



Preschool
Curriculum Package

Our Curriculum Overview

Perhaps the most notable feature of The Laurel School's preschool is its early learning program. Aside from all the wonderful learning opportunities a balanced, nurturing preschool can offer, The Laurel School understands that preschoolers are ready to build their academic foundations. It is not surprising that youngsters find learning easy; this is what life is all about to them. Everything is new and wondrous and ready to be understood.

The key components to The Laurel School's early learning program not only prepare our students for school, but they also stimulate them intellectually, which is essential during those early years when the brain is developing and forging the early connections that will be so well-used—and beneficial—in later years. By the time our students enter grade one, they are typically reading at a grade three level, which is something that inspires confidence, not only in the children themselves, but in their parents and teachers, too.

- ✓ **Early Reading** – Every day, the teacher works one-on-one with each child to develop his/her phonemic awareness and build his/her early reading skills. At first, preschoolers are introduced to one letter of the alphabet and its basic sound. Once this first sound is mastered, the child is introduced to a second letter and its sound, and so on. Using Laurel's own simplified and individualized systematic phonics approach to reading, our youngest students are often reading short words and sentences within their first year at Laurel. A record of the child's daily reading is sent home for the purpose of informing parents about their child's progress and so that parents may practice at home the skills their child has learned at school, if they wish to do so.
- ✓ **Seatwork** – Each day, our preschoolers spend some time completing a selection of individualized activities at the table that reinforce what the child has read with the teacher and also build his/her number, fine-motor, and problem-solving skills. Activities completed at school are also sent home each day to keep parents involved. Preschoolers typically complete three to four types of seatwork activities each day.
 - **Phonics** – A step-by-step series of activities build phonemic awareness and help each child become fluent with identifying letters and their sounds, especially consonant and short vowel sounds, identifying beginning, middle, and ending sounds, blending sounds together, and encoding and decoding sounds.
 - **Number Skills** – Through hands-on activities and the use of manipulatives, children learn to count and to understand quantity. At the same time, they are taught the associated number symbols, and as their fine-motor skills improve, they are able to print them independently. Once this is mastered, they move on to simple addition and then subtraction problems.

- **Fine-Motor Skills (by Learning Without Tears)** – We use the award-winning “Learning Without Tears” program to build early skills. Using slates and chalk, magnetic boards, and wooden forms, our children learn to make their letters using big and little sticks and big and little curves with songs. As fine motor-skills develop, children can complete more complex phonics and math activities.
- **Problem-solving** – Children’s logical and problem-solving abilities are developed through puzzles and games, and handout activities involving patterns, numbers and spatial skills. Cause and effect and ordering of events are some of the concepts introduced to the children.
- ✓ **Social Skills** – Children are encouraged to develop and demonstrate consideration for others, take turns, share classroom activities and equipment, and communicate and express personal feelings and ideas using words.
- ✓ **Self-care Skills** – While assistance is given as needed, preschoolers are encouraged to develop independence in dressing, eating, washing of hands at appropriate times, tidying up after themselves, and the use of the washroom.
- ✓ **Themes - Language Skills, Science & Social Studies** – Good language skills permit children to express their needs and to understand more about their world. In order to encourage the development of language in preschoolers, the teacher engages the children in discussions, leads activities that introduce them to new words, and reads to the class each day. Additionally, the teachers encourage children to express themselves clearly during group and individual interactions with the children, and they offer routine opportunities (e.g. show and tell) for each child to speak in front of a group. One of the ways the teacher does this is through the use of weekly themes. These themes introduce children to new vocabulary and often develop their understanding of the world around them: early science & social studies knowledge.

Themes

Weekly themes may include community and community helpers, forest life, the seasons, transportation, the weather, and outer space.

- ✓ **Gross-Motor Skills** – Children participate in games and activities that improve their balance, coordination, and dexterity, while developing the skills which will prepare them for later participation in physical games and sports, e.g. kicking, catching and throwing a ball, running, jumping, and learning to follow rules in a simple game.
- ✓ **Music** – Preschoolers develop an appreciation for music through songs and chants. They use rhythm instruments, and listen and move to music.

- ✓ **Art** – Preschoolers learn about colour and texture, and they develop their fine motor skills through work with a variety of media, including paints, finger paints, creative clay, scissors, crayons, and pastels.
- ✓ **French** – Students learn to develop their early French skills in listening and speaking in French using songs, movement and stories.

Get Set for School (by Learning Without Tears)

Three Core Learning Areas

Get set for school curriculum prepares young learners for school with three complete programs: Readiness and Writing, Language and Literacy, and Numbers and Math. These programs complement and expand on our existing Pre-K program.

- Children are engaged using the following strategies:
- Creative lessons that enable children of different abilities to achieve
- Child-friendly language and activities
- Developmentally-based teaching that works at every level
- Hands-on approach that promotes active participation

Reading & Writing

This component is the core of the program. The handwriting component is based on more than 25 years of success with Handwriting Without Tears. Writing requires many skills that are essential for school: physical, language, cognitive, social, and perceptual. The program uses music, movement, and multisensory manipulatives to teach all the core readiness skills, including crayon grip, letter and number recognition, number and capital letter formation, and body awareness.

Language & Literacy

This component uses dramatic play, singing, finger plays, manipulatives, and movement to teach children to rhyme, clap syllables, make and break compound words, and identify sounds. We expose children to a rich variety of literature to foster a love of reading, build vocabulary, and learn how books work. They learn facts from informational texts. They learn to use new words and develop oral language skills by listening, retelling, and narrating stories. They also learn that there is meaning in the words they say as they watch teachers write what they say.

Numbers & Math

This part of the program is a natural extension to the readiness program that helps children build number sense right from the start. We use manipulatives, music, and rhymes to teach counting, comparisons, spatial awareness, patterning, sequencing, matching, sorting, problem solving and even Pre-K geometry skills. Lessons give children time to play with real objects and test their ideas so that math becomes real and meaningful. Children also develop oral language that helps them learn about and express math concepts.

World of Wonders (by McGraw Hill Education)

World of Wonders is a literacy-based program that includes cross-curricular support for mathematics, science, social studies, music, and more. In every theme-based unit, students will build familiarity with the essential pre-reading skills, background knowledge and classroom routines that will make them successful in future years.

World of Wonders enhances our current curriculum by being a cross-curricular supports in the following learning areas:

- Phonological Awareness
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Printing Awareness
- Oral Language
- Vocabulary
- Emergent Writing
- Centres and Transitions
- Family Engagement
- Social-Emotional Development
- Physical Development

Kindness Curriculum

The Mindful Based Kindness Curriculum was initially created in 2008 for a research project examining the impact of mindfulness-based practices on preschool students' well-being at the Center for Healthy Minds in the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It prepares children for the opportunities and challenges outside the classroom.

Through this mindfulness-based set of lessons and practices, the Center for Health Minds introduced a new kind of ABC's: *Attention, Breath, & Caring* and worked closely with experienced teachers to understand how they could build a curriculum flexible enough for daily use.

The early results suggested that the curriculum taught in schools not only improved the children's social and emotional measures such as sharing, attention and empathy, but also improved on traditional academic measures such as grades when compared to children who were provided with the standard curriculum in a control group.

The curriculum focuses on eight themes introduced throughout the year:

1. Mindful Bodies and Planting Seeds of Kindness
2. I Feel Emotions on the Inside
3. How I Feel on The Inside Show on The Outside
4. Taking Care of Strong Emotions on The Inside and Outside
5. Calming and Working Out Problems
6. Gratitude
7. All People Depend on Each Other and The Earth
8. Gratitude and Caring for Our World