

Literacy



Literacy by Design by Harcourt Achieve is a complete literacy program that connects whole class, small group, and independent instruction through a common comprehension strategy. The K-5 program links literacy skills to standards-based science and social studies content through the use of fiction and nonfiction texts and themes. Instruction focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing within content-specific themes, which simultaneously builds reading and content-area competence among students. *Literacy by Design* utilizes a built-in acceleration system that allows teachers to differentiate instruction based on students' individual needs.

Guided Reading – Guided reading is only one part of the literacy program. Guided reading is an instructional setting that enables the teacher to work with a small group of students to help them learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding. The purpose of guided reading is to meet the varying instructional needs of all the students in the class, enabling them to greatly expand their reading powers. Guided reading gives students the opportunity to read at their just right level, which means that the books provide them with a moderate challenge. They are grouped with students who are similar in ability, needs, and strengths. Instruction is then finely tuned to the needs of those particular students. Without teaching at the point of need, many students will not progress. By providing small group instruction that allows children to discover how to think about a text, they will be able to use their strategies in other classroom reading throughout the curriculum. A guided reading lesson is also your opportunity to talk about story elements such as character, setting, plot, metaphors, point of view, and vocabulary, etc. It is also a great time to talk about effective decoding strategies. The purpose of guided reading is to teach individuals to read increasingly difficult texts with understanding and fluency.



Math

Math Expressions by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is a comprehensive standards-based K-5 mathematics curriculum that offers new ways to teach and learn mathematics. Combining the most powerful elements of reform mathematics with the best of traditional approaches, **Math Expressions** uses objects, drawings, conceptual language, and real-world situations to help students build mathematical ideas that make sense to them.

Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC)

EIC programs employ the environment as a comprehensive focus and framework for learning in all curriculum areas, thinking and problem-solving and life skills such as cooperation and interpersonal communication and last but not least, an understanding of and an appreciation for the environment. EIC programs attempt to provide students with the opportunity to connect and integrate what they are learning to their surroundings.

Suzuki Music Program – All NSA students are able to participate in the Suzuki music program where they study violin with master teachers from the St. Paul Conservatory of Music. During Suzuki music lessons, students learn to work cooperatively with others, to think critically and creatively, and to become focused, adept learners. Students participate in a 20-30 minute small group lesson one time a week and a large group lesson for 60 minutes one time a month.



Artist in Resident

As part of our curriculum, we use local artists to develop experiences for NSA students. Artists work with students to develop their artistic intelligence and creativity within natural settings. In the past we have had a Movement Specialist, Scientist, Herpetologist, and Book Maker visit and work with our students.

Outdoor Education

NSA students spend a portion of each day outdoors. Our outdoor spaces function as both our play space and outdoor classroom. While our physical education does not include organized sports, it does include running and strategy games, endurance, strength and team building. We have no minimal playground equipment but our students enjoy chasing around our outdoor space, imaginary play, and cooperative games. Fresh air and open-ended play are the order of the day during recess at NSA.

Work as well as play takes place out-of-doors at NSA. Our environmental focus is interdisciplinary, meaning that it spans all curricular areas including math, literacy, social studies, the arts, and of course science. Students write, read, measure, investigate and explore outside. The natural world compliments and informs our learning indoors.



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With so much time spent outdoors in all seasons NSA students can naturally get a little dirtier than their counterparts at traditional schools. We encourage students to dress equipped for the weather and encourage parents to understand that it is only dirt and that the benefits of active, outdoor play out-weigh the extra laundry.

Place-Based Education

Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, science, and other subjects across the curriculum. Place-based education emphasizes real-world, hands-on learning experiences. It has been shown to increase student academic achievement and develops stronger ties to the community and natural world. Place-based education connects individuals with nature and culture in their place.

Project-Based Learning

A systematic teaching method that engages students in learning skills and knowledge through an extended inquiry process structured around authentic questions and carefully designed student products and tasks.

