meets twice weekly, one 90-minute class and one 40-minute class
- Spanish – meets four times a week for 30 minutes per session
- ILIS – meets twice weekly (length varies depending on the project)
- Physical Education – meets four times a week for 40 minutes per session
- Art/Shop – meets twice weekly for 50 minutes per session
- Drama – meets once weekly for 40 minutes per session
- Music – meets twice weekly for 40 minutes per session

Fourth and fifth graders typically attend two Morning Exercises a week with Grades 4–12. They have 50 minutes for lunch and recess each day. Students may bring their lunch or purchase lunch from the school’s cafeteria. The school’s food allergy policies focus on safety and inclusion and are articulated in the Parker Handbook, updated annually.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Intermediate School students are expected to be in the Intermediate School hallway at 8 a.m. Fourth grade students rotate through three morning responsibilities (community engagement) from 8 to 8:30 a.m.: K-Walking (assisting Junior and Senior Kindergarteners to their rooms from the drop-off point on Webster Avenue), managing the school store (selling school supplies, making change) or practicing keyboarding skills. Fifth grade classes begin promptly at 8:10 a.m. Between 8 and 8:10 a.m., 5th grade students organize themselves for the day. Fifth grade community engagement focuses on managing Parker’s
composting project in the cafeterias during each lunch period. As a progressive school devoted to teaching students to “think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens and leaders in a diverse democratic society and global community,” community engagement is an essential component of the school’s program at all levels. While Intermediate School students generally engage in their community on-site at school, beginning in Middle School, all Parker students build relationships with people and organizations beyond the Parker campus throughout Chicago.

TIDES

TIDES is a schoolwide initiative that aims to integrate technology, innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship for society into the culture of the school across all grade levels. The TIDES tenets are deeply rooted in the mission and goals of Francis W. Parker School, and TIDES seeks to create responsible, collaborative, thoughtful citizens in a global world. TIDES strives to engage students in curriculum that fosters the mindsets of collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and innovation. The TIDES initiative is woven into the culture of the school in two ways: first, through professional development opportunities led by the cross-divisional TIDES facilitators, and second, in the student experience in the Integrated Learning and Information Science Department (ILIS).

TIDES facilitators work with teachers and the community to add more collaborative, project-based and design-thinking programs throughout the school.

The ILIS Department is uniquely structured to enable students to follow interests and pursue passions while making connections among concepts, the classroom and the community. Project-based learning is the foundation of the program. Technology and media are thoughtfully integrated to ignite social awareness and launch imaginations. A focus on design thinking and maker empowerment encourages students to recognize designs and systems in the world around them and to tinker, create and remake.

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

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/guardians meet these needs. We believe every student is capable of learning and relating, and every student wants to learn and grow.
In addition to the traditional roles of counselors, Counseling Department members also function as educators, coordinators of services, assessors and consultants.

During the course of a normal week, Intermediate School Counselor Jenny Lira helps 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.”

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**LEARNING RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

Francis W. Parker’s Learning Resources Department supports JK–12 students with learning differences throughout the school. The goal of the Learning Resources program is to develop independent learners who understand their own learning needs in order to advocate successfully for themselves and learn strategies that enable them to reach their full potential. Our resource teachers provide a variety of support inside and outside the classroom based on individual student needs. We work to strengthen areas of challenge through one-to-one (occasionally), small group and classroom support. In collaboration with classroom teachers, counselors, administrators, families and sometimes outside support specialists, we strive to assist student development in our learning and global community.
FOURTH GRADE OVERVIEW

LITERACY

Intermediate students are ready to expand their reading skills as their abilities to appreciate and understand nuances and different perspectives grow. While basic reading strategies are reviewed and solidified, the emphasis is on comprehension, analysis and communication. Students learn to assume a critical stance when approaching a piece of text and react to it in a more evaluative and interpretive manner. Through discussion they learn to present their arguments more succinctly and more fully support their ideas with examples from the text. As the sophistication of the texts they read grows, their vocabularies expand, and students are encouraged to analyze text and write responsively, mirroring the development of their thinking.

The following is a listing of topics, skills and processes 4th graders explore. Literacy includes reading, writing, reflecting, word study and speaking. Intermediate School students are reading to learn, and much of their reading and writing instruction is integrated with the social studies curriculum.

Listening and speaking
- Developing the ability to listen to multi-step directions and following through with a course of action
- Developing the ability to listen within a classroom discussion, synthesizing the points made and contributing thoughtful, supportive remarks
- Developing the ability to create and deliver oral presentations to a variety of audiences
- Developing expressive language (from clearly making a point in a discussion to dramatic speaking parts)

Reading
- Reviewing and solidifying comprehension strategies
- Reading across genres
- Experiencing books through whole class readings, small groups and individually
- Analyzing text structure
- Reading texts related to geographical and historical studies, using information gathered for written and oral reports, plays and presentations

Word study
- Expanding vocabulary through reading
- Studying prefixes and suffixes
- Exploring word origins

Writing
- Developing paragraph writing, including topic sentences and supporting details
- Developing writing connected paragraphs
- Developing use of transition words
● Developing research report writing
● Developing descriptive writing, painting pictures with words, using sensory words, elaborating the text to explain things with clarity to the reader
● Developing sense of audience, thinking about ways to engage a reader in the writing
● Developing dialogue format
● Developing personal voice, writing from one’s own perspective
● Developing the ability to try out other voices, writing from another’s perspective

MATHEMATICS

The Francis W. Parker School approach to mathematics is based on the premise that students need to develop deep understanding as they acquire skills. We help them delve deeply into problems, making meaning, using a variety of strategies, choosing effective tools, persevering through the process and communicating their reasoning clearly. While computational skill is an important tool, we strive to help students understand that to be a mathematician requires a great deal more. Students work with patterns and structure, make reasonable estimates, explain their processes, critique each other and support their processes and conclusions with mathematical argument. We encourage Intermediate School students to use formal mathematical vocabulary appropriately. By the end of 5th grade, students have developed strategies for multi-step problem-solving with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They begin working in greater depth with fractions, decimals and percentages. As they grow in their ability to understand and use the patterns in the number system, they develop the foundation for the algebraic work of future grades. Our classrooms value accuracy, while encouraging exploration, sharing and learning from mistakes.

Fourth grade areas of study include:
● Understanding the number system up to 10,000
● Working fluently with multiples of 10
● Solving addition and subtraction problems with multiple strategies and tools (i.e., breaking numbers apart, using landmark numbers, using place value algorithms, using number lines)
● Reviewing coin values and practicing making change
● Reviewing and expanding multiplication and division concepts
● Representing multiplication situations (arrays, pictures, concrete models)
● Practicing multiplication combinations
● Multiplying 2-digit numbers
● Multiplying with 1- and 2-digit numbers
● Multiplying by 10
● Building mathematical vocabulary for geometry
● Working with polygons and angles
● Identifying fractional parts of an area and of a group, using appropriate notation
● Ordering fractions
● Working with decimals in tenths and hundredths
● Explaining work
● Comparing strategies
SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY

In keeping with the theories of John Dewey, we believe that our social studies/history curriculum should provide students with opportunities to reflect on society, developing skills to become thoughtful, prepared citizens of a democracy.

The central topic in 4th grade revolves around geography and culture. Broadly, we consider the relationship between land and people. We focus on aspects of physical geography, as well as how that geography may influence the culture of a society. Our early focus is on representations of the world, landforms, water features and structures of the Earth, then on the geography of the United States. We later shift to the study of an ancient culture, Greece, helping students consider elements of societies, such as economy, religion, government, arts, architecture and daily life. Ancient Greece provides an introduction to understanding democratic ideas of government. From these studies, students expand their knowledge of democratic processes by exploring the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Interdisciplinary project-based highlights of 4th grade (with a social studies root) include an ILIS city-state project with 3-D design/virtual reality applications and the writing and performance of the Greek Play.

Fourth grade areas of study include:
- Geographical terms
- Maps and globes
- Landforms/Water features
- Components of cultures
- Relationship of geographical features to cultures
- The geography of the United States (and various states)
- Ancient Greece (culminating in a dramatic presentation)

As students move through 4th and 5th grades, they develop their skills for finding information in expository sources and sharing what they have learned through discussion, research papers, historical fiction, visual models, reenactments and playwriting. They grow in their ability to read for information, ask relevant questions, accumulate information, make connections and form opinions. They reflect on how the natural world and human history shape the present, what is currently happening in our world and how they can make change and contribute as they grow and take their place in a democratic society.

SCIENCE

The 4th grade science curriculum is an experiential, hands-on study of earth science, ecology, energy and human body systems. Students learn to create and use models, apply systems of inquiry, explore patterns, identify cause-effect, discover interdependence within systems, engineer to solve problems and develop and conduct experiments to better understand concepts.

Students study Earth science and ecology concepts by modeling and investigating the processes that have shaped the Earth, the flow of water, fossil and rock records and changing ecosystems. Students explore
the rapid process of volcanic eruptions as well as the gradual processes of weathering and erosion. Using what they learn about features and processes of the Earth’s surface, they apply their knowledge and design solutions to mitigate the impacts of these processes on humans.

During our energy studies, students explore types of energy, investigate how energy is stored and how it can make objects move, and how collisions transfer energy between objects. Students construct devices that convert energy from one form to another, such as heat into motion and electricity into light. Students investigate the basics of electricity and energy by constructing vehicles and other devices that run on alternative energy sources. They work to discover connections between energy, force, motion, work and effort. Students also explore the theme of alternative energy and transportation by creating simulations in the Scratch programming language as they learn about events, conditional statements, user interaction, and loops.

During our human body systems unit, students investigate the body’s structures and functions. We explore how our bones and muscles are interconnected, how our eyes and ears interact with light and sound and impact our vision and hearing, and how our brain responds to stimuli in our environment. Students construct and explore models to learn about the circulatory, respiratory and nervous systems and conduct tests to collect data and look for patterns that inform cause-effect relationships. In collaboration with the School Nurse and Counseling Department, students are introduced to puberty and their changing bodies.

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**SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURES**

As students transition from the Lower School, they come to the Intermediate School equipped to take their learning to the next level. As such, the Intermediate School program is designed to support students’ growth and development through this unique period of late childhood. Recognizing the novel phase of development in which our students progress, the Intermediate School Spanish Language and Cultures courses incorporate the three basic tenets of literacy, application and cultural competency throughout the students’ late-childhood experience.

Fourth grade Spanish Language and Cultures topics:

- Understanding how geography has influenced the Hispanic world (pairing with the 4th grade Central Topic [geography], science and math), including the exploration of topographical and political maps, as well as animals and their habitats of the natural world. The studies of these topics culminate in a project-based learning activity between social studies, Spanish, math and science to create habitats for a real-life zoo design for animals native to the Hispanic world.

- Understanding how culture shapes our own identity, as well as the identity of the Hispanic world (pairing with the 4th grade Central Topic [myths]), including discussing personal descriptions, characteristics and traits and their influences on identity development. The studies of these topics culminate in an interdisciplinary project between social studies, music, drama and Spanish to create an identity photo album to pair with each student’s character in the Greek Play.
Fourth grade Spanish Language and Cultures skill set development:

- **Interpretive Skills:** Students spend time honing their reading skills by learning strategies (skim/scan, using titles and bolded/italicized/highlighted text, cognates) to interpret the main ideas of the written word. Students participate in listening activities to hone their ability to hear the main ideas of a piece of oral communication as well. Students also take the first steps to write in paragraph form. There is emphasis on writing mechanics (spelling, accents, punctuation), content and structure (topic sentence, transitions, conclusion).

- **Interpersonal Skills:** Students practice extemporaneous speaking in introductory situations to gain interpersonal fluency with the spoken language on topics of self-interest.

- **Presentational Skills:** Students prepare presentations with visual aids to share information unassisted (no reading of notes). Students practice to gain presentational fluency in tone of voice, pacing, physical presence, organization and content of information.

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**VISUAL ARTS**

The Intermediate School Visual Arts Department fosters inimitable joyful creativity and an appreciation for the art-making process. Students have the opportunity to explore a wide variety of materials and techniques as they move through our art and woodshop program. We encourage each child to express and develop their unique proficiencies and follow their intellectual curiosities while gaining historical insights and a comprehension for the art of past masters. Our program has a strong studio foundation, which blends a focus on skill-building with collaborative classroom-related projects.

In 4th grade art and woodshop, students explore multiple ways to express themselves with projects that seek to develop fine motor skill and reflect personal interest and artistic growth. Our visual art classes help the student understand and interpret the world around them with observational drawings and reflective and introspective projects. Early in the year, we strive to improve our skills and techniques with basic art-making materials and basic hand tools. Later in the year, we focus on gaining an appreciation of Egyptian and Greek practices and their artistic masterworks, shared with the community. A sampling of our projects in 4th grade art and woodshop may include ceramic tile painting, the creation of original but historically inspired artifacts for the Egyptian museum and thaumatropes from wood.

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**INTEGRATED LEARNING AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (ILIS)**

*Includes the Kovler Family Library, TIDES Garage and collaboration with Intermediate School Grade Heads on learning activities that integrate technology, innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship for society (TIDES) in and across various subjects.*

Overview

Parker students learn to think, create, adapt and invent. Our Integrated Learning and Information Science Department (ILIS) curriculum is uniquely structured to enable students to follow interests and pursue passions while making connections between concepts, the classroom and the community. Project-based learning, the foundation of our program, helps students engage in research and develop agility in
accessing, discerning and applying information. Technology and media are thoughtfully integrated to ignite social awareness and launch their imaginations through the two years of Intermediate School (and beyond) as they progress through the school’s divisions.

Objectives
ILIS hosts collaborative projects that allow students to engage in experiences that encourage creativity, collaboration and adaptability. We use the tools of technology, innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship for society to guide the student experience. We’re passionate about building and facilitating these projects to help students and teachers create connections between departments, grade levels and the community. Working collaboratively with others across grade levels, building mastery year after year, students develop the skills and mindset to impact their school and the world as thinkers, doers and makers.

Highlights
The Kovler Family Library is a flexible learning space that houses an extensive collection of research materials in both print and digital formats. There is a wide collection of materials to meet curricular research goals as well as enjoyment reading for learners. The TIDES Garage design studio is outfitted with design and prototyping materials including dry erase walls and tables, 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, laptops, green screens, virtual reality technology, iPads and more. Students use these resources in a number of different content-area projects that we design in collaboration with the classroom and departmental teachers.

A focus on design thinking and maker empowerment encourages students to recognize designs and systems in the world around them and to tinker, remake and create. Our staff consists of librarians/media specialists and educational technology experts who work to empower students to not only use print and digital research materials, but also create new knowledge.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Intermediate School physical education curriculum continues to build simple movements that students learned in the Lower School into more complex patterns, skills and knowledge. Students strive to improve their self-concept and confidence level with teacher support, training and encouragement as they gain greater competency and demonstrate more mature forms of cooperative play, as well as more sophisticated individual and team skills. During 4th and 5th grades, the physical education curriculum introduces tournament play with modifications, emphasizes the importance of sportsmanship and encourages peer teaching. We introduce healthy lifestyle choices and mindfulness. Intermediate School units include, but are not limited to, soccer, football, volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, team handball, fitness, track and field, whiffle ball, junior tennis, badminton, wall climbing and running games. Physical education teachers work with students to nurture sound communication skills and greater levels of patience, self-sufficiency and independence, while communicating effectively with Grade Heads to track student progress and growth and offer children the benefits of an integrated, nurturing and healthy experience.
The overall goal of our music program is to develop in our students a love for music and age-appropriate musical skills and concepts, which they can use to perform music, create music, listen perceptively to music, appreciate music deeply and become lifelong seekers of varied musical experiences to enrich their lives. The 4th grade music program connects closely to the broader 4th grade curriculum. In connection with their ancient Greek studies, students learn about the music of the ancient Greeks, its role in every facet of their lives and ancient Greek music compositions that have survived to this day. Students perform some of this music during the Greek Play. The curriculum also presents opportunities to nurture and grow cultural competence by exposing students to, performing music from and listening to music that honors a variety of cultures. Fourth graders discover music by female and male composers of various racial, ethnic and other identities and musicians (performers and composers) with physical disabilities.

Skills practiced include:
- Singing with expressiveness and improved pitch accuracy
- Singing in unison and harmony, primarily through rounds and melodic ostinato
- Singing a variety of material, including art music (i.e., Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy”), ancient Greek music and traditional music from the United States and various parts of the world

In music appreciation and listening, 4th graders:
- Listen to, discuss and describe more complex and sophisticated music of recognized composers and various styles
- Learn about the life of accomplished composers and the historical era in which they lived and worked
- Attend a live performance by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- Are exposed to the sounds of orchestral instruments, ancient Greek instruments and traditional instruments from around the world
- Are introduced to the world of opera through Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, exploring connections to their study of ancient Greece (learning that opera was created as a revival of ancient Greek drama) and their study of ancient Egypt, the setting of this opera’s story

In movement to music, students:
- Continue experiences with Dalcroze Eurhythmics: moving freely, creatively and expressively to music to enhance and demonstrate perception of its various components
- Participate in organized traditional dances and develop choreographies and interpretive gestures for songs or listening selections

In playing instruments, 4th graders:
- Participate in more complex Orff ensemble experiences
- Continue to study the soprano recorder
- Create instrumental sound effects for poems, stories and the Greek Play

In reading and concept development, students:
- Learn to read traditional staff-notated pitch and rhythm, especially for the study of the recorder
- Continue to reinforce previously introduced concepts and add new ones in the areas of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tone color and musical form
DRAMA

In 4th grade, students build on their experiences in drama to activate their individual and ensemble voices. Through a wide variety of exercises, games and improvisations, students develop awareness of body and movement, improve vocal production, generate and communicate ideas clearly and increase their sense of stage picture and dramatic competence. Along with active listening and responding honestly in partnerships and in full-class work, students increasingly showcase their own points of view through storytelling, scenic creation and ensemble games. Using original material and classroom texts, students increase fluency in language and reading comprehension through script creation, analysis and performance. Focus on successful actor and audience behavior contribute to social-emotional learning and engender successful dramatic work, as well as equipping students with tools to provide helpful, supportive feedback.

Fourth graders continue to develop skills in critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and social cooperation, as well as following directions; cooperating successfully with peers; giving, taking and sharing focus; and developing empathy through classmate and character viewpoints. Increased communication skills and awareness of the power of positive individual contributions generate thoughtful work of varying styles and formats.
FIFTH GRADE OVERVIEW

LITERACY

Intermediate students are ready to expand their reading skills as their abilities to appreciate and understand nuances and different perspectives grow. While basic reading strategies are reviewed and solidified, the emphasis is on comprehension, analysis and communication. Students learn to assume a critical stance when approaching a piece of text and react to it in a more evaluative and interpretive manner. Through discussion, they learn to present their arguments more succinctly and more fully support their ideas with examples from the text. As the sophistication of the texts they read grows, their vocabularies expand, and students are encouraged to analyze text and write responsively, mirroring the development of their thinking.

The following is a listing of topics, skills and processes 5th graders explore. Literacy includes reading, writing, reflecting and speaking. Intermediate School students are reading to learn, and much of their reading and writing instruction is integrated with the social studies curriculum.

Listening and speaking
- Expanding the ability to share ideas in discussions
- Expanding the ability to recognize multiple perspectives
- Developing willingness to take on new perspectives
- Developing, expressing and supporting opinions appropriately
- Developing the ability and willingness to participate in peer editing

Reading
- Using word recognition and comprehension strategies fluently
- Developing greater stamina for reading and organizational skills for managing reading tasks over time
- Responding to reading by using writing
- Developing analytical and critical skills
- Developing the ability to read like a writer

Writing
- Developing writing fluency
- Developing writing as a process, planning recursively
- Developing greater skill in description, using imagery effectively
- Developing a desire to seek and consider response, taking into account audience and purpose
- Developing writing as a means of thinking, discovering and communicating
- Developing greater flexibility for revision and editing
- Developing writing in a wide range of genres
- Developing the ability to work on more than one piece of writing at a time
Research

- Refining ability to generate questions about topics
- Developing the ability to narrow topics
- Refining the ability to organize topics into subtopics, using keywords to find information
- Developing the ability to take notes using one’s own words to restate or summarize
- Developing the ability to identify missing and extraneous information
- Introducing skills to write a thesis statement
- Expanding the ability to write introductions, body paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting details, and conclusions
- Introducing skills for compiling a bibliography within a formal format

MATHEMATICS

Francis W. Parker School’s approach to mathematics is based on the premise that students need to develop deep understanding as they acquire skills. We help them delve deeply into problems, making meaning, using a variety of strategies, choosing effective tools, persevering through the process and communicating their reasoning clearly. While computational skill is an important tool, we strive to help students understand that to be a mathematician requires a great deal more. Students work with patterns and structure, make reasonable estimates, explain their processes, critique each other and support their processes and conclusions with mathematical argument. We encourage Intermediate School students to use formal mathematical vocabulary appropriately. By the end of 5th grade, students have developed strategies for multi-step problem solving with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They begin working in greater depth with fractions, decimals and percentages. As they grow in their ability to understand and use the patterns in the number system, they develop a foundation for the algebraic work of future grades. Our classrooms value accuracy, while encouraging exploration, sharing and learning from mistakes.

Fifth grade areas of study include:

- Exploring factors, multiples and prime and composite numbers
- Estimating with thought, reflection and greater accuracy
- Rounding
- Learning how to choose effective strategies to meet a mathematical goal
- Making connections between conceptual understanding and algorithmic processes
- Practicing multi-digit addition and subtraction
- Reviewing and practicing multi-digit multiplication
- Solving division with informal procedures and partial quotient algorithm
- Comparing US Customary and Metric measuring systems
- Applying standard linear measurements in real-world problem-solving situations, converting within a system
- Developing understanding of capacity and weight
- Developing conceptual understanding of fractions as parts of an area, part of a set a ratio and as division equations
- Ordering and comparing fractions
• Making equivalent fractions
• Adding and subtracting common fractions (with and without modeling)
• Working with fractions greater than one
• Developing decimal vocabulary
• Comparing and ordering decimals (tenths, hundredths, thousandths)
• Adding and subtracting with decimals
• Relating fractions and decimals
• Introducing concepts of percents
• Expanding and solidifying understanding of plane geometry
• Calculating area and perimeter of figures
• Developing vocabulary of plane geometry
• Critiquing and comparing strategies
• Explaining mathematical thought processes and procedures, defending thinking with mathematical argument

SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY

In keeping with the theories of John Dewey, we believe our social studies/history curriculum should provide students with opportunities to reflect on society, developing skills to become thoughtful, prepared citizens of a democracy.

The central topic in 5th grade is perspective and observation. Throughout the year, in every discipline, we encourage students to examine the world from multiple points of view. The classroom is a place where students learn to use the past, critique the present and prepare for the future. Through various historical vehicles, including Ancient Rome, Medieval Europe and the topics of freedom and oppression in the history of the United States, students reflect on their response to history and ways they can be part of shaping the future of our society. As a citizen or slave in ancient Rome, a noble or serf in Medieval Europe, a person attending school with Ruby Bridges or a member of the 5th grade community on the playground, students explore the perspectives of positive contributions, negative contributions and bystander roles.

Interdisciplinary project-based highlights of 5th grade include the three-night educational experience at the Lorado Taft Field Campus in Oregon, Illinois in the fall and the Medieval Presentation project in the spring, concluding with a Fifth Grade Dubbing Ceremony that serves as a rite of passage before the self-contained classrooms of our Lower and Intermediate Schools give way to the departmentalized program of Middle School (late childhood moving toward early adolescence).

Fifth grade areas of study include:
• Views of the world through the lens of a visual artist, scientist or writer (culminating in the Lorado Taft outdoor education field trip)
• Life in Ancient Rome, the rise and fall of an empire (culminating in a full-scale research report)
• Life in Medieval Europe, focusing on manors/castles, towns and monasteries (culminating in a role-playing presentation)
• Freedom and oppression, using themes from Facing History and Ourselves to understand the history of civil rights in our country and reflecting on our role in the present day

As students move through 4th and 5th grades, they develop their skills for finding information in expository sources and sharing what they have learned through discussion, research papers, historical fiction, visual models, reenactments and playwriting. They grow in their ability to read for information, ask relevant questions, accumulate information, make connections and form opinions. They reflect on how the natural world and human history shapes the present, what is currently happening in our world and how they can make change and contribute as they grow up and take their place in a democratic society.

SCIENCE

The 5th grade science curriculum is an empirical study of outdoor education, Earth resources and cycles, ecosystems, astronomy, simple machines, chemistry, engineering and robotics. We place emphasis on inquiry, experimentation and a more formal approach to scientific process and engineering.

During our environmental studies, students explore how organisms depend on one another and form an interconnected ecosystem. Students investigate food chains, food webs and the importance of producers, consumers and decomposers. We look at energy and matter flow through food chains and how cycles and interdependence create systems that support the basic needs for life. We investigate resources that we depend on, how the earth naturally cycles resources and how our use of energy and habits of development disrupt and jeopardize the systems that we depend on and alter local and global conditions. We examine and study nature from a scientist’s perspective. Students explore outdoor education through environmental stewardship, weather observations, maps, orienteering and investigation of observed patterns. We take outdoor education trips that reinforce and introduce field skills and concepts best explored in “nature’s classroom.”

During our astronomy studies, students explore the Earth, sun, moon and stars using observations of shadows and changing patterns in the sky. They explore the planets of our solar system, cause-effect relationships, measurement and scaled models to make sense of the vast sizes and distances and how scientists determine what exists in the universe.

During our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) studies, students examine the structure and function of simple machines and design, build, engineer and test machines they program to sense and respond to environmental conditions. During robotics, students design, build, program and test navigating robots as they develop and apply computational thinking skills. As a culmination to the unit, the 5th grade participates in STEAM week, in which we devote a large block of time every afternoon for one week to build out individual projects. The goal of STEAM week is to give students an extended and immersive grade-wide build experience with the time and space to take what they have been learning and apply it as they brainstorm, prototype and problem-solve creations of their own design.
Fifth grade chemistry studies are an opportunity for students to enrich their lab skills and application of scientific process as they conduct a variety of experiments and learn about properties of matter, phase changes, mixtures and chemical reactions. We discuss and model experimental design, and students begin to build conceptual models for the particulate nature of matter.

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURES

The Intermediate School program is designed to support students’ growth and development through the unique period of late childhood. Recognizing the novel phase of development in which our students progress, the Intermediate School Spanish Language and Cultures courses incorporate the three basic tenets of literacy, application and cultural competency throughout the students’ experience.

Fifth grade Spanish Language and Cultures topics:

- Understanding how point of view influences the Hispanic world (pairing with the 5th grade Central Topic [perspective and observation], science and math), including the exploration of historical, political and meteorological maps and terms. Students’ studies culminate with an interdisciplinary project using Spanish, science and math to create a weather forecast.
- Understanding how culture shapes our own identity, as well as the identity of the Hispanic world (pairing with the 5th grade Central Topic [perspective and observation] and music), including discussing personal descriptions, characteristics and traits and their influences on identity development. The study of these topics culminates in an interdisciplinary presentation including social studies, science, math, music and Spanish for parents on Laredo Taft Night. Later in the year, students also complete an interdisciplinary unit on Medieval studies, which includes writing an original Spanish-language identity poem based on each student’s character in their Medieval village.
- Understanding how cultural influences affect the development and success of societies (pairing with the 5th grade Central Topic [perspective and observation], science and math), including the exploration of city development (with their Medieval knowledge and urban experiences) and the factors that determine a city’s failure or success. Students’ studies culminate with a project-based learning activity using social studies, Spanish, math and science to become city planners and design a thriving city based on real-life parameters.

Fifth grade Spanish Language and Cultures skill set development:

- Interpretive Skills: Students spend time honing their reading skills by reinforcing strategies (skim/scan, using titles and bolded/italicized/highlighted text, cognates) to interpret the main ideas of the written word, as well as start to delineate key details. Students participate in listening activities to hone their ability to hear the main ideas, as well as key details, of a piece of oral communication. Students also further their skills in writing in paragraph form. There is emphasis on writing mechanics (spelling, accents, punctuation) and structural expansion (topic sentence, transitions, conclusion) pushing toward greater content details.
- Interpersonal Skills: Students practice extemporaneous speaking in introductory situations to gain interpersonal fluency with the spoken language on topics of self-interest.
Presentational Skills: Students prepare presentations with visual aids to share information unassisted (no reading of notes). Students practice to gain presentational fluency in tone of voice, pacing, physical presence, organization and content of information.

VISUAL ARTS

The Intermediate School Visual Arts Department fosters inimitable joyful creativity and an appreciation for the art-making process. Students have the opportunity to explore a wide variety of materials and techniques as they move through our art and woodshop program. We encourage each child to express and develop their unique proficiencies and follow their intellectual curiosities while gaining historical insights and a comprehension for the art of past masters. Our program has a strong studio foundation, which blends a focus on skill-building with collaborative classroom-related projects.

In 5th grade art and woodshop, students learn a variety of technical skills that allow them to create unique pieces of art. They build on a foundation of observational skills and work to train their brains and hands to draw what they see rather than what they think something looks like. The woodshop program helps the student advance their planning skill and develop a proficiency with basic hand tools and the electric scroll saw. Early in the year, we prepare for the outdoor education experience in November (Lorado Taft) by observing nature and translating it to paper. Later in the year, students gain an appreciation and share the experience of Medieval practices and artistic masterworks. A sampling of projects in 5th grade art and woodshop may include slot animals, sketchbooks, painting from observation and calligraphy for the Medieval Presentation and Dubbing Ceremony.

INTEGRATED LEARNING AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (ILIS)

Includes the Kovler Family Library, TIDES Garage and collaboration with Intermediate School Grade Heads on learning activities that integrate technology, innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship for society (TIDES) in and across various subjects. The faculty and staff from the ILIS Department who work with Intermediate School students include, Lower and Intermediate School Librarian and TIDES Department Co-Chair Mary Catherine Coleman, Educational Technology Integration Specialist and TIDES Department Co-Chair Sarah Beebe, Technology Assistant Seth Bacon and Intermediate and Middle School STEM and Coding Teacher Adam Colestock.

Overview

Parker students learn to think, create, adapt and invent. Our Integrated Learning and Information Science Department (ILIS) curriculum is uniquely structured to enable students to follow interests and pursue passions while making connections between concepts, the classroom and the community. Project-based learning, the foundation of our program, helps students engage in research and develop agility in accessing, discerning and applying information. We thoughtfully integrate technology and media to ignite social awareness and launch their imaginations through the two years of Intermediate School (and beyond) as students progress through the school’s divisions.
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ILIS hosts collaborative projects that allow students to engage in experiences that encourage creativity, collaboration and adaptability. We use the tools of technology, innovation, design thinking and entrepreneurship for society to guide the student experience. We’re passionate about building and facilitating these projects to help students and teachers create connections between departments, grade levels and the community. Working collaboratively with others across grade levels, building mastery year after year, students develop the skills and mindset to impact their school and the world as thinkers, doers and makers.

Highlights
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PHYSICAL EDUCATION
The Intermediate School physical education curriculum continues to build simple movements that students learned in the Lower School into more complex patterns, skills and knowledge. Students strive to improve their self-concept and confidence level with teacher support, training and encouragement as they gain greater competency and demonstrate more mature forms of cooperative play, as well as more sophisticated individual and team skills. During 4th and 5th grades, the physical education curriculum introduces tournament play with modifications, emphasizes the importance of sportsmanship and encourages peer teaching. We introduce healthy lifestyle choices and mindfulness. Intermediate School units include, but are not limited to soccer, football, volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, team handball, fitness, track and field, whiffle ball, junior tennis, badminton, wall climbing and running games. Physical education teachers work with students to nurture sound communication skills and greater levels of patience, self-sufficiency and independence, while communicating effectively with Grade Heads to track student progress and growth and offer children the benefits of an integrated, nurturing and healthy experience.
MUSIC

Students in 5th grade music explore perspective, observation and reflection as Central Topics in music as well as in the broader 5th grade experience. This in-depth exploration includes studying the art as well as the cultural context of music to provide students with a deeper and more complex understanding of the many purposes of music in society. This work seeks to help students better understand music in their own lives and their own identity, as they see facets of their identities reflected back to them in the curriculum, along with windows into other ways of thinking and being. For example, students study different versions of the song “Have You Ever Seen the Rain?” in the context of the racial, national and gender identities of the artists and their times. This leads to identity work in music class, helping students better understand their own perspective and the perspectives of others through music.

Another important part of the work in 5th grade music is helping students understand their power and their responsibility to create a safe, inclusive and positive musical community. This work includes physical exercises to help raise students' awareness of their own feelings and regular discussions about group dynamics. Activities in the class include movement exercises, dancing, singing, exploring and playing instruments, composing original music and listening/music appreciation. Among the units of study is Lorado Taft music (music exploring or channeling the natural world), secular Christmas music, women in music, modern composing techniques, chamber music, Medieval music and hip-hop music. Concepts include singing in harmony, traditional notation, musical genres, musical analysis (e.g., objective vs. subjective observations), social justice issues in music, duple vs. triple metric subdivisions, compositional processes, structure and techniques of rap music and choral singing skills (e.g., head voice, vowel shape, articulation and breath control).

DRAMA

Students in 5th grade continue to develop communication of thoughts and feelings in dramatic form and expression. The class undertakes a renewed and vigorous exploration into the nature of ensemble and increase awareness of the role of the individual and the collective. Group members refine their ability to share their voice and exercise personal expression through appropriate movement, scripted and unscripted dialogue and improved vocal production. Focus on the nature of an ensemble leads into a variety scenic work, based on improvisation and scripted material, and organically increases understanding of compelling staging and tableau creation.

Fifth grade actors investigate various approaches to character, exploring emotion, physicality, vocal energy and the environment, with a goal of sustaining that character through various interactions and duration. The coursework comprises a wide variety of drama games, scenic scenarios and group activities, cultivating awareness of self and group. Consequently, students listen to and empathize with others, follow multi-step directions, demonstrate flexibility, take turns sharing focus and their voice and contribute positive and supportive feedback. Throughout the curriculum, students engage in a thoughtful and varied practice, with a focus on ensemble generating compelling and contrasting work and the expression of individual point of view. Evaluation takes place in the form of report comments at the end.
of a semester, noting success in the concepts covered with a focus on commitment, respect and meaningful engagement.

A FINAL WORD: ADVICE FROM RECENT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL PARENTS/GUARDIANS

In a recent survey of Intermediate School parents, we posed this question: *What advice would you give your 3rd grade parent self today?*

Here is a sampling of the responses we received.

- Slowly allow for more independence, in growing increments.
- Be aware of how your child is using devices, social media, etc. and monitor their interactions.
- Don't worry so much.
- Keep an open mind and don't be afraid to say "no."
- Friendship challenges begin (or increase). It’s felt by my kids at this age. Feelings get hurt and there is a lot of energy, emotion and conversation around the way we treat others and learning how we want to be treated. I would tell my 3rd grade parent self to keep this all in perspective. These friendship issues are real one day and gone the next.
- Enjoy every moment.
- Really, I have absolutely no idea. Not a clue.
- Even though some things might seem unthinkable—devices and social interaction online, oh no! human sexuality in science class, gasp!—everything turns out okay. We and our kids have incredible support systems in the school and in each other. Our kids rise to the occasion, and so do we!
- I'm a stronger advocate of nurturing wide friendships; open communication and relationships with other parents is critical.
- Stay out of the drama with adults. If my child is happy and thriving, that is all the matters.
- Start pushing your child to be more independent and start pushing yourself as a parent to redefine your role from doing everything for them to pushing them to do things for themselves. Replace that hands-on parenting time of “doing for them” with having fun and talking. Both parent and child grow up a little.
- Encourage my kids to have more variety in their friendship circles.
- Continue the dialogue with teachers and administrators.
- Let the kids help out more and let them figure things out.
- Let the school do the school thing and let the family do the loving family thing. Wait. That's actually what I did and it all worked out!
- Enjoy the time together and notice all the little moments.
- You just can't parent a 4th grader the way you do a 3rd grader, crazy as that seems.
● Embrace the change because it is going to happen, but the more you talk (and not judge) your child, the more they will share.
● Allow your child to forget their homework, their notebook, their backpack, their gloves. It's really the only way they will learn to take responsibility for themselves in the way Intermediate School requires.
● Find ways to spend more time with your kid.
● It will work out. It really will work out.