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School Philosophy & Mission Statement

Mission Statement

The mission of Black Pine Circle School is to create a learning community that encourages humanity, empathy, moral depth, cultural understanding, and freedom in intellectual pursuits.

From its founding in the late sixties, Black Pine Circle School has educated students within the Socratic and humanist tradition, equally emphasizing math and science, the performing arts (music, dance and drama), visual arts, and the humanities. We seek to create well-rounded and enriched students who enjoy the challenges of thinking and learning. Within the curriculum we also work to foster a sense of community, of caring for others and an empathetic approach to the many challenges that are part of social and emotional growth.

All six Lower School homeroom teachers have received their California Teaching Credential and together have over 75 years of experience in public and private schools as well as experience teaching different grade levels throughout their career. They, too, are life-long learners bringing a rich, balanced background in the sciences and the humanities to our school culture. With enthusiastic, well-trained, and dedicated teachers, we have been able to accomplish the one essential goal of education: to teach the love of learning along with the necessary academic skills.

Our arts program and its integration with our core curricula is essential to satisfy multiple intelligences, reinforce classroom experiences, and build confidence in a child's abilities. Children learn in different ways and each child excels in various areas. Neurological research shows that presenting information in a variety of ways increases the success of an individual's ability to take in knowledge. One of the ways BPC accomplishes this is through its arts program. Learning visually, musically, or dramatically provides children many ways to experience the world.

Each day students engage in the creative arts through visual representations, dance, drama, and music. Wherever possible, the visual and performing arts are integrated into the classroom's core curriculum. All media lead to self-discovery, cultural understanding, greater self-confidence, and better communication.

Specialist teachers in art, music, and drama bring their expertise in each field as painters, photographers, dancers, musicians and recording artists, and actors, as independent practitioners and participants in local ensembles, arts groups, and community theater.

Much emphasis is placed on music instruction in the classroom and as an extra-curricular activity. BPC's seven music teachers instruct students in both choral and instrumental music, leading two singing groups, two orchestras and two bands. Frances Kandl, the school's co-founder, developed the music program at the school's inception and it has remained a critical part of the curriculum since. Trained at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Sorbonne in Paris, she designed the program using the Kodaly and Orff methods of teaching music.

BPC's administration continues these founding principles and stays true to the original vision of its founders. The school has included in its mission an extensive outreach program to serve the community as well. Currently staff, students and their families have many opportunities to work on projects to help the environment and people in need in our community. It is BPC's mission to help students see beyond themselves and appreciate their role in the larger community outside the school.

BPC's administrators are:

Head of School: John Carlstroem
Assistant Head of School/Lower School Principal: Laura Wolff
Head of Upper School: Rebecca Greco

Kindergarten

Romina Ronquillo, Teacher; Mary Ann Opet, Teacher's Aide

Grade Level Goals

Social skills are an important part of Kindergarten. We believe that the learning of social skills is the foundation for social and academic success. Young children have an intrinsic desire to show kindness and to be helpful to others. We nurture this by modeling and praising acts of kindness. The students learn to take care of and be considerate of each other. They become part of a warm, loving environment where they can feel safe and wholly accepted. We practice peaceful ways to solve conflicts and learn about the importance of respect and kindness in a community.

Our goal in Kindergarten is to provide students a strong foundation from which they can grow to become active participants in life-long learning. In Kindergarten your child will be involved in learning activities that stimulate thinking and foster independence and initiative. Many of the activities and daily routines that the students take part in encourage them to experience how exciting it is to solve problems and make discoveries and to take pride in doing their best. Students participate in directed lessons and projects and are also given opportunities to choose their own activities.

Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, Spanish, and Art are the main components of the Kindergarten curriculum. Language Arts activities, which build oral language, active listening, reading, and writing skills, are woven throughout the day in addition to being the focus of lessons. Math is based on hands-on experiences with manipulatives and guided student interaction. Science is studied in conjunction with many of the themes we cover. In addition, students help to conduct a science experiment or participate in a hands-on science demonstration with our Science Specialist once a week. Social Studies, like Science, is a basis for many of the themes studied throughout the year. Art is primarily taught in small groups. The students use art to tell stories and to express their own individuality. We use a large variety of art mediums and incorporate concepts such as warm versus cool colors into projects.

Integrated Studies

Our Apple Unit is an example of how one theme is integrated into each area of the curriculum. We study apples in September. The Kindergarteners learn science concepts related to apples such as different varieties of apples, different shapes of apples, products made from apples, the parts of an apple and the seasons of the apple. We read different books about apples. We read and write stories about apples. The students learn about the legend of Johnny Appleseed. We sing apple songs and learn apple poems. The students also practice their critical thinking skills by comparing and contrasting the different varieties of apples. We practice math skills by guessing and counting how many seeds are inside an apple and graphing the students' favorite apple.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- ✏ Music
- ✏ Violin/Cello
- ✏ Physical Education
- ✏ Computers
- ✏ Science Specialist
- ✏ Conflict Resolution
- ✏ Gardening
- ✏ Library
- ✏ Spanish
- ✏ Math Specialist

Kindergarten Sample Daily Schedule

8:30	Arrival
8:45	Opening Circle
(Calendar Math & Morning Message)	
9:15	Language Arts
9:45	Handwriting
10:00	Recess/ Snack
10:20	Music
10:40	Math
11:00	Social Studies
11:30	P.E.
12:00	Lunch/ Recess
12:45	Spanish
1:00	Journals
1:30	Centers/Art
2:00	Poetry/Story Time
2:30	Dismissal

Kindergarten Units

Language Arts

- ✏ Upper and lower case letters
- ✏ Beginning and ending sounds
- ✏ Sight words
- ✏ Phonetic decoding
- ✏ Directional Conventions
- ✏ Printing
- ✏ Story dictation and writing
- ✏ Speaking and listening
- ✏ Following Directions
- ✏ Invented and conventional spelling
- ✏ Dramatic presentations

Math

- ✏ Patterns
- ✏ Shapes
- ✏ Sorting
- ✏ Graphing
- ✏ Estimating
- ✏ Comparing Quantities
- ✏ Counting
- ✏ Number recognition
- ✏ Addition
- ✏ Subtraction
- ✏ Time
- ✏ Fractions
- ✏ Money
- ✏ Measurement

Science

- ✏ Five Senses
- ✏ Evergreen Trees
- ✏ Light and shadows
- ✏ Magnets
- ✏ Sound
- ✏ Insects
- ✏ Apples
- ✏ Health/Nutrition
- ✏ Plants
- ✏ Animals in Winter
- ✏ Weather
- ✏ Oviparous Animals
- ✏ Water, ice and snow

Social Studies

- ✏ Spring and winter holidays
- ✏ All About Me
- ✏ Community helpers
- ✏ Conflict Resolution
- ✏ Thanksgiving
- ✏ Presidents and Nat'l Symbols
- ✏ Mapping and Geography
- ✏ Social Skills & Character Ed.

First Grade

Sue Bechtel, Teacher; Barbara Banez and Mary Ann Opet, Teacher's Aides

First Graders continue to build on the skills they learned in Kindergarten. We create a positive environment where children feel comfortable expressing themselves and they enjoy the process of learning. In keeping with the philosophy of the Socratic Method, children are taught the critical thinking skills that lead to self-discovery in the educational process. By encouraging the development of discussion skills, students learn to feel confident in expressing themselves and in respecting the ideas of others. The children are given opportunities to enhance and strengthen their skills by working with different groupings, including small groups, partners and teacher-led, and whole class activities.

Academic Focus

First Grade focuses on enhancing the reading skills acquired in Kindergarten, as well as developing new skills to make students strong, independent readers. In First Grade children expand their sight-word vocabulary and knowledge of phonetic sounds. They learn to recognize and understand elements of a story, such as setting, plot, characters, and point of view, and use this information to predict what will happen in a story. This learning is then transferred to their writing where they are able to express themselves through creative writing and poetry as well as display their knowledge of facts through expository writing. These reading skills carry over to all areas of academic study. In Math, the children work on problem solving, and reading and using graphs to obtain information. The Math program also emphasizes hands-on activities in order to help the students better understand new concepts. Whenever possible these skills are applied to real life scenarios that allow the children to recognize the importance of the skills they are learning. Science and Social Studies are highly integrated, as the study of the Earth's continents introduces not only varied animal populations, habitats, land and climates, but also the diverse human population. Global awareness and cultural diversity are emphasized through the study of customs, art, food, music, holidays, traditions and life styles of various cultures around the world. In Science, the interconnectedness of all ecosystems is stressed, as well as a sense of good stewardship of the earth. In addition, students also have opportunities to express themselves and their knowledge through music, dance and special art projects that reflect the current unit of study.

Integrated Studies

Our science and social studies topics are month long themes that are easily integrated with reading, writing, math, music and art. For example, our first units are Earth in Space and North America. Using a graph of concentric circles, students are introduced to the math concept of inclusive sets. Using circles, they could map a city (Berkeley), inside a state (California), inside a country (U.S.), inside a continent (N. America). The students used concentric circles again to learn the make-up of the Earth: inner core, outer core, mantle, and crust. They used patterning to note these areas were solid, liquid, solid, with a break in the pattern, crust being a solid (with pockets of liquid). The children worked with colored clay to make models of the inside of the Earth. They learned a song to help them remember the countries in North America and also learned the national anthems of America and Canada. The students read stories, wrote their own, and drew pictures of native animals and peoples of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- ✏ Computers
- ✏ Music
- ✏ Science Specialist
- ✏ Phys. Ed.
- ✏ Library
- ✏ Violin/Cello
- ✏ Gardening
- ✏ Spanish
- ✏ Art
- ✏ Manners
- ✏ Math Enrichment

First Grade Sample Daily Schedule:

8:45 - Welcome, Calendar
9:00 - Reading, Writing, Spelling
10:00 - Recess
10:20 - Math
10:45 - Music
11:15 - Handwriting
11:30 - Science Experiment
12:00 - Lunch
12:45 - Spanish
1:15 - Social Studies
2:15 - Physical Education
2:45 - Story
3:00 - Dismissal

First Grade Units

Language Arts:

- ✏ Phonetic decoding and sight word building
- ✏ Oral Reading
- ✏ Comprehension
- ✏ Critical thinking skills
- ✏ Making connections and comparisons
- ✏ Parts of a book/story
- ✏ Different genres
- ✏ Independent reading
- ✏ Spelling
- ✏ Handwriting
- ✏ Punctuation and grammar
- ✏ Sentence structure
- ✏ Creative and expository writing, poetry
- ✏ Dramatic presentations

Math:

- ✏ Sorting and classifying
- ✏ Patterns
- ✏ Graphing
- ✏ Addition and subtraction facts (fact families)
- ✏ Solving and creating word problems
- ✏ Plane and solid geometry
- ✏ Ordinal numbers
- ✏ Place value and addition and subtraction
- ✏ Telling time to the hour and half-hour
- ✏ Identifying coins, adding coins of different denominations
- ✏ Measurement
- ✏ Problem solving strategies (estimation, prediction, choosing the operation, critical thinking and logic)
- ✏ Fractions
- ✏ Estimating
- ✏ Counting by 2s, 5s, 10s
- ✏ Even and odd numbers

Science:

- ✏ Seasons; Day and Night
- ✏ Body systems
- ✏ Earth in Space
- ✏ Habitats, adaptations and lifecycles
- ✏ Antarctic and Arctic Animals
- ✏ Dinosaurs/Fossils/Erosion
- ✏ Seeds, Plants, Trees
- ✏ Rainforest and ecology
- ✏ Ocean Animals
- ✏ Chemistry Fun!

Social Studies:

- ✏ Conflict Resolution
- ✏ Rights and Responsibilities
- ✏ Earth Day
- ✏ Geography: 7 continents
- ✏ Island Cultures
- ✏ Building cultural understanding through the study of celebrations, music, dance, art and customs of people from different countries

Second Grade

Kathrine LaFleur, Teacher, Rebekah Werth, Teacher's Aide

In Second Grade students continue to develop self-reliance, to forge friendships, and to work cooperatively with their peers. As their communication skills increase, they learn to give voice to their feelings. They also learn to listen and empathize with the feelings of others. They learn to give positive support to their peers. They practice constructive ways of dealing with conflict. They are developing the skills to resolve these conflicts independently and to reach compromises that are acceptable to all.

Academic Focus

The focus of the academic program in the Second Grade is on the students' development of their skills, competence, and self-assurance as learners, while maintaining their interest and enthusiasm for learning. In Language Arts, the students learn to become fluent readers. With greater vocabulary skills and comprehension, students advance to reading independently both for learning and for pleasure, pursuing their own interests. They also develop fluency in writing, so they have the ability to express their ideas clearly and creatively. Mathematics furthers the students' abilities to order and interpret their world. Looking for patterns, making generalizations, logic and reasoning, and problem solving are emphasized as well as the mastery of number concept, place value, various units of measure, basic geometry, and methods of computation.

Integrated Studies

The Second Grade curriculum is designed to integrate Language Arts and Mathematics with units of study in Science and Social Studies. In this manner, students will be able to better apply what they have learned and therefore achieve a greater depth of understanding. Units in Science and Social Studies are chosen for interest and accessibility to a Second Grader's world.

For example, our first unit of study in the fall is autobiography and family. Students begin with activities that focus on their unique personalities and lives. They write riddles about themselves. They write about important events in their lives, and then put them in sequence on a timeline. The students then create descriptive books about themselves differentiating between physical traits and personality traits. They survey their classmates and make graphs to indicate favorite animals and drinks. Gradually our focus widens to include family. The unit culminates with a family tree and a research project that traces a family member's journey to the United States, incorporating a study of history as well.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- ✏ Spanish
- ✏ Vocal Music
- ✏ Violin/Cello
- ✏ Physical Education
- ✏ Computers
- ✏ Art
- ✏ Gardening
- ✏ Library
- ✏ Science and Math Enrichment

Second Grade – Sample Daily Schedule

8:45 - Morning Circle and Calendar
9:00 - Language Arts
10:00 - Recess
10:20 - Math
11:20 - Music
12:00 - Lunch and Recess
12:45 - Spanish
1:15 - Silent Reading
1:30 – Homework Review
1:45 - Orchestra
2:25 – Science/Social Studies
3:00 - Dismissal

Second Grade Units

Reading and Language Arts

- ✏ Phonemic awareness
- ✏ Fluency
- ✏ Reading Comprehension Strategies
- ✏ Vocabulary
- ✏ Word Structure
- ✏ Point of View
- ✏ Sequence of Events
- ✏ Main Idea
- ✏ Cause and Effect
- ✏ Compare and Contrast
- ✏ Author's Purpose
- ✏ Drawing Conclusions
- ✏ Discussion Skills
- ✏ Identifying Genre
- ✏ Writing for Audience
- ✏ Writing Process and Genres
- ✏ Setting, Theme, Characters
- ✏ Graphic Organizers
- ✏ Grammar and Mechanics

Math

- ✏ Strategies for Adding and Subtracting
- ✏ Number Sentences
- ✏ Fact Families
- ✏ Money
- ✏ Place Value
- ✏ Using Models
- ✏ Fractions
- ✏ Skip Counting and Multiplication
- ✏ Numbers in other Cultures
- ✏ Decimals
- ✏ Estimation
- ✏ Identifying Missing Elements in Number Sentences
- ✏ Coordinate Graphs

Science

- ✏ Observing, formulating questions, recording data
- ✏ Liquid explorations/States of Matter
- ✏ Plants/Soil/Conservation and Recycling
- ✏ Energy and Weather
- ✏ Magnets
- ✏ Birds
- ✏ Outdoor education through field trips and gardening
- ✏ Nutrition
- ✏ Embryology/ Life Cycles
- ✏ Buoyancy
- ✏ DNA
- ✏ Solar Energy
- ✏ Water Cycle

Social Studies

- ✏ Mapping Skills and Geography
- ✏ Bay Area history and nineteenth century sailing ships/Explorers/Trade
- ✏ Our Family Histories/Autobiographies
- ✏ Historical and ethnic studies through the celebration of holidays
- ✏ Pilgrims and the Early Colonies
- ✏ President Washington and President Lincoln
- ✏ African American history, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights
- ✏ Social skills, conflict resolution, cooperation

Third Grade

Maureen Ray, Teacher; Barbara Banez, Teacher's Aide

Community is an important aspect of Third Grade. We strive to create an environment where students feel accepted and respected. Community building activities are incorporated in various lessons throughout the year to promote this. Students are encouraged to show kindness and respect for each other. In third grade, the students become part of a "family" that learns together and cares for each other.

Academic Focus

In Reading, the students work as part of the whole class, in small groups and individually to complete assignments and enrich each other's reading experiences. Students encounter a variety of genres as they work through the reading program. The students read for specific information as well as for enjoyment. The students develop the ability to infer, compare and draw conclusions based on the reading material. The students will also study the mechanics of writing using a text called *GUM: Grammar, Usage and Mechanics.* The writing program explores a variety of genres and styles, as students learn the five steps of the writing process. They pre-write using various graphic organizers and organizational tools, write with an emphasis on ideas, revise and edit for proper grammar and mechanics, and the "publish" their work with correct formatting. The subjects of their writing are connected to topics being studied in Reading, Social Studies and Science.

In Math, the focus is engaging all students in mathematical thinking. Through whole class lessons, group problem-solving activities and games, and individual skills practice, students develop number sense, learn logical and creative problem solving strategies, solidify their understanding of algorithms, and engage in mathematical communication. The mathematics curriculum allows for a varied learning experience as students engage in Socratic reasoning lessons and hands-on exploration. Students engage in independent task time each day to provide independent practice of the concept being taught and to provide opportunities for differentiation.

Integrated Studies

In Third Grade, the students study community and government through an exploration of various civilizations, including the Native Americans of the Great Plains, the ancient Japanese, and the ancient Egyptians. The curriculum focuses on the ways in which environment impacts the development of a society. Students learn perspective taking and develop critical thinking skills through Socratic discussions, the reading of various texts and in dramatic performances that relate to the unit of study. Students read stories based on traditional folklore to understand the customs and religious beliefs of each culture. They explore how the physical geography and climate influence one's way of life and how people depend on their surroundings for survival. By studying the food, clothing and shelter of these various groups, students develop an appreciation for these rich cultures. Field trips to museums that feature artifacts from these cultures enrich the classroom curriculum.

In our study of ancient Egypt, for example, students learn the importance of mummification as they mummify fish in science, build tombs for other mummies, and research the mythology for oral reports for which they dress up as a god or goddess. Students also learn through a dramatic performance of the creation myth of Osiris and Isis. They employ math skills as they learn the Egyptian number system and study the building of the pyramids. This unit of study culminates in a guided tour of the Rosicrucian Museum in San Jose.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- ✏ Spanish
- ✏ Vocal Music
- ✏ Art
- ✏ Math Enrichment
- ✏ Physical Education
- ✏ Computers
- ✏ Science Specialist
- ✏ Gardening
- ✏ Library
- ✏ Orchestra

Third Grade Sample Daily Schedule

8:45 – Morning Meeting
9:00 - Reading and Language Arts
10:20 - Recess
10:40 - PE
11:10 - Math
11:55 - Music
12:25 - Lunch/Recess
1:15 - Social Studies/Science
2:25 - Orchestra/Independent Learning

Third Grade Units

Reading and Language Arts

- ✏ Silent Sustained Reading (20 minutes)
- ✏ Response to literature (reading logs)
- ✏ Oral Reading
- ✏ Paired reading
- ✏ Reader's Theater
- ✏ Author's chair
- ✏ Brainstorming
- ✏ Listening and discussing
- ✏ Story Sequencing
- ✏ Poems
- ✏ Creative Writing
- ✏ Revising
- ✏ Editing (grammar, spelling, punctuation)
- ✏ Cursive handwriting
- ✏ Book Reports
- ✏ Dramatic presentations

Science

- ✏ Simple Machines
- ✏ Moon Phases/Astronomy
- ✏ Planets
- ✏ Light and Sound
- ✏ Tide Pools and the Sea Shore
- ✏ Mummification

Math

- ✏ Daily Word Problems
- ✏ Place value operations: number sense, ordering numbers, skip counting, rounding to six digits
- ✏ Addition and Subtraction to four digits, across zeroes
- ✏ Time: telling time to the minute on a standard clock
- ✏ Money: estimating money amounts
- ✏ Measurement: standard and metric units of length, area, volume, temperature and weight
- ✏ Fractions: parts of a whole, equivalent fractions, fractional parts of a set
- ✏ Problem solving strategies
- ✏ Representing data
- ✏ Multiplication
- ✏ Division
- ✏ Use of Manipulatives

Social Studies

- ✏ Native Americans, Japan, Egypt
- ✏ Land Resources
- ✏ Community & government
- ✏ Conflict Resolution
- ✏ State Reports

Fourth Grade

Diane Wirtschafter, Teacher; Kira Del Mar, Teacher's Aide

In Fourth Grade students begin their transition to independence in learning. Students are more confident about their ideas and are able to contribute to discussions to derive understanding or consensus. They learn to be objective about their work so that they can critique it themselves and accept suggestions positively. They learn to work with each other and use each other's ideas. They can begin to reflect on their own learning needs and advocate for what they want, both in school and at home, with homework. They begin to practice important long-term planning skills. They also are able to take their conflict resolution skills to a higher level, where they can begin to understand the roots of conflict and deal with those. Respecting the needs and views of others becomes an important part of both academic and emotional growth.

Academic Focus

Fourth Grade emphasizes the application of previously learned skills. Students transition from learning to read to reading to learn. They consult references for information but also evaluate and critique their usefulness. They use a greater variety of resources and begin to research independently. Students can analyze historical motivation and use critical judgment about the needs and contexts of other cultures and times. Even in creative writing, they draw together their acquired writing skills so that a finished product reflects growth in creativity and expressiveness. Cooperative learning skills and critical thinking play an important role in Science, where students develop hypotheses and record the results of their experiments.

In Mathematics they integrate their basic skills in the four operations, as when they do long division or work with fractions, and they also apply them to problem solving. Students learn to value the process of solving problems along with their results. They can articulate their reasoning and evaluate their mistakes.

Integrated Studies

The Fourth Grade Reading and Social Studies Curriculum are highly integrated. California History provides the framework for many types of lessons. We study Native Californian cultures and their transformation during the period of Spanish colonization. Spanish instruction time incorporates the translation of California place names to understand their roots. We study Geography to determine environmental reasons for the pattern of mission settlement. We discuss the role of religion as a motive for exploration and settlement. When we visit nearby Mission Dolores, we examine the architecture, decoration, and evolution of the missions into pueblos and towns. The students research individual missions for report writing, using websites, encyclopedias, and historical reference books. They also research the economic role of the missions and develop their own, whole-class model of a composite mission. Each student must design and build a portion of the mission in order to understand the principle of self-sustaining units. Lastly we visit Sonoma State Historical Park, where the mission, the pueblo, and American exploration came together.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- ✏ Spanish
- ✏ Music
- ✏ Science Specialist
- ✏ Physical Education
- ✏ Computers
- ✏ Art
- ✏ Gardening
- ✏ Library
- ✏ Math Enrichment

Fourth Grade Sample Schedule

8:45 - Check-in
8:50 - Reading
9:35 - Math
10:20 - Recess
10:40 - Language Arts
11:15 - Spanish
11:45 - Library
12:25 - Lunch
1:15 - Social Studies or PE
2:15 - Homework & Cleanup
2:30 – Class Meeting
3:00 - Dismissal

Fourth Grade Units

Reading/Language Arts

- ✏ Oral Fluency and Expression
- ✏ Note-taking and Outlining
- ✏ Brainstorming
- ✏ Editing and Final Drafts
- ✏ Report Writing
- ✏ Prediction, Analysis and Discussion of stories
- ✏ Sight Words & Frequently Used Words
- ✏ Alphabetization
- ✏ Syllabification
- ✏ Dictionary usage
- ✏ Prefixes & Suffixes
- ✏ Sentence Structure/Grammar
- ✏ Punctuation
- ✏ Homonyms, Synonyms, & Antonyms
- ✏ Cursive Mastery
- ✏ Creative writing and poetry
- ✏ Different genres of reading and writing
- ✏ Dramatic presentations

Science

- ✏ Geology
- ✏ Human Body
- ✏ Electricity
- ✏ Weather
- ✏ Engineering

Mathematics

- ✏ Addition & Subtraction to five places
- ✏ Place Value to six places
- ✏ Multiplication & Division to five places
- ✏ Division with one and two digit divisors
- ✏ Fractions with all operations
- ✏ Decimals
- ✏ Geometry
- ✏ Graphing
- ✏ Probability
- ✏ Algebraic Readiness
- ✏ Problem Solving

Social Studies: California History

- ✏ Native Californians
- ✏ Spanish Exploration
- ✏ Mission Settlement
- ✏ American Contact
- ✏ Gold Rush
- ✏ Statehood
- ✏ California Cultures/Immigrant populations and contributions
- ✏ Conflict Resolution

Fifth Grade

Tim Ogburn, Teacher; Lesley Jones, Teacher's Aide

Fifth Grade is an important transition year for the students. This is the last year that they will have a self-contained classroom setting and one teacher for their core subjects. Looking forward to junior high, it is an important year for taking responsibility for their own learning, organizing themselves, and using time wisely. They must begin to rely less on their teacher and parents, and more on themselves to take advantage of educational opportunities that are offered. As well as working independently, students have the opportunity in small group learning experiences to collaborate and contribute to a common effort.

Academic Focus

Fifth Grade is also an important year for review and mastery of skills introduced in earlier grades. BPC students are expected to be able to read and write with fluency, to have mastered all major math functions, and to listen and participate thoughtfully in discussions. Fifth Grade offers the opportunity to master these skills in place under the guidance of a teacher who works with them in many different subject areas.

Integrated Studies

As much as possible, we try to take a multidisciplinary approach to the material. For example, our measurements unit is integrated with science. When we read *Julie of the Wolves*, we study the ecology of Alaska and Inuit history and culture. Many historical subjects, such as the American fur trade or the Civil War, are approached through creative writing and drama.

In the same spirit, we try to coordinate with specialists so that their curriculum overlaps with and supports the core subjects. We use computer class to do research, publish poetry, and take virtual historical tours in the Internet. During our reading and writing unit on Dragons, we make dragon sculptures in Art. The haiku we write in class are painted in Art and displayed in the garden. During the Science Fair, we use our Writer's Workshop time to work on the written parts of our projects and learn the characteristics of good scientific writing.

Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the "Specialist" section of this booklet.

- Art
- Music
- Physical Education
- Computers
- Gardening
- Spanish
- Science Specialist
- Library
- Math Enrichment

Fifth Grade Sample Schedule

8:45 - Math
9:45 - Literature/Language Arts
10:20 - Recess
10:40 - Art
12:00 - Spelling/Grammar
12:25 - Lunch
1:15 - Spanish
2:00 - History, Current Events or Science
3:00 - Dismissal

Fifth Grade Units

Literature
- ✏ Historical Fiction
- ✏ Biographies
- ✏ Newspapers
- ✏ Scripts
- ✏ Poetry
- ✏ Fairy and Folk Tales
- ✏ Mysteries
- ✏ Adventures
- ✏ Fantasy
- ✏ Arthurian Legends

Writing
- ✏ Expository Writing
- ✏ Journal Writing
- ✏ Poetry
- ✏ Story Writing
- ✏ Research Reports
- ✏ Spelling and Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics
- ✏ Language Topics
- ✏ Usage-homophones

Science
- ✏ Using Microscopes
- ✏ Experimental Design
- ✏ Oobleck
- ✏ Chemical Reaction
- ✏ Ecology
- ✏ Science Fair Projects
- ✏ Rockets`
- ✏ Water Chemistry and Conservation

Math
- ✏ Review of Addition, Subtraction, Division and Multiplication (4+digits)
- ✏ Statistics and Graphs
- ✏ Connecting Arithmetic to Algebra
- ✏ Decimals
- ✏ Number Theory
- ✏ Fractions
- ✏ Ratios, Proportions, and Percents

History
- ✏ U.S. Geography Study and Review
- ✏ Native Peoples and Early Exploration of North America
- ✏ European Explorers
- ✏ Early American Settlements and the Thirteen Colonies
- ✏ Founding Fathers and the American Revolution
- ✏ The Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- ✏ Frontier and Westward Expansion/ The War of 1812
- ✏ Pre-Civil War Conditions and The Civil War
- ✏ Life After The Civil War

Technology Program

Teacher: Menna Stern
Lab Curriculum 2009-10

O***verview*:**
The Black Pine Circle School approach to computer education is spiral in nature. Throughout Lower School, students experience age appropriate lessons that build, year upon year, a solid foundation in three dominant fields of technology: production applications (word processing, spreadsheets and database), multimedia creation/presentation, and Internet/webpage utilization. Inherent in the approach is the development of literacy; a *true* understanding of computer operations that will enable students to use computers - and related technologies - to solve problems in *real world* settings. Wherever possible, students integrate their lab experience with actual classroom lessons. Integration may be as basic as typing a vocabulary word and drawing an illustration or as complex as creating a multimedia project in conjunction with one or several other schools across the globe. In addition, keyboarding (using the touch typing method) is practiced as an ongoing component of their education

Classes are conducted in Black Pine Circle School's computer lab where each student has his/her own Macintosh computer. The culture of the lab is non-competitive, collaborative and investigative. Lab projects, so as to capture student imagination and inspire originality, are open-ended and non-linear in design. Students are encouraged to take risks, make *mistakes,* and innovate.

Kindergarten
Kindergarten children follow an emerging skills program (see separate handout) with Ms. Wolff in the computer lab. In the spring, they join the computer lab instruction program:

- Introduction to basic computer parts
- Introduction to the power key
- Practice in following a short string of directions
- Practice in tracking a demonstration on main monitor
- Lots of "experimenting" in paint program
- Practice typing their name, changing font and size
- Project: Big names with original drawings

First Grade

- Identification of computer hardware including storage devices, computer chips and the basic components of the computer
- Identification of shift key and use of power keys
- Introduction to word processing with special emphasis on font, font points, centering, and printing
- Introduction to basic keyboard hand placement
- Introduction to multimedia by creating a fact slide with text and illustration
- Continued multimedia through creation of a thematic slide show using illustrations, text and sound. Themes are based on current classroom exploration. Shows are collaborative and involve the whole class
- Project: Students create and illustrate their own slide show stories with voice recordings

Second Grade

- Identification of computer hardware including storage devices, computer chips and the basic components of the computer
- Introduction to folder and file creation (file management)

- Continued practice in word-processing with special emphasis on centering, addition of graphics, and basic layout
- Keyboarding begins with an introduction to the home row and practice with anchoring keys using a simple word processor
- Internet use and practice is integrated with classroom curriculum in a guided approach
- Multimedia lessons are integrated with vocabulary to produce an ongoing interactive project
- Students enhance multimedia skills by creating and illustrating their own slide show stories with voice recordings and text for class presentation. Collaborative teams of up to four students decide on creative choices through consensus
- Themes are based on current classroom exploration. Shows are collaborative and involve the whole class

Third Grade

- Hardware identification continues
- Introduction and emphasis on file management through creation of hierarchical folder and file systems (directories)
- Introduction and regular practice of touch typing skills using *Type to Learn* begins
- Continued advancement of word-processing skills: emphasis on use of spell checking, the thesaurus, document setup, and object placement
- Introduction to Internet 'smart searching' techniques, netiquette and information literacy
- Use and integration of Internet sites specific to classroom curriculum

Fourth Grade

- Hardware identification continues
- Keyboarding skills continue using *Type to Learn*
- File management techniques continue
- Continued enhancement of word-processing skills: object layers, borders, page numbering, orientation and placement, layout design
- Introduction to Power Point
- Internet search/research in conjunction with classroom Science and Social Studies curriculum
- Introduction to spreadsheet usage/design
- Projects: Creation of various content specific presentations using Power Point

Fifth Grade

- Continued study of hardware basics
- Continued mini-sessions in how to trouble shoot computer problems
- Continued practice in keyboarding using *Type to Learn.*
- Continued practice in file management
- Continued practice in word processing with emphasis on layout using text and graphics as objects
- Continued practice in spreadsheet usage/design
- Enhancement of Internet search/research skills using classroom content
- Projects: spreadsheets using comparative data, classroom report title pages with mixed text/graphics, subject specific multimedia production/presentation in Power Point

*****************BPC Computer Lab is Apple Mac based***********************

Program Titles:

Graphics Creation: *KidPix, AppleWorks, Graphic Convertor*
Multimedia: *KidPix, PowerPoint, iWork, iLife suite, iPhoto*
Word-processing: *KidPix, MS Word*
Spreadsheet/Graphing*: Excel*
Keyboarding: *Type to 3, Type!*
Internet browser: *FireFox and Safari*

Art

Kim Buckingham, teacher for Kindergarten through Fourth Grade
Kieren Dutcher, teacher for Fifth through Eighth Grade

Our program is designed to create a safe space in which students are encouraged to explore, create, experiment and learn.

Our objectives are:

- To nurture creativity
- To explore with a wide variety of media
- To teach basic skills and techniques
- To familiarize students with the language of art
- To evoke an appreciation of art
- To discuss fundamental concepts
- To develop individuality
- To acquaint students with the many movements and styles of art
- To integrate as often as possible with the classroom studies of the students

Throughout the year we focus on artists, techniques, and traditions from around the globe. We draw from many cultures with the intention of connecting to people who are different, learning new techniques, enriching our experience and inspiring creative thought.

We will follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum depending on the grade and interests of the students. We will also use a spiral curriculum to touch on certain concepts, for example, representing what we see. Through self-portraits, still life drawings, figure drawings, garden watercolor, and sculpture the students develop a deeper understanding of observational art.

Throughout the year we will explore some of the following:

Elements of design (line, form, value, texture, color, pattern, movement)
Clay
Watercolor paint
Charcoal
Oil pastel
Paper Mache
Wire
Pen
Print Making
Weaving
Perspective drawing
Sculpture
Collage and Decoupage
Still life studies
Portraits and Self Portraits
Artistic Movements (i.e. expressionism, cubism, etc.)
Individual Artists (Frida Kahlo, Van Gogh, Kandinsky, etc.)

Art

Kieren Dutcher, teacher for Fifth through Eighth Grade

The goal of the Upper School Art program is to instill in students an appreciation of art, both as creators and as viewers. This is achieved through instruction in specific skills, introduction to a broad range of media and materials, and exposure to the art of different times and cultures.

Art class focuses on students creating artwork, improving technical skills, experimenting with different media, critiquing their work informally, and having the opportunity to show their work on an ongoing basis. Students also view the work of many artists and cultures throughout history, thus developing an understanding of what goes into the making of art, a greater understanding of how life and art connect, and a sense of their own creative process.

Sixth Graders study an artist of their choice, write a report on the artist, and make a piece of work in the style of the artist. The project culminates in an oral presentation to the class. The wealth of knowledge gained is built upon in 7th and 8th Grades.

Students are required to keep sketchbooks as a place to express themselves and practice/plan projects, and keep a record of art vocabulary. These become logs of the year's work, and students can look back through them to see how their skills have improved over the year.

There will be occasional homework – to watch a special show, make a few sketches, look up an artist online, or visit a museum exhibit.

Projects this year may include:

- ✏ Drawing: still life, self-portraits, landscapes, imaginary works
- ✏ Design: logos, posters, t-shirts, etc
- ✏ Painting: color mixing, watercolor, tempera, acrylic, sand painting
- ✏ Printmaking
- ✏ Collage
- ✏ Textiles: weaving, sewing
- ✏ Sculpture: wire, clay, paper mache, wood, junk
- ✏ Stone carving

Student work will be exhibited throughout the year in our gallery, located in the hallway of the theatre building. All grades display the spring semester's artwork at the annual BPC Art Fair in late May/early June.

Spanish

Cheryl Burger (Zoerheide) (K-4), and Catalina Lacy (5), Teachers

The Lower School Spanish program consists of both language acquisition and cultural learning. Students are introduced to basic concepts and conversation vocabulary in Kindergarten; as they continue on, throughout their lower school years, children gain confidence with listening comprehension, speaking abilities, and writing and reading skills. Cultural activities from Mexico, Spain and other Latin American countries are also a focus in the classroom. These activities bring a global awareness to the classroom, reflecting the school's commitment to the appreciation of different cultures from around the world.

In Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade, students start building a foundation for learning the Spanish language with introductions to new vocabulary and basic conversations. Throughout these first three years students use ¡Hola Niños!, a resource that uses TPR (Total Physical Response) activities and storytelling to increase comprehension, in combination with songs and games to enhance their skills. Activities and subject matter:

- Greetings and introductions
- Numbers 1-100
- Colors
- Days of the week and months of the year
- Vocabulary such as food, animals, feelings, family, and body parts
- The alphabet and letter sounds
- Listening comprehension and writing practice
- Cultural events: Independence Days, Días de los Muertos, Las Posadas, Los Tres Reyes Magos, Cinco de Mayo, and Cesar Chavez Day

Throughout third and fourth grade, students use Cuéntame, a series of vocabulary units and stories that combine listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing activities to increase comprehension and production skills. More of the class time is conducted in Spanish, and students put their skills to the test, while writing and performing original stories completely in Spanish. Activities and subject matter:

- Review and expansion of topics from Kindergarten, First and Second grade
- Common verbs and commands
- Understanding masculine and feminine nouns
- Learning the formal and informal forms of *tu* and *usted*
- Numbers 1-1000
- Vocabulary such as the weather, seasons, time, clothing and household objects
- Independent reading
- Writing stories
- Latin American Geography
- Cultural events as above, including individual country studies

In Fifth Grade, students are expected to be able to produce basic questions, answers, commands, and target vocabulary with good pronunciation. Students work on mastering personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, interrogative words, regular *–ar* verbs in the present tense, some irregular verbs, and describing how often, how well, how much, and when. They will also be introduced to the future tense. Students apply their knowledge by conducting interviews and skits in Spanish.

Library

Sharon Taylor and Kathleen McNulty, Librarians

Our library program supports and promotes student reading and a life-long love of books. All students will be exposed to literature through story telling, book talks, and author readings. Books will be celebrated and when possible introduced through a variety of methods. Students will cover a wide range of genres in fiction and non-fiction to help them discover the kinds of books they love to read. Author birthdays are celebrated every month, including a review of the authors' literature.

All students learn to be active users of the library. This includes how to use shelf markers, read spine labels, know library circulation procedures, understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, and become confident making independent reading selections. Book awards (Caldecott, Newbery, Coretta Scott King, etc.) are discussed in detail. When required for class or homework, students will learn to conduct research in the library using the most appropriate tools, including encyclopedias (print and electronic) and other reference materials. Parts of a book (i.e., contents and index) are also examined. Students will learn to find books within our collection through the electronic catalog and these skills will enable them to locate information within any library.

The library also hosts all-school events to facilitate literacy on campus. These events include, but are not limited to, an all-school book swap, a Book Faire, participation in the "California Young Reader Medal" program, and book donations to needy communities.

Our library is an inviting place where reading and information literacy is honored. In addition to regular class visits to the library, students may choose to visit the library during lunchtime for private reading, extra story time, individual research assistance, and even just talking one-on-one with the librarian about a favorite book.

Science Enrichment

Christine Mytko, Teacher

Philosophy

Science is not about memorizing "big words." Science is about being curious, asking questions, exploring data, asking more questions, researching, and making connections between what you learn and what you already know.

General Objectives and Content

At BPC, we strive for a Science curriculum that helps students further develop their natural skills of curiosity and inquiry. At each grade level, we use a combination of content-specific lessons and supplemental activities to reinforce and build upon each of these skills. Content is taught primarily through age-appropriate, hands-on, minds-on activities, and often supports cross-curricular learning with other subject areas.

Kindergarten Science Units generally include: Apples, Pumpkins and Measurement, the Five Senses, Water, Ice & Snow, Light, Color & Shadows, Weather, and Insects.

First Grade units generally include: The Earth, Human Body Systems, Winter and Solstice, Arctic Animals, Soil/Erosion/Fossils/Dinosaurs, Seeds and Plants, the Rainforest, Ocean Creatures and Chemistry Fun!

Second Grade units generally include activities integrated with four themes: Families (Trees and Genetic Traits), Trading (ships, buoyancy, how things are made, conservation and recycling), Life Cycles (including our embryology unit and chick hatching!), and Farming.

Third Grade units generally include: Simple Machines, Sound & Light, Astronomy, Mummification, Conservation (and Earth Day), and Tide Pools.

Fourth Grade units generally include: Geology, Dry Ice, Electricity, The Human Body, and Engineering

Fifth Grade units generally include: Experimental Design, Ecology, Water Chemistry and Conservation, Science Fair Projects, Oobleck Investigations, and Rockets!

Progression of Skills

We focus on the following science skills at each grade level:

				Experiment	Experiment
			Data work	Data work	Data work
			Measuring	Measuring	Measuring
		Classifying	Classifying	Classifying	Classifying
	Predicting	Predicting	Predicting	Predicting	Predicting
	Comparing	Comparing	Comparing	Comparing	Comparing
Communicating	Communicating	Communicating	Communicating	Communicating	Communicating
Observing	Observing	Observing	Observing	Observing	Observing
Kindergarten	**1st Grade**	**2nd Grade**	**3rd Grade**	**4th Grade**	**5th Grade**

Classroom Music

Madeleine King (K-3), and Cheryl Sumsion (4-8), Teachers

Music has always been an important aspect of Black Pine Circle. Students experience the joy of listening to and creating music. It permeates the curriculum in many ways, especially through the study of various cultures. Students share their musical talents by participating in both Winter and Spring School Concerts, in Talent Shows, and for the annual Grandparents'/Godparents' Day assembly.

The primary objective of the K-3rd Grade music classes is to create a fun, and challenging atmosphere in which students are encouraged to learn basic and more complex musical concepts through participation, listening and cooperation. Incorporating elements from both the Kodaly and Orff teaching methods, students in these grades will all be participating in singing, rhythm, movement and the use of instruments. Use of singing games, chants, body movement and percussion help to develop a sense of rhythm and coordination in all of the grades. Such ideas as melody, harmony, pitch identification and beginning musical notation are all introduced as early as the Kindergarten year and are developed more thoroughly by the Third Grade.

Beginning in early October, all classes will spend one class period per week learning folk dancing. For the Kindergarten class this will begin with basic dance steps and ideas such as forming a circle, moving together and following the music. For the First through Third Grades, the focus will be on using circle dances, line dances and for the Third Grade, beginning square dance.

In the 4th and 5th Grades, students become more familiar with standard music notation that includes recognition of notes on the staff, rhythmic values and patterns, and knowledge of the basic elements needed for musical composition and sight singing.

In 5th Grade, students spend more time listening to masterworks from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods, and learn to identify the instruments of the orchestra, both aurally and visually. Our work culminates in an annual trip to hear the San Francisco Symphony in concert.

Students' musical experiences will include reading and writing music, singing, playing the recorder, creating, listening, and moving to music. Students will continue to develop a sequenced skill set which will enhance their critical thinking skills and their understanding of different types of music.

Proper vocal production will be emphasized through body awareness and singing in unison, in canon, with descants, ostinati, and in parts. Students will prepare Choral Repertoire to perform at the Winter and Spring Music Festivals and at Grandparents' Day, which may include incidental use of keyboard, recorder, choreography, or other instruments. Students in grades 3-5 will also have the opportunity to join the voluntary Lower School Chorus, which meets on Fridays at lunch to prepare songs for fun and performances.

In the second semester, a study of the recorder gives Fourth and Fifth Grade students another practical application for the reading, breathing, and phrasing skills we work on during singing. Particular emphasis will be placed on learning recorder fingerings, developing the ability to sight read notes, playing with accurate articulation, and using rehearsal time well, which will include home practice.

Instrumental Music

Rachel Durling, Dina Weinshelbaum, K-3rd Grade teachers, Jerry Kennedy, 4th-8th Grade Band teacher, Rem Djemilev, 4th-8th Grade Orchestra teacher.

Instrumental instruction for K-5, beyond the classroom music program, is an optional program with an extra fee. Students may join group lessons in violin or cello in Kindergarten and First Grade, ensemble instruction for our Junior Orchestra (2nd and 3rd grade) or Advanced Orchestra (starting at 4th grade), or band (starting at 4th grade). Students perform for assemblies, concerts and special events throughout the year. Musical selections range from classical for Orchestra to jazz and rock for Band. In addition, independent instruction for a variety of instruments, including piano and guitar, can be arranged after school with various teachers.

The String Program for Kindergarten-Third graders is a pull-out program on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons during independent activity time in their regular classes. The First Grade and Kindergarten program is open to beginners. The Junior Orchestra is for 2nd and 3rd Graders and is open to students who have had Beginning Strings in K and 1st Grade, or have had private lessons. Band and the Advanced Orchestra meet before or after school and is open to students of all levels who have had some playing experience.

The fundamentals of instrumental music start in Kindergarten. Learning to play an instrument is, in the beginning years, primarily a physical discipline. Kindergarteners learn the basics of caring for their instruments, correct posture and position, a few rhythmic fundamentals, songs using all four open strings, and beginning principles of practicing. By the end of the year they have learned more complicated songs using one or two left hand fingers. First Graders improve upon general playing skills learning different rhythms, bow strokes, and fingerings on all four strings. By the end of the year, they should be familiar with reading all the notes in first position. Second Graders focus on note reading, intonation, and rhythmic accuracy. Depending on skill levels, we may add Beginning Ensemble playing. In Third Grade, we emphasize chamber music playing and the expressive aspects of music-making (i.e., dynamics, phrasing, pacing, and moods).

Children will progress faster, enjoy playing their instrument more, feel more confident and enthusiastic, learn discipline and enter into the world of music-making more quickly with regular practice. It is more effective for a child to practice once a day for 5 or 10 minutes than once a week for 30 or 40 minutes. As your child gets older, he/she may be able to increase daily practice (10-15 minutes for 1st Grade, 15-20 minutes for 2nd and 3rd Graders). Parent involvement is necessary in the beginning and may be needed up to 3rd Grade. Please encourage your child to show you what he/she is learning everyday. Each day should review that week's material from class. The key to successful practice at this stage is a lot of repetition of the exercises and songs, with a neutral focus on maintaining the basics of good physical form. These basics will be enumerated in a "checklist" for each class. Of equal importance is helping your child remember both the instrument and music for each rehearsal period.

Students enrolled in the Instrumental Music Program perform in two large school Music Festivals a year. There are other opportunities for students to perform in a solo concert and an ensemble night. Students who are not enrolled in BPC's instrumental music program may also participate.

Physical Education

Coach, Michael Feferman

Physical Education at BPC encompasses three main objectives:

- ✏ Cognitive learning - this involves thinking, problem solving, creativity and brain-storming
- ✏ Affective learning - teamwork, motivation through social/psychological interaction
- ✏ Psychomotor - through practice, students will develop motor learning

Kindergarten and First Grade will participate in activities that help the acquisition and development of large motor skills. They will handle the ball, kick the ball, use targets for concentration, etc. They will gain finer large motor coordination in running, jumping, skipping, catching, and other activities designed by the P.E. teacher for this purpose. Activities will increase hand-eye coordination, balance and large and small muscle development.

Second Grade is introduced to sports. Games and activities that lead up to team sports are introduced for affective learning. This is the beginning of teamwork for students. Students will develop greater confidence in their own abilities and appreciate the contributions and efforts of others. They will learn good sportsmanship and fair play.

Third Grade is a follow-up to Second Grade activities. However, more fitness activities will be emphasized. Warm-up and cool-down exercises are incorporated with the lessons.

In Fourth and Fifth Grade, we emphasize technique for the year, such as the proper way to bat a ball, soccer skills, and volleyball. Cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning skills are discuss and emphasized. These students will also learn middle school activities. We will also focus on some basic gymnastics and some self-defense wrestling skills.

In addition to using basic sports equipment, children work through obstacle courses, use the play structure for pull-ups, use hula hoops, jump ropes, bowling games, a large parachute, seated scooters, hockey equipment, and mats for tumbling.

It is also a goal of physical education for students to enjoy physical activity and develop a life-long appreciation of sport for health and longevity.

Garden

Liza Malm, Teacher

The Garden Program is an extension of the Science Program and plays a key role in providing a hands-on practical laboratory for many subjects in Science as well as art, literature and history. All students participate in the garden by planting and harvesting. They also turn and sift the compost, make signs, and learn how to propagate plants. The Garden is mainly located behind the 4th/5th classrooms.

All students have two hours of gardening per month in the "Outdoor Classroom." K-5 classes begin with recording date, weather, temperature and rainfall in the class garden journal. The students have an opportunity to observe the ecosystems in the garden and learn to recognize the cycle of regeneration that exists in nature. The activities of the classes are always dictated by the garden; we do what needs to be done depending on the season.

We have been working with the curriculum "Botany on your plate" since the early drafts in 2001. As a volunteer at the U.C. Botanical Garden, Ms Malm had access early on to this program. The students are introduced to this curriculum in their firsts three years at BPC. By third grade, the study is intensified. Throughout the year they work in the classroom as well as the garden investigating and dissecting plants, and recording their observations in journals.

Recycling and Composting are also a part of the curriculum. Students are taught how to separate their trash into recyclable and compostable items, which they then practice at lunch. The "Four R's" are always a part of the curriculum: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot (composting).

Gardening continues in 6th– 8th grades in the garden on Upper School campus. The classes are divided into four group activities: Gardening Landscaping, Cooking and Composting. Students now work in individual journals recording: the date, weather, temperature and rainfall. They now use the metric system of measurement. Writing and drawing is part of their journal keeping. This work is part of their science grade. They use the same journal all three years and when they graduate, the journal is theirs to remind them of the important role they played in our school's environment.

Math Enrichment

Vera Balarin, Math Specialist

Black Pine Circle school values mathematics and teaches students the importance of mathematics in their daily lives. In addition to regular math lessons with the core teachers, students meet with a math specialist once a week.

The essential point of this program is to help students “make sense of mathematics” and to teach them to use it as a tool for reasoning and problem solving.

Problems that students solve are carefully crafted and they often come from children’s everyday lives. Students often work with a partner or in a small group setting where they can explore problems and craft solutions together. As a class, we discuss alternative strategies, and look for different solutions in an environment where it is safe to take risks. Problems are often ”open ended,” meaning that there is not only one correct answer. A goal is not to teach how to solve this or that kind of problem, but to foster a deep conceptual understanding of essential mathematical ideas and strategies.

Numbers are abstract for young children. Using manipulatives such as pattern blocks, teddy bears and scales helps young mathematicians get a better understanding of numbers and other mathematical concepts. As students get older, they start replacing concrete objects with models (e.g. drawings, graphs, tables, open number lines, function machines). With a use of models and carefully picked math puzzles and problems, students are introduced to some big algebraic ideas (e.g. variables, functions) and the door to abstract mathematics is starting to open for them. This is a big and important step for the students in the Lower School.

Throughout the year students work on different projects and explorations that link ideas and concepts from several strands of mathematics into an integrated whole. For example, they will design their dream clubhouse, and apply their knowledge about area and perimeter, and practice arithmetic with fraction and decimals. At the same time they will use their creativity and engineering skills. Younger students might simply do an inventory of their classroom library in order to build their counting skills, or use origami paper to make symmetrical designs. These project are often integrated with art, technology, science and Spanish programs.

Reports and Conferences

Reports

There are two written reports each year, one for each semester. The student's head teacher will include a summary of the material covered during the term, a paragraph that describes the student's achievement and progress, and suggestions on how to help the student improve in a particular area. In addition, most specialists write a one page report that also summarizes the term's curriculum, and the child's progress is conveyed both with a rubric of desired skills and behaviors and a short written evaluation.

Teacher-Parent Conferences

There are also two half-hour conferences each year for parents to meet with their child's classroom teacher. This will be an opportunity for both teacher and parents to express the successes, concerns and needs for the child. The conferences will focus on both the academic and social accomplishments of the child. Recommendations may include additional support from home, an observation from either the Learning Specialist or the School Psychologist, tutoring assistance for remedial work or outside testing, if needed. Teachers are also available via phone conferencing and email for any concerns parents may have.