Junior Curriculum
(Grades 1-3)
English Curriculum

Our English program focuses on these main activities, plus enrichment for any students who would benefit from this:

• Listening to Literature
• Oral Practice
• Reading & Literature
• Handwriting
• Grammar & Writing Practice
• Spelling
• Vocabulary
• Creative Writing
• Expository Writing
• Enrichment

Each of these activities makes an essential contribution to the development and strengthening of good language skills.

Listening to Literature
This part of the program will introduce children to the creative uses of language, including different types of writing. The teacher will read to the class various selections of literature, including contemporary and classic fiction, short stories, short novels, poetry, etc. which are appropriate for this age and which exemplify a range of genres. Listening to literature builds students’ vocabulary, their understanding of story-telling, their imagination, and their ability to appreciate the written word.

Oral Practice
The children will be asked to make short presentations to their teacher and classmates about topics which are familiar to them, including their favorite book, something they found in nature, etc. As their reading skills become more proficient, children will be given short poems to memorize and present. The emphasis in these activities will be building English skills and confidence.

Reading & Literature
Those students who are reading below a grade two level (whether they be in kindergarten or grade three) will participate in The Laurel School reading program; students who are reading at a grade two or higher level will participate in the literature program. Students reading below grade level may need to receive extra instruction in the Corrective Reading Program.
Reading

Our reading program is a simplified explicit systematic phonics approach.
- **Phonics-first** – Our reading program teaches children that letters stand for sounds. As children develop skill with reading phonically regular words, they are introduced to the exceptions: words that can’t be sounded out.
- **Systematic** – Children start by learning the basic letter sounds, one at a time, progressing onto new sounds only as they show mastery with the sounds already introduced. This approach builds confidence in the young reader and prevents confusion or frustration.
- **One-on-one** – Each budding reader reads one-on-one with his/her teacher or our reading teacher every day.
- **Individualized** – Each child works at a level and pace that is comfortable for him/her and allows him/her to master concepts before moving on to new material.
- **Simplified** – Our reading program has been simplified so that even two- and three-year-olds quickly learn to sound out words and read stories.
- **Explicit** – Children are taught the letter-sounds *explicitly*, and then they are given many opportunities to practice those new sounds by reading them in words, sentences, and stories.

Phonics teaches students that the letters in our alphabet, and combinations of these letters, represent sounds. A systematic approach works because children learn these phonic rules in a step-by-step way, starting with the more basic rules (for example, U makes the sound “uh”), and moving on as a child demonstrates mastery, to more advanced rules (for example the SH combination makes the sound “shhhh”). At each stage, the reading program requires the application of only those phonic rules that the child has been explicitly taught.

What does this mean for the budding reader? This means that learning to read will feel natural and comfortable as the child progresses at a pace and level that suits his/her abilities. It eliminates frustration and builds confidence in a skill that is so vital for success in school and life, in general.

Literature

The Laurel School Literature Program will introduce students who have finished the Rainbow Readers to a range of children’s and young adult literature, from classics to contemporary works. It includes various genres, such as science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and biography.

Every child who has finished the Rainbow Readers is expected to read between 10 and 15 minutes per day at home. In addition to the reading of the books, students will be required to complete associated activities. These activities may include:

- Recitations - memorizing a passage of prose or poetry and performing it in front of the class
- Student-written skits - skits that are based on a section of text which the students perform for the class
- Historical links - to help put the book into a historical context
- Art activities - such as drawing or painting a scene, or working on a recreation of an important part of the story
Class discussions - to facilitate students’ understanding of the reasons why characters behave in particular ways, why authors would make the choices they do when writing, etc.

Vocabulary lists - tracking words in student workbooks or on chart paper

Character Studies - asking students to look at the main character(s) and to respond to questions such as “How does the main character change from the beginning of the story to the end?” “Do you like the character?”

Character Journals - created by the student in the role of a character at a specific point in the story

Author Studies - When and where did the author grow up and live? How does this influence the story?

Exploring theme, setting, characters, and other aspects of the story

Locating climax, foreshadowing, suspense, humor, irony, similes and metaphors, etc.

Discussion of person/narrator - whether the book is written in first or third person and how this changes how much and what you can know about the central character and others.

Vocabulary exercise asking student to locate 10+ new words in the text, to write the words down, their meaning, the sentences the words were found in, and their respective page numbers. (for students reading books in levels D and up, since good dictionary skills are required)

Written book reports

Handwriting

In recognition of the fact that so many children struggle with learning to print and write neatly and comfortably, The Laurel School uses the award-winning program Handwriting Without Tears. Created by Jan Olsen, an occupational therapist with more than 25 years’ experience specializing in handwriting, this program both prevents and resolves handwriting problems (such as posture problems, reversals, etc.) so that our students can work more efficiently, confidently, and proudly.

Our school has used a variety of handwriting programs over the years, and our teachers and students have found that Handwriting Without Tears has yielded the best results. In the beginning, children learn that letters are made of big and little lines, and big and little curves and they use a variety of tools, such as mini-slates and chalk, to make printing fun. Each new letter is introduced with a simple rhyme or chant that makes the formation fun and easy and serves as a mnemonic so that children won’t forget.

The transition from handwriting to cursive is gradual and smooth, and concepts such as “tow truck letters” make it fun, too!
Grammar & Writing Exercises

“To write well, students must be able to think well. With Reasoning and Writing, higher-level thinking is integrated with writing instruction to help students express ideas efficiently and effectively.” (www.sraonline.com)

Students participate in teacher-directed lessons at least three times each week, using the program “Reasoning & Writing”. This exceptional program provides a structured, step-by-step approach that builds students’ reasoning, grammar and writing skills. Daily writing activities ensure mastery of skills and concepts. At the beginning level, students build sentence writing skills, but they soon work up to paragraphs and, in the later grades, full essays. The program demands a high level of proficiency with key skills, and the program is designed so that students spend most of their class time actually writing, rather than wondering what to write. Teachers will enrich the program using “writing extensions” and other materials.

In addition, students are given opportunities to express themselves through creative writing activities. In the senior grades the focus will be on essay writing techniques, poetry, and fiction writing.

Spelling

After years of using spelling programs that provide weekly lists for memorization, and observing many of our students score perfect on weekly tests, only to forget the words’ spellings mere weeks or days later, we decided, in 2003, to use the Spelling Mastery program published by Science Research Associates (SRA).

Spelling Mastery is a six-level spelling series designed primarily for students in grades 1-6. The series is effective with average and advanced students, as well as with academically challenged learners, nonnative speakers of English, and older students with poor spelling skills.

Spelling Mastery uses specific strategies that encourage students to think their way through spelling rather than memorize weekly word lists. These strategies, combined with repeated practice and application, enable students to spell unfamiliar words and to remember familiar words more successfully than they would by using other spelling methods.

In traditional spelling materials, a spelling pattern, rule, or word group is usually taught within a unit, usually covering a week’s time. For instance, rules for doubling final consonants are pretested, taught, practiced, and tested within a week’s time—and no other skills are taught or practiced during that time.

In sharp contrast, Spelling Mastery skills are taught in tracks. Each lesson is made up of several tracks, so each lesson includes work on more than one skill, pattern, or rule. Therefore, less is taught on a skill within a single lesson, but a track typically extends over a period of several weeks, so students receive more time to acquire and master the objectives of the program. Tracks allow skills to be
taught gradually. Initially, a skill in a track is taught with a great deal of assistance and guidance from the teacher. Gradually, that assistance is “faded” until students perform on each skill independently.

- from the *Spelling Mastery* series guide

Spelling Mastery teaches spelling using a variety of techniques and strategies, such that every child’s learning opportunities are maximized:

- **Phonemic** – sound-symbol relationships
- **Morphemic** – spelling units of words and combining them to form longer words
- **Whole Word** – memorizing individual words (useful for teaching those words that cannot be spelled phonemically or morphographically

At the beginning of the school year, or when the child enters our program, a placement test is conducted to determine his/her level, which ensures that children build solid spelling foundations: Students may work at, ahead of, or below grade level according to their abilities.

Regular spelling tests do not require study at home or out of class; they are part of the program and test each student’s learning and progress. We generally find that students do quite well on the tests, since the in-class practice is quite significant. Tests are repetitive and provide opportunities to recheck mastery, which ensures that demonstrated skills are not merely short term.

Those students whose skills exceed the expectations of the grade six program will participate in another program (e.g. enrichment) during designated spelling classes.

**Vocabulary**

Students who are reading at or above a grade two level will participate in a vocabulary program that provides weekly word lists and accompanying exercises to expand and build their vocabulary. The additional use of a workbook designed to teach analogies further enhances this and builds problem-solving skills.

Enrichment for students may be provided using the exceptional program *Open Court Classics*, which presents excerpts from classic literature and provides a range of sophisticated and challenging questions and activities related to the selection.
Mathematics Curriculum

Competence in mathematics requires a clear understanding of underlying mathematical concepts, skill at straight calculation, as well as problem solving. One of the biggest pitfalls in math education is the trap of thinking that one, and only one, of these three areas provides the “key” to teaching mathematics to children. In recent years, our public schools have become greatly enamored with the idea of teaching math “conceptually”, and have foregone many traditional, time-tested teaching methods. As a result many students who would excel in a more traditional program, find even basic core computation a great challenge. This approach unfortunately forgets that math concepts can only grow with, and out of, a sound mechanical skill at calculation, nurtured in an environment where the student is encouraged to think for him or herself.

The Laurel School seeks to integrate all three areas, while at the same time allowing each child the individualized attention they need, with the opportunity to advance to whatever skill level they are capable.

Program Materials:
- Singapore Math, Marshall Cavendish Education
- PRISM Math, McGraw-Hill Ryerson

Singapore Math (www.singaporemath.com)

The backbone of the Laurel math program is the strongly teacher-directed Singapore Math series, which emphasizes all three-skill areas in an integrated, systematic way, using traditional, time-tested teaching methods. (This is the renowned program responsible for making Singapore the top nation in the world in math education for well over two decades, according to TIMMS, www.timss.org).

PRISM Math (www.mcgrawhill.ca/school/imprints/sra/math/prism+math.php)

Concurrent with the Singapore Math program, students do additional assigned work in the excellent, self-directed workbook series PRISM Math, which we are using alongside Singapore Math to provide each student with his or her own individualized math practice work, addressing his or her particular needs in core skills. These workbooks, unlike Singapore Math, can be worked through largely on the student’s own. They focus on core skills, and each page has a short but clear and concise summary of the procedure to follow at the top of the page. These workbooks are used in addition to the excellent skills practice students already get in the Singapore workbooks, and are not meant to replace them. The purpose here is individualized practice, as opposed to teacher-directed learning, and is tailored to each student, whereas the Singapore programme is worked through by an entire class together.
Since the entire school has math at the same time each day, students can, where needed, be moved into the math class that best suits them, according to the skills assessment administered in the first week of the school year. This gives each teacher the ability to focus on one skill level, removing from them the burden of teaching multiple groups. PRISM practice then allows the teacher to ensure that each child gets the additional skills practice they need. Where students are capable, they are accelerated into a higher group, through individual work either in PRISM or in Singapore, whichever better fits the needs of that student.

There is no separate problem-solving component in the The Laurel School curriculum, as the problem-solving component of Singapore Math is among the best we have ever seen, while being at the same time seamlessly integrated with the concepts and skills components. The school also provides various enrichment activities in mathematics, to supplement regular classroom learning, including computer-aided instruction. Students in Grades 4 and up are challenged each year by competing in the nation-wide Mathematica problem-solving contests (www.mathematica.ca). In Middle School, students use the Evolver Pre-Algebra and Dimenxian Algebra computer adventure game series (www.dimenxian.com) to build math skills while having fun.
Science Curriculum

Science textbooks at the elementary and middle school levels are notoriously fraught with technical and pedagogical problems. While colourful and inviting to the eye, usually little attention is paid to technical accuracy and too few textbooks have real scientists writing, and often not even consulting.

The problem is most acute in the higher Grades, and especially in Middle School, where the student is being prepared for High School science. In a report on Middle School science, the AAAS (the American Association for the Advancement of Science) gave all American textbooks they evaluated a failing grade, as inadequate to teach basic science concepts.

Our science program draws from different programs at different grade levels. At the younger grades (1-5), we use Singapore Science, published by the same group that produces the renowned Singapore Math program. For the older grades (6-8), we use a selection of textbooks recommended as highly accurate by the lead author of the AAAS report (John Hubisz).

Program Materials:
- **Startup Science**, Marshall Cavendish Education
- **MPH Science**, Marshall Cavendish Education
- **Integrated Science**, J.M. Le Bel Publishers
- **Glencoe Science**, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill

Grades 1-2, **Startup Science** ([www.singaporemath.com](http://www.singaporemath.com))

Published by the same group who brought us the renowned Singapore Math program, the Singapore Science books (Startup Science for Grades 1-2, MPH Science for Grades 3-5) provide a lively, fun, experiment-filled introduction to the basic ideas of science.

Grades 3-5, **MPH Science** ([www.singaporemath.com](http://www.singaporemath.com))

Also published by the Singapore Science group, these books introduce the core ideas of science, using an inquiry-based approach, in which students become actively involved in finding the answers to scientific questions. Science is divided into several themes: Diversity, Cycles, Systems, Energy and Interactions, each covered by a small, colourful and approachable text and companion workbook. While in use in Singapore schools, these books helped place Singapore first in the world in science education, according to TIMMS (www.timms.org), for more than two decades.
Enrichment Activities

Students build and program their own robots using the *LabView* programming language and LEGO NXT robotic kits. This year, we will be participating in the First LEGO League robotics competition ([www.firstroboticscanada.org](http://www.firstroboticscanada.org)). In their Laurel classes, their lessons on robotics integrates their knowledge of the computer science and engineering with ideas from cybernetics and biology. Each year, students in Grades 4-8 participate in a Laurel science fair, in which they conduct a piece of original research, write on it, and present it to others, just as a real scientist would in a journal or at a scientific conference.

Social Studies Curriculum

Social Studies seeks to examine and understand communities from the local to the global, their various heritages, physical systems, and the nature of citizenship with them. Students acquire knowledge of key social studies concepts, including change, culture, environment, communities and Canada’s role in a culturally diverse and interdependent world. Through lessons, hands-on activities, and selected workbooks and textbooks, our students will develop an understanding of these concepts and skills. Another goal of Laurel’s social studies program is to give students a basic understanding of history, and a context in which to understand the present.

Junior
- Relationships, Rules and Responsibilities
- The Local Community
- Beginning Physical Geography
- Traditions and Celebrations
- Features of Communities around the World
- Early Settlements in Upper Canada
- Urban and Rural Communities
- Physical Geography
French Curriculum

Grades 1+
For students in kindergarten and up, the award-winning Histoires en Action (HEA) program comprises the bulk of the instruction and materials used; however, additional supplementary materials may be used, depending on the grade level.

According to the Histoires en Action Program Guide, HEA is
- a sequential program designed to accelerate the acquisition of French as a second language for students with little or no fluency in the language
- successful at promoting fluency – a highly communicative program that meets all provincial ministry outcomes
- modular and sequential, with emphasis on developmental learning
- a program that ensures an extensive vocabulary is taught, then subsequently reviewed and consolidated from one unit to the next
- based on a variety of proven successful techniques, strategies and methodologies

Students are expected to make regular use of the DVD for home review in learning the gestures and vocabulary.

Each unit is centred around an age-appropriate French play. Students are introduced to high frequency vocabulary in the early levels and new vocabulary is introduced and built on this foundation with each unit. Skills and vocabulary are taught, step-by-step, with modeling and scaffolding by the teacher. With this program, students receive unparalleled oral practice, written exercises, songs and dances, and play preparation and performance.

Grade 1
Two of the following Histoires en Action units:
- La poule Maboule
- Le petit chat cherche une famille
- Où est mon chien?
- Petite Pauline

Grade 2
Two of the following Histoires en Action units, not covered in grade 1:
- La poule Maboule
- Le petit chat cherche une famille
- Où est mon chien?
- Petite Pauline

Grade 3
Two of the following Histoires en Action units:
- Les trois petits cochons
- Le chat et la lune
- Boucles Violettess et les trois ours
Art Curriculum

The purpose of art classes is twofold:
1. to develop basic skills, including drawing and painting, using perspective, scale, balance, symmetry or asymmetry
2. to bestow on children an understanding of artistic techniques, the significance of art in our civilization and in past civilizations, and to give them the basic tools with which to understand and appreciate art

Art classes will generally follow these steps:

1. **Introduction of a concept, technique (or skill), or style** – The teacher will, through visual and/or tactile means, as well as a verbal explanation, introduce students to the new concept, technique, or style. She will explain its importance, its use, and any historical significance. She will also introduce to the students any artists (or body of artists) whose work was significant in developing or promoting the concept, technique or style.

2. **Explanation and demonstration** – The teacher will furnish students with an explanation of the concept, technique or style and how it is achieved; she will model this for the students to assist them in understanding before application.

3. **Student practice** – In this component, students will use practice pages or their sketchbook for experimentation using the concept, technique or style.

4. **Student project** – In this component, students will typically use an artist’s work as an ideal on which to model their own work. Such activities will guide students in how to use the concept, technique or style, while providing parameters that will ensure a high level of success. There will also be a limited number of projects for which students will derive the idea and the work completely from their own imagination. The length of time spent on a project will depend on the medium, whether it benefits from multiple classes for perfecting the work, and whether the medium actually permits such gradual completion. Generally, projects will take from one to three classes to complete.
Art All Around

Lines are all around us. This unit will cover Stained Glass effects, Monoprint, Relief Print as well as shapes that fit together. Students will be introduced to the elements of design that include: line, shape and texture, and they will use the media of collage, pastel and mixed media.

Using a Paint Brush

This unit will introduce students to primary and secondary colours, tone/value as well as various styles of painting. The style of Claude Monet will be covered and a project will be assigned accordingly. Students will be using tempera and watercolour paint techniques to paint different scenes. Brush mark and colour relationships will also be emphasized. A unit on still life will be done in the style of Georges Seurat using the style called Pointillism.

Sculpting and Modeling

A unit will be done on Egyptian Relief Sculpture where students will make a Treasure Mask as well as Egyptian jewelry. Students will also explore a style of sculpting and painting that reflects the Egyptian culture and way of living.

The World 's First Art Gallery

This unit is inspired by the artwork of the Stone Age. Projects include Art Hunt, Rock Masterpieces and Art of the Cave. Students will explore line, shape, brush mark as well as contour line techniques.

Painting and Drawing

In this unit students will further explore colour theory, colour mixing and elements of Design (line, shape, texture). Projects are related to Egyptian, Greek and Roman Art, as well as the Post-Impressionist artists. Students will be challenged with a variety of media such as: acrylic painting on canvas, watercolour, tempera paint, pastels, and mixed media.

Working in Clay

Students will be introduced to the pinch method of hand-built pottery while studying pottery from Africa and Mexico. Print making techniques will be explored using clay as a medium.
Media Literacy

Technology has revolutionized literacy.

Computers and the Internet will help develop critical thinking and progressive expression. Students will learn how media texts are produced and are constructed so that they may respond to them in a responsible and intelligent manner. Recognizing facts and opinions, and being able to evaluate the credibility of sources, recognizing bias and learning to be aware of discriminatory portrayers of individuals and groups will be covered. Students will use computers to create media texts of different types (e.g., computer graphics, graphic designs and layouts, comic strips, newsletters, web pages, blogs, power point presentations). Students will be educated in using communication technologies to maintain effective contact and collaboration with their peers and the world.

Students will further develop their media literacy skills by viewing, analyzing and discussing non-electronic media texts such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and posters. Wherever possible, media literacy and technology studies will be integrated into other areas of the curriculum.

Media literacy and technology will help support autonomy and lifelong learning. At The Laurel School, we aim to prepare our students for the ever-changing world around them.
Physical Education Curriculum

The physical education program has three central goals:

• To encourage each student to work towards achieving and maintaining a good level of physical fitness, based on the individual abilities and skills of the student.
• To create an environment that respects the current physical skills & abilities of each student and encourages each student to do his/her best.
• To develop each student’s ability to play as part of a team and to use good sportsmanship skills.
• To develop each student’s awareness of healthy living issues, including healthy eating habits, safety risks and safe practices, etc.

Sports Clubs

Those students who would like to further develop their athletic skills are encouraged to sign up for one or more of the sports clubs scheduled throughout the year.

Physical Education Class Goals & Units

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<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Floor hockey</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
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*order may vary from year to year

Grade 1 students will learn, perform and practice basic movement skills required to participate in physical activities, including locomotion, stability and manipulation. They learn to work and cooperate with a partner and to follow instructions.

Grade 2 These students will participate in moderate to vigorous activities. They will enhance locomotive, stability and manipulation skills. Children are encouraged to be more focused and competitive while still demonstrating good sportsmanship.

Grade 3 students will perform basic movement skills, and they will be encouraged to be more focused and competitive in team sports. They will enhance their manipulation skills by hitting slow moving objects and directing it to specific spots. Their stability skills will also become more effective and they will be able to jump for distance or height over low objects.