

Preschool & Kindergarten Curriculum Overview

Our preschool and kindergarten is a Montessori-based, combined-age program that blends developmentally appropriate lessons with exploration and imagination, for children 3 to 6 years old. The carefully prepared indoor classroom environment invites students to interact with materials that encourage all areas of development. Our exquisite 355-acre mountaintop setting is our outdoor classroom connecting children to their natural world and their place within it. Spending time outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine helps students develop a personal relationship with the earth. Exploring the trails and getting to know the various ecosystems instill understanding, appreciation and inspiration for stewardship.

MMS Pre/K is a state licensed facility and is accredited by CAIS and WASC. The student to teacher ratio is 8:1, allowing ample attention to the needs of the young child. The child is our curriculum and we are committed to nurturing feelings of self-worth and a sense of age-appropriate independence within each student. We cultivate a love of exploration and learning, as well as positive values and trusting relationships that continue to grow with the child and are the stepping-stones to higher learning. We believe parents to be our partners in the education of our children and so provide ample opportunities for collaboration and participation.

Character Development and Service Learning

The principal of positive character development is interwoven throughout the pre/k curriculum. Our dynamic program offers many opportunities for the children to hone their social-emotional skills and gain the confidence and sense of self-worth that provide a solid foundation. Throughout our days the children are guided through the conflict resolution skills of expressing their ideas and feelings and listening to the ideas and feelings of others. Self-regulation and personal awareness are cultivated through activities such as taking “calming breaths” and short “mindfulness moments.” Before enjoying snack together we take a moment to offer a song of gratitude. Circle time and group lessons provide opportunities for the children to develop the skills of active listening, turn taking and idea sharing. Literature, storytelling and discussions provide a venue for the children’s exposure to positive values and different ways of living in the world. An attitude of reverence for the natural world is fostered by spending plenty of time exploring our beautiful outdoor campus.

Language Arts

Our kindergarten language arts program provides the children with the reading readiness skills needed for academic success through imaginative, hands-on and creative pursuits. Through seasonal songs, finger plays, rhymes and circle time games the children explore language and gain phonemic awareness in an auditory and kinesthetic venue. Through daily story time and weekly story circle the children are exposed to new ideas and vocabulary while gaining the skills of verbal comprehension and sequencing. The building blocks of the ABC’s are taught through our weekly Sound book lesson where the sounds are explored through story, movement and art. Weekly entries in their Drawing Journals as well as the many seasonal books that they create help the children to associate the written word with its corresponding image and allow them the pleasure of “reading” their own books. The fine motor skills needed to learn how to write are supported through the beautiful Montessori lessons that cultivate visual discrimination, movement from left to right and hand-eye coordination.

Math

Our kindergarten math program provides the children with an introduction to basic mathematical concepts through hands-on and engaging activities. The children explore a number each week utilizing story, movement and art as they create their own Golden Number counting book. They practice the formation of each number by tracing the number on sandpaper, drawing the number in sand, writing the number with a pencil on a "number strip" and forming the number out of bread dough that is then baked and enjoyed. The skills of number sense and mathematical reasoning are taught with the beautiful manipulatives found in our Montessori math lessons. These lessons cover one to one correspondence, an introduction to addition and subtraction, working with teen numbers, counting by tens up to 100 and on the hour time telling. The children are introduced to the basic geometric shapes by working with "metal insets" and pattern blocks. Group math lessons cover graphing, patterns, measurement and estimation.

Science

Our kindergarten science curriculum utilizes our rich outdoor environment at Mount Madonna School. Life science is introduced through the study of plants and animals that can be found in close proximity to our classroom during regular science walks. The children observe and note changes to fruit trees, wheat, local grasses and various animals noticing their similarities and differences in addition to their growth patterns. The children also complete life cycle books that illustrate this process. Physical science allows the children to use their senses to actively make predictions about elements while noticing qualities such as sinking and floating during hands-on experiments. Earth science gives the children greater appreciation of their local ecosystem through the study of weather and seasonal changes in addition to land and water formations. Through investigation and experimentation with field trips and activities as baking, oobleck and volcano making, the children gain a greater understanding and appreciation for our natural world.

Health

Health topics in the pre/k include:

Communication Skills — identifying and expressing emotions, expressing needs, sharing, using good manners

Good Hygiene — washing hands and preventing the spread of germs

Nutrition — healthy food choices, active play and exercise

Anatomy — parts of the body, the five senses

Safety — crossing the street, school rules, poisons, medicine safety, safe touching, stranger awareness

Social Studies

Our Pre/K social studies program provides a foundation for the children to see themselves in the broader context of a community and cultivates in them a sense of global citizenship. Every year the children engage in an in depth study of a different culture. The year's culture is explored through food preparation, art, science, bookmaking, storytelling, music, dance and literature culminating in a performance in our Cultural Awareness assembly. Through this study the children gain an understanding of the universal similarities between all people and the differences that make each person unique.

Field trips

The Pre/K children visit an organic farm and participate in a beach clean-up or other related community service activity with our "big buddies."

First Grade Curriculum Overview

First Grade

Character Development and Service Learning

First grade is a transition year from Kindergarten into our Elementary program. During this time, the teacher strives to foster children's innate desire to learn and form a foundation of positive self-image while developing empathy for others. Weekly class meetings help students practice listening to each other, expressing their concerns and feelings and implementing problem solving skills. Puppetry, role play and music are also used to foster these communication skills, as well as highlighting our Value of the Month. Students become versed in conflict resolution and active listening skills.

Students interact with both younger and older children on our Mount Madonna Campus. Nature hikes with the kindergarten class allow first graders the opportunity to be "big buddies." The first graders also are paired with high school students from our Upper Campus and engage in activities designed to promote self-esteem, communication and friendship. They read to and with their 'Big Buddies', and share with them projects, presentations, journals and science activities. Attention is given to caring for their classroom environment and outdoor spaces. A prayer, song or moment of silent gratitude is expressed each day before we eat what the earth has provided. Students take responsibility for their classroom by participating in classroom jobs that rotate weekly.

Language Arts

Through the first grade language arts curriculum, first grade students develop skills of phonemic awareness, decoding and word recognition while extending their reading comprehension and use of conventions for written language. They read a variety of texts, listen to literature, and respond to books, poetry, plays and age-appropriate expository text. They expand their oral language skills and knowledge about language to express themselves clearly, both through speaking, presentations, and writing. They develop effective listening skills as they listen and learn from both the teacher and students in the classroom. Word work in the first grade includes penmanship, phonics, high frequency word study, incorporating a "word wall" and personal dictionaries. Dictation, spelling and reading choice centers encourage daily practice. Writing skills include a writer's workshop, poetry and class books. Reading skills are developed through: chants, songs and poems, morning messages, pocket chart activities, daily shared and guided reading, mini-books, self-selected reading, Reader's Theater, reading comprehension activities, and nonfiction study.

Mathematics

In first grade, the Everyday Math program includes counting, learning the calendar, attendance tallies, and weather and temperature daily routines. First grade mathematical strands, skills and concepts include:

- Number and Numeration: counting, reading, writing, and modeling whole numbers; investigating whole number place value; exploring fractions; using ordinal numbers.
- Operations and Computation: learning addition and subtraction facts and exploring fact families; beginning informal work with properties of numbers and operations; exploring the values of coin combinations.
- Data and Chance: collecting, organizing, and displaying data using tally charts, tables, line plots, and graphs; exploring concepts of chance.
- Measurement and Reference Frames: using tools to measure length and weight; using clocks, calendars, timelines, and thermometers.
- Geometry: Exploring 2- and 3-dimensional shapes.
- Patterns, Functions, and Algebra: exploring attributes, patterns, sequences, relations, and functions; finding missing numbers and rules in Frames-and-Arrows and "What's My Rule?" problems.

First grade instruction includes the use of hands-on learning and fun, as they gain confidence and competence through use of math manipulatives such as number grids, number lines, counters, hands on practice with clocks, coins and dollars, learning of place value through use of ones, tens and hundred counters. Students use rulers and calculators and various math tools. Daily math lessons and opportunities to practice new skills through written and hands on assignments are integral. There is some fact memorization asked of students and learning and practicing concepts through games, songs, art, and play are also important parts of our first grade math curriculum. Students record data on bar graphs, tally charts, and various diagrams as well as discuss and learn how to interpret the data collected, make observations, generalizations, predictions and comparisons. Students learn to see relationships and notice patterns.

Science

Throughout the year, first grade students record observations and data using sensory details. Students are guided to respond to who, what, when, where, and how questions and will expand their vocabulary by learning appropriate grade-level scientific terms. Topics of study in science include: Physical Sciences-General properties of Solids, Liquids, and Gases; Life Sciences- Needs of Plants and Animals within a biome; Five Senses; Earth Sciences-Observing, Recording Weather, Seasons. Students have many opportunities to learn within the natural environment of the MMS campus and the Children's Garden, as well as go out on various field trips that lend themselves to study and application of concepts.

Health

Health education topics include:

Communication Skills — friendship building, understanding self and others, helping others and sharing, I messages, active listening

Good Hygiene — germs and cold prevention, good daily practices, dental care

Nutrition — balanced diet, food groups, avoiding sweets, fats and the importance of water

Anatomy — digestion and the skeletal structure

Safety — poison prevention, good touch/bad touch, saying no, tell someone and leave, wildlife safety

Social Studies

For first grade students, the classroom serves as a microcosm of society in which students learn to take responsibility for their actions, abide by the rules of fair play, good sportsmanship, and respect for the rights and opinions of others. Students examine the geographic and economic aspects of life in their own school and neighborhoods and compare them to those of people long ago. Students explore the varied backgrounds of American citizens and learn about the symbols, icons, and songs that reflect our common heritage. Units of Study include: Holiday Traditions, Family heritage, Community, Cardinal Directions and Mapping skills, Goods and Services, American Symbols and Democracy, Pilgrims, Famous People, Continents and Oceans.

Special Courses

In addition to the Core Subjects, first graders have Music, Art, Spanish, Science Life Lab, Dance, and Physical Education each week with Specialty Teachers (please see Enrichment Course Descriptions.)

Field Trips

Gizdich Ranch, Henry Cowell Redwoods, Agricultural History Project, Natural History Museum, UCSC Garden

Second Grade Curriculum Overview

Second Grade

Character Development and Service Learning

The second grade classroom fosters independent and cooperative learning. Lessons in intrapersonal and interpersonal communication and relationship building are included daily. Stories, lessons, projects and activities build on individual awareness and friendships. They learn to distinguish and regulate their emotions. Students practice transforming emotions, focusing the mind, mindfulness and yoga. They recognize each other for showing positive character traits and learn peaceful conflict resolution communication skills. Students are given the time and space to mediate differences. They create the class they want to be in by practicing the Golden Rule. Second grade students make a commitment to practice peace and kindness.

Students participate in cross-aged buddy lessons and activities. They learn to work with a variety of students who are in different stages of social and emotional development. In these activities, second grade students teach and learn from others how to be kind and friendly. The “Big Buddy” and “Little Buddy” program fosters community, cooperation and compassion.

Students participate in service learning projects. They learn the importance of taking responsibility for others in need and the environment. Students contribute to food and material drives for people and animals both locally and abroad. Students learn about the environment, its resources, and the importance of preservation and conservation for a sustainable system. They are involved in clean-up projects on campus, on field trips and on the beach. They recycle, reuse containers, use composting worm bins and follow the guidelines for our “Waste Free School” program. They and their families sponsor our “Summit for the Planet and Eco Festival” to aid in environmental issues. Students in second grade at MMS are given the opportunity to develop into positive, conscious and active people who work cooperatively to create a healthy and happy world.

Language Arts

Students in the second grade learn language arts through directed and guided lessons, individual, partner and group work. Language arts is taught through a balanced approach including: direct mini lessons on reading and writing conventions and strategies, guided reading lessons in small groups, writer’s workshop and author’s chair, independent silent reading, word work centers. The integrated curriculum also imbeds science and social studies topics of study.

A balanced language arts program helps students’ develop a positive attitude about themselves and others. It guides students’ to become sensitive listeners, thoughtful speakers, proficient readers, accomplished writers and critical thinkers, all skills necessary to be a life-long learner and a conscious citizen. Students’ progress is tracked through formal assessments, teacher’s observations and student portfolios. Language arts includes many strategies and activities to practice word work, reading, writing and speaking/performing.

Mathematics

Students in second grade develop logical thinking and problem solving skills using concrete materials in varied activities. They explore, investigate and discover mathematical skills and concepts through directed teaching lessons, partner and group work. They work together to enhance understanding through verbalizing, movement, games, and projects. Students learn math throughout the day as it is embedded in the morning circle, language arts, art, music, science, PE and integrated studies unit. The Everyday Mathematics program is used daily and students learn through the spiraled program. The concept strands taught throughout the year include: number sense, algebra, measurement, geometry, statistics, data analysis and mathematical reasoning. Students have daily lessons, practice and have a variety of ways to demonstrate their understand of number sense, place value, and decimals, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, number stories and patterns, money, time and measurement, 3-D and 2-D shapes, fractions and graphing.

Science

Science in the second grade involves investigation and experimentation through focused units of study including the physical, life and earth sciences. Students make observation and predictions, measure, sort, compare, describe, graph and theorize. They test their theories in science experiments both in the classroom, as well as in the science lab. Special guests come to our school to teach specific programs about science and the natural outdoor environment is used as an outdoor classroom. Students use the natural surroundings and the Children's Life Lab Garden on campus as well as the environments on our fieldtrips to learn about science. Students learn while visiting county and state parks, beaches, farms, museums and aquariums. Topics of study include: Balance and motion of objects, magnetism, sound, plant and animal characteristics and variations, life cycles and development, pebbles, sand and silt, weathering and soil, fossils, the Earth's resources and the preservations and conservation of the environment.

Health

The second grade health unit focuses on making healthy choices physically, emotionally and socially for a happy life:

Communication Skills — understanding emotions, friendship building, conflict resolution skills, active listening and seeing other points of view, sharing, being an ally

Good Hygiene — exercise, stress reduction breathing and centering, food as fuel for healthy bodies, illness and injury prevention, smoking prevention

Anatomy — human development and babies

Safety — first aid and emergency procedures for fire, earthquake, tsunami, bus safety, learning address and phone number, how to call for help, stranger safety, wildlife safety

Health Workers — community helpers and environmental actions that keep us well

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum is integrated with language arts and includes a Cultural Awareness performance to share our Lower School focus topic each year with our Community. Students learn about themselves in relation to the larger community, appreciating and respecting diversity.

Topics include: students' personal and family history, comparing long ago lifestyles to present day, North American comparison of Native American lifestyles, pioneers, explorers, Comparison of US government system to other countries, Food Production, Producers and consumers, Goods and Services, people who serve in the community, timelines, geography, and mapping skills. We also study biographies of historical heroes.

Special Courses

In addition to the Core Subjects, second graders have Music, Art, Spanish, Science Life Lab, Dance, and Physical Education each week with Specialty Teachers (please see Enrichment Course Descriptions.)

Field Trips

The Santa Cruz County Fair, Live Earth Farm, Natural Bridges/Monarch Beach/Tide Pools, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Natural History Museum, and others.

Third Grade Curriculum Overview

Character Development and Service Learning

The third grade classroom is relationship centered and builds a foundation for a community of learners based upon safety, trust and meeting student needs while developing skillful communication. Social and emotional learning are equally important to academic learning.

Therefore, the weekly schedule allows time for class meetings to share, listen and express feelings.

Through lessons, exercises and practice, students reflect honestly, develop compassion for self and others and take responsibility for their actions. Third graders participate in a Buddy program with the second graders and high school students to promote cross-age relationships. They choose projects to help the local communities and environment each year such as planting native grasses or collecting food for the local food banks. Students are involved in caring for their own environment and participate in the Waste Free Schools program.

Language Arts

Key strategies for developing proficient readers in third grade are learning to: make connections between prior knowledge and the text, form questions as they read, visualize what they are reading, draw inferences, determine important ideas, synthesize information, and expand comprehension and prediction skills.

Through teacher modeling and demonstrations, students apply these strategies by practicing in small and large groups and receiving feedback and support about their thinking as readers. The writing process builds by writing in drafts, editing and revising while developing a topic. Authentic self-selection of both literature and written topics are the mainstay for students to gain mastery in these areas. Many opportunities are given for the students to share their work, performing formally and informally for each other in order to develop their speaking and listening skills. Handwriting and cursive are also a component of the third grade program.

Mathematics

The third grade math program develops the students' number sense by estimation, calculation and solving problems involving multiple digit addition and subtraction with regrouping, as well as multiplication, division and fractions. Students review place value, identifying ones, tens and hundreds and apply that pattern to identify larger numbers. They become familiar with money, time, metric & US standard measurements. Hands-on manipulatives and real world applications are regularly used to develop math skills. Basic geometry and data collection are practiced across the curriculum. Mathematical reasoning and logic problems are also part of the Mount Madonna School's math program. The Everyday Math program is used daily with journaling, workbooks and games. These are completed both independently and cooperatively. Singapore and other programs are used to bolster arithmetic skills and extra practice.

Science

Science is a way of thinking in third grade. By asking questions, building on prior knowledge, investigation and hands-on discovery science comes to life. The students meet weekly for Science/ Life Lab as well as on going curriculum in the core classroom. Field trips are an important component to this study. Third grade science topics include: Pollination, Adaptations, Energy & Matter, and Astronomy, a rotating animal study such as birds, amphibians or insects along with Local Habitats (Flora & Fauna).

Health

Students learn what good health looks like in their bodies, minds and social connections. Health curriculum in third grade cover:

Communication Skills — decision making, resolving conflicts, active listening, understanding points of view, making fair rules, reporting versus ratted, being an ally

Anatomy — understanding the body systems and parts, taking care of our bodies

Safety — dangerous drugs versus medicines, saying no to tobacco and alcohol, bike safety and car riding safety, first aid and emergency procedures for fire, earthquake and tsunami

Environmental Health — taking care of our world (3 R's), understanding earth/water/air pollution

Social Studies

The year begins with geography and map reading. Once we have established our place on the globe, the state of California is examined both geographically and through the history of its people. Inquiry, investigating and building on prior knowledge is the format used for studying relevant topics that capture interests and concerns. The third and fourth grades have an overnight field trip to support California State studies. One year the children travel to the Montara Lighthouse, studying wetlands, riparian zones and tide pools, and how the First People lived in this environment. The alternate year students travel to Sacramento and visit Sutter's Fort, the California State Indian Museum, the Railroad Museum, the Sacramento History Museum, Marshall's State Park, and pan for gold to bring to life historical events that led to statehood. Along with our state studies, the Elementary through Preschool classrooms annually select a cultural theme to investigate. Each class then prepares and presents a "piece of the picture." This jigsaw technique of peer sharing and teaching each other is a powerful process. Third grade routinely studies biographies as a window to history and each student chooses to research a moral hero and creates a museum day when the students dress-up like their character and share model hero dolls, timelines and presentations.

Technology

The third graders at Mount Madonna work regularly on a keyboarding program in weekly computer lab. They learn how to navigate the Internet, look up articles to read and are checked for comprehension. Third graders also select research projects and learn to gather information from different online sites. They learn to create documents, edit and save work in files in order to publish short pieces.

Special Courses

In addition to the Core Subjects, third graders have Music, Art, Spanish, Science Life Lab, Dance, and Physical Education each week with Specialty Teachers (please see Enrichment Course Descriptions.)

Field Trips

The Santa Cruz County Fair, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Ano Nuevo, Tech Museum, UCSC Life Lab Overnight trips include:

- 2 day trip to either Sacramento or Montara Lighthouse Coastal area
- 3 day science camp at the Sierra Outdoor School in Columbia, CA

Fourth Grade Curriculum Overview

Character Development and Service Learning

In fourth grade, social and emotional learning takes place every moment of every day so we skillfully utilize this ongoing process of personal development as the authentic context within which we build friendships, negotiate differences, and create a joyful learning environment. We govern the classroom with intention, providing time and structure for class meetings and personal reflection, so that all members of the community take responsibility for the learning and well-being of each individual and the community as a whole. Fourth graders come to understand how their choices impact themselves and one another, and learn effective conflict resolution strategies. Through explicit lessons and consistent practice, the students develop respect, empathy, responsibility, caring, compassion, and nonviolent communication. Students learn the importance of service through our annual Second Harvest Food Bank school drive, creating art and obtaining donations for non-profit organizations, designing environmental/ educational presentations for the Summit Festival for the Environment, building relationships with our big and little buddies and caring for the environment surrounding our classroom and playground.

Language Arts

In the fourth grade reading and writing workshops, students learn how readers and writers think. Using explicit thinking strategies, students become meta-cognitive about the content imbedded in text and in their own thought processes while they read. As writers, they come to know the writing process from seed idea to publishing, and throughout the process, they acquire the tools necessary to craft, edit, and revise their own work. They examine writing from the perspective of the author and study mentor texts to inform their own sense of style and craft. We emphasize acquiring skills within the authentic context of self-selected literature and the students' own writing. Students have many opportunities within each day to develop their skills as active listeners and confident speakers as they share their work and articulate their process.

Mathematics

Fourth grade students acquire knowledge of geometry, measurement, pre-algebra, data analysis and graphing, decimals, percents, fractions, and place value through the millions. In addition, students learn and master computation skills for the 4 operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). While using the Everyday Math Program as a curricular framework, the students' needs are met through differentiation, providing opportunities for expanding concepts or repeating skills as necessary. Fourth graders experience mathematics as a discipline where they apply computational skills in authentic contexts and employ problem-solving strategies collaboratively and independently.

Science

Fourth grade science is taught as a discipline of asking questions and seeking answers through a systematic approach of inquiry and hands-on exploration. Being situated in the natural ecology of the coastal redwood ecosystem, students are consistently exposed to life science, which is further supported by our children's garden devoted to and maintained by the elementary grades of Mount Madonna School. Fourth grade curricular concepts include geology, electricity and magnetism, ecosystems, interdependence and the human body.

Health

The health classes focus on healthy choices and taking care of our bodies. The topics include:

Communication Skills — decision making, resolving conflicts, positive character values, helping others solve conflicts, being an ally, peer pressure, respecting family diversity

Healthy Choices — good nutrition, vitamins and nutrition education, reading food labels, how the body uses food, saying no to drugs and alcohol

Safety — child abuse prevention skills, saying no, tell someone when needed, internet safety, kitchen, fire safety

Environmental — studying earth stewardship groups and being a smart consumer

Social Studies

In addition to becoming aware of our classroom community as a microcosm of the larger communities that surround us, students study “Who are we and what is our history? Who came before us and what is their history? What are the stories that shape our understanding of ourselves and other human beings?”

Fourth graders explore the concept of cause and effect through examining patterns of exploration, migration, conflict, power and the encounters of diverse cultural groups within the state of California and beyond.

Topics include: Early Explorers of California, Rancheros, Missions, Gold rush, Immigration and the Transcontinental Railroad. Historical biographies, Autobiography, Stories of students’ families, their history and genealogy.

Technology

We use technology to further our fourth grade students’ understanding of each subject and to facilitate their creative self-expression. Students are consistently given opportunities to navigate the Internet in search of information for research projects and are given the option to bring their written work to final publication via the use of word processing. Through the authentic context of creating their own work, students learn the basic word processing skills of keyboarding and typography, while familiarizing themselves with the tools and shortcuts for creating documents, saving, filing, editing, cutting and pasting. They also create a power point demonstration.

Special Courses

In addition to the Core Subjects, fourth graders have Music, Art, Spanish, Science Life Lab, Dance, and Physical Education each week with Specialty Teachers (please see Enrichment Course Descriptions.)

Field Trips

Santa Cruz County Fair, Tech Museum in San Jose, A Mission experience San Juan Bautista Overnight trips include:

- 2 day trip to either Sacramento or Montara Lighthouse Coastal area
- 3 day science camp at the Sierra Outdoor School in Columbia, CA

Fifth Grade Curriculum Overview

Character Development and Service Learning

Using the principles of Non-Violent Communication in which listening to others without judgment is the key skill to be developed, we practice observation of behavior, statement of needs, recognition of feelings, and a statement of requests from each other. The fifth grade works with the idea of internal self-esteem vs. external self-esteem to help guide actions as students move into their adolescent years. We guide our classroom by examining the differences between learning and achievement as a means to utilize our gifts and work under the ideal that together we are smarter. Students are explicitly taught time management through the use of student planners and study skills in order to prepare students for the transition from elementary school to middle school. As a service learning project, students form a mock non-profit business to produce a DVD based on their environmental studies project. The profits raised are invested in people who will pay it back via a micro finance bank and funds will in turn be donated to organizations that support their environmental focus. Students learn the value of collaboration to create positive change in their world and aid others not only through charity, but through loans. Students participate in other service learning projects both related to their project and related to other classes' projects such as food drives or clothing drives.

Language Arts

There are four components to this subject: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. In speaking, we practice public speaking and employ video cameras to allow for self-reflection and growth. We engage in theater arts as another form of speaking and as a means to increase confidence. In reading, we stress comprehension and content by asking children to identify plot, characters, set and setting. They are introduced to a variety of genres and participate in literature studies and sharing what they read with each other. The writing component asks students to address different styles of writing such as expository, autobiographical, creative, descriptive, letter, and news reporting. In conjunction with writing, students are taught note-taking skills and reference skills such as proper citation of sources. Vocabulary studies help expand students' language knowledge, and grammar is taught in conjunction with writing lessons and with weekly skills homework. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is focus on developing the skill of actively listening – and students are given ample opportunity to develop this skill in collaborative projects throughout the curriculum.

Mathematics

Mathematics is applied to many projects and subjects, along with specific practice and skill development. Students are taught to look at math in terms of concept, language, mechanics and application. Self-reflection on their learning helps them formulate questions and students learn to solve real life problems using math skills. Students aim for 100% accuracy in their work as a means to learn from their mistakes and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Students work with a combination of Singapore Mathematics and Everyday Math Program along with learning projects that apply mathematical skills like mechanical drawing of graphs, scientific experiments and application of statistics in research. Some of the skills taught in fifth grade include: mastering addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, operations with fractions, long division, multi-digit multiplication, estimation, calculator use, pattern recognition in geometry, model drawing, graphing, operations and relationship between percents, decimal & fractions and problem solving skills.

Science

The fifth grade science classroom program is experiential and inquiry based. The program is a student-led project based on a local environmental topic in which students work to create positive change. The Environmental project includes studies in environmental, physical and life sciences as well as exploring the research process and scientific experimental process. Students partner with high school science classes to develop experiments related to issues connected with their environmental topic. This semester long project is shared in local, state and national venues. In May, we spend a week in the Sierra Mountains exploring nature first-hand with the expert guidance of a professional naturalist.

Health

The fifth grade health class includes the following units and is taught weekly. The structure of the class involves communication skills and builds on students' personal experiences in relation to the following topics:

Communication Skills — understanding our uniqueness, self learning assessment profile, influences on our decision making, peer pressure, resolving conflicts, "Let's Get Real" (anti-bullying curriculum)

Being Well — body image, nutrition, health maintenance, stress reduction, drug prevention

Safety — camping, hiking, athletic, animal, skateboard, water, HIV prevention, Internet safety, Heimlich maneuver and rescue breathing

Environmental Health — deconstructing media, learning to be a smart consumer

Growing and Changing — preteen changes, stress, peer pressure, sexual education

Social Studies

In the first semester, we look at the creation of the thirteen colonies up to the birth of the Constitution. We work to understand the various levels of government from local to state to federal, and the role of our representatives at each level. The students then apply this knowledge in conjunction with their study of formal letter writing when they advocate for policy related to their Environmental issue of study. In the second semester, we focus our curriculum on the racial issues following the abolition of slavery leading up to the Civil Rights Movement. Finally, students work on their geography and mapping skills as we study the states and capitals of the United States of America.

Technology

The fifth grade works on various group projects each year that use a combination of technologies including digital presentations, video, movie making, sound editing, image editing, Microsoft Word and Excel, along with other computer programs. Students learn to use e-mail including attaching documents, use of removal hardware and file sharing over outside server networks. Extensive class discussions work to help students develop a safe and positive digital reputation, internet safety and determination of reliable resources. They have a weekly session in the computer lab and use various online search tools and programs. Student work is predominantly typed and often submitted electronically. Technology is used as a tool to create and express student imagination.

Special Courses

In addition to the Core Subjects, third graders have Music, Art, Spanish, Science Life Lab, Dance, and Physical Education each week with Specialty Teachers (please see Enrichment Course Descriptions.)

Field Trips

In addition to the outdoor learning experience of the five day Sierra backpacking trip, we work with local organizations that support the environmental topic to arrange related field trips. Such trips often take students on a learning journey to local science labs, local habitats for restoration or clean-up, out to sea or to local government gatherings to influence policy.

Enrichments

ART

Art class is an opportunity for the students to express ideas, feelings, thoughts and visions without words using a variety of media. Sometime creating art can help foster a deeper understanding of the world around us. It can train the mind to examine things carefully and explore different perspectives which are then revealed in the artist's work. They create works of art for the school, their homes and the community. Once a year, each class creates art work to be sold via donations to give to a non-profit organization that helps children around the world.

DANCE

The goal of dance class is to encourage and allow students to experience the world of dance in a fun, safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment. Students learn basic dance technique, dynamic range, musicality, safe stretching, and choreography memorization, improvisation, and performance skills. Students are encouraged to become movement inventors, and are challenged to think of dance as not only a physical exercise, but as an art form that expresses ideas and emotions.

Utilizing various music genres, students are exposed to a wide range of music and musicians from around the world. They learn to count music as well as listen for musical cues. Students are responsible for learning choreography, timing, spatial patterns, and working together with their peers to create cohesive group performances. They learn the practice of repetition and the importance of being well rehearsed. They are also taught bits of dance history and discuss the evolution of certain dance forms.

There are three dance performances each school year in which students learn, practice, and then perform choreography in front of audiences.

FACTORY

The Factory is a STEAM class (integrated science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics). It is a series of lessons and studio time that lasts ten weeks for each grade. Students receive age-appropriate instruction in electrical engineering, physics and motion, coding, and 3D design. They practice with circuits and build their skills with engineering challenges. Making builds creative autonomy, as well as collaborative skills in a discovery-oriented process. Educators call Making an "anti-curriculum" because challenges and standards evolve individually from each student's creative project. For this reason, there are no grades in a Makers' studio.

MUSIC

Students have fun engaging in song, rhythmic movement and the use of miscellaneous percussion to celebrate the innate musician within everyone. They engage in pitch matching activities to develop their singing voice and to rhythmic activities to develop beat competency so as to be able to accompany musical activities or move to music in a rhythmic way. Students learn to read, write and perform rhythmic notation, including whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes and quarter note rests. They are able to describe music according to its elements, using the terminology of music. They are exposed to a variety of instruments from diverse cultures. Students apply vocal and miscellaneous percussion skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They sing a varied repertoire of music from diverse cultures, including rounds, descants, and songs with ostinatos and sometimes use the barred percussion Orff instruments to play melodies and accompaniments from a varied repertoire of music from diverse cultures, including rounds, descants, and ostinatos. Students are guided into composing and improvising simple rhythmic and melodic patterns and they begin to discover the relationship between music and events in history. They are exposed to music and learn and sing songs from diverse cultures and time periods. The children participate in four school-wide performances including our cultural awareness unit that exposes the children to various cultures from around the world, the Winter Concert, Summit for the Planet and the *Ramayana*.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

This is an important part of our overall program. Our school is on 355 acres of mountain top, and students hike daily to get to and from classes. We believe in the importance of movement to create a healthy and strong body ready to learn in all subject areas. The development of motor skills through physical activity, and the understanding of the importance of movement for life-long health is valued at Mount Madonna School. We encourage cooperation and good sportsmanship through games and activities that require collaboration and team work. Our Physical Education classes often take place in the gym, on hikes through the forests on challenging trails during the warmest weather, or in classrooms on yoga mats on rainy days. This demonstrates to students that they can stay active in any environment and that various types of exercise increase flexibility, stamina and strength.

SCIENCE and LIFE LAB

Students help to tend to our garden throughout the year and enjoy its bounty with our Garden Based Nutrition Education and cooking. To start the year we utilize the wonderful pumpkins in our garden to explore predictions, measurements, graphing, and seed preservation. We conduct experiments to learn about how different objects move and what affects their movement, balance, counter weight and stability by using the FOSS "Balance & Motion" module. We also explore plants through the Life Lab curriculum by learning what elements plants need for continual survival. Students will observe energy sources doing work and learn how energy (light, heat, and motion, chemicals, and electricity) can be converted from one form to another. We work to identify and organize minerals with a diagnostic table of color, hardness, streak, luster, cleavage, and other special properties. We discover the processes that form igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks and their place in the rock cycle. We also explore the processes that slowly change Earth's surface (physical and chemical weathering, erosion, and deposition) and those that cause more rapid changes (landslides, volcanism, floods, and earthquakes).

SPANISH

Spanish classes focus on building and developing conversational skills. By exposing the students to a full immersion experience, students begin to hear the patterns of speech and are continually exposed to frequently used vocabulary words. They are taught the skills they need to be successful and are offered opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the language in a variety of ways. The goal of the program in the elementary classes is to help students gain confidence while speaking Spanish and overcome their fear of making mistakes. They are exposed to a variety of topics in each grade.