

Goshen Friends School

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW PRESCHOOL THROUGH FIFTH GRADE

The curriculum for Goshen Friends School is designed to be a continuous spiral that builds upon itself from preschool through fifth grade and speaks to the developmental stages of each child. We approach learning on an individual basis, assessing each child's strengths and needs and moving them forward in challenging yet supportive ways.

Preschool has several basic goals for children: to practice social skills through play; to develop large-motor coordination through music, movement and outdoor play; and to begin the skills for academic success through small-motor tasks such as playing with play-dough, texture tables, mastering scissors, crayons and pencils, and puzzle work, letter recognition/writing and basic counting. These are achieved through a variety of eye-hand tasks and arts projects.

Few may realize that riding a tricycle and skipping, running and climbing are precursors to reading, writing and counting. Outdoor play is also a constant in our children's lives throughout their schooling here. Our older students have organized physical education classes starting in kindergarten but all students enjoy recess as a part of daily life. Our 10+ acre campus is not only our playground, but also our art studio and laboratory for a number of nature studies and science classes.

We encourage peaceful conflict resolution by teaching children to "use their words" from the earliest ages. Learning to advocate for oneself and to be aware of one's own feelings and those of others are basic to the Quaker tenet of believing in and regularly practicing the recognition of "that of God in every person." While Friends are not proselytizers, we do expose children to Meeting for Worship as a time for reflection and peace, encouraging students to give messages from the heart when they feel moved to do so. Meeting for Worship begins with older preschool students and continues through fifth grade. The whole community, including all teachers and administrators, are encouraged to attend.

Handwriting is taught beginning with three-year-old classes. Formalized handwriting begins in kindergarten, but children have already been exposed to large- and small-motor skills from the threes onward. Public speaking is also an important part of our teaching and begins with brief, developmentally appropriate presentations in preschool classes. By the time our children graduate from fifth grade, they are able to present formal, polished graduation speeches to parents and relatives that equal those given by high school graduates.

Of course, academics are paramount at Goshen Friends. Along with the enrichment of Spanish (beginning with games and songs in the preschool five classes), music (a discrete intelligence closely related to mathematics), art (valuable for its individual

expression as well as exposure to the wider world of fine arts), physical education/health (already noted) and technology (culminating in programming for robotics in fifth grade), students receive a wealth of hands-on experiences. Increasingly multi-step projects in language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening), mathematics, science and social studies occupy a large part of students' time in the lower school. Classes work in groups of varying sizes to foster good cooperative skills. We focus also on service learning at appropriate levels, feeling that students are eager for and capable of contributing through service to not only our own school family but to the wider community as well. . The ratio of teacher to student is very favorable, allowing for individualized attention.

We focus on learning in a cooperative, non-competitive, supportive environment. Children are encouraged to compete only with themselves. Teachers are called by their first names, encouraging students to look upon them as approachable coaches as well as teachers, allowing for the vital component of mutual respect. While we do give the Stanford Achievement Test in the third and fifth grades, we do not believe in emphasizing standardized testing. We believe that children need the experience, and want to have some measure by independent means, but are wary of "teaching to the test," we would rather teach the child. Our school psychologist is on hand to offer guidance in all spheres when called upon. He regularly works on community skills through music.

Our graduates have gone on to many wonderful independent schools such as Westtown, Wilmington Friends, Shipley, Malvern Prep, Sacred Heart, Media-Providence, Upland Country Day, Tower Hill and Notre Dame de Namur. We have also enrolled graduates at all public middle schools in the area, often in accelerated classes. Contacts with parents of these graduates are available through the Head of School's office.

The formal, written curriculum prepared for the PAIS (Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools – our accrediting body) evaluation is also available in the school office, realizing, of course, that this is but an outline, implementation being a creative and movable "feast." We welcome your examination of us, and hope you will take a close look – we have many happy families who have entrusted their children to us for these most formative and important preschool and elementary school years. By the time children leave us in fifth grade, they know how they learn and are articulate and assertive advocates for themselves. They have also begun to develop the habits of mind to become active members of society and good citizens of the world.