



BLACK PINE CIRCLE SCHOOL

A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Black Pine Circle School

Lower School Curriculum Guide

2015-2016

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Mission Statement & School Philosophy

Black Pine Circle School's mission is to create a learning community that encourages humanity, empathy, moral depth, cultural understanding, and freedom in intellectual pursuits. Educationally, it is our goal to create intellectually vibrant people and inspire independent thinkers, who will never lose their passion for learning, their delight in research, and their involvement in cultural pursuits.

Black Pine Circle School's teaching philosophy is best described as Socratic. This is a system of learning based on inquiry, questioning, exploration, and discovery. This student-centered drawing out of ideas minimizes competitiveness and makes learning personally relevant, motivating students to acquire knowledge and skills for their own sake. By researching in depth the hypotheses they have themselves derived, they will "own" the knowledge they receive and retain it for a lifetime, especially when it is reinforced by an interdisciplinary focus which integrates academics with music, drama and visual arts.

Socially, it is our goal to instill mutual respect, compassion, and tolerance among our students. Our faculty is dedicated to creating a supportive structure and a warm, loving atmosphere in which children can safely address concerns and grow in their understanding of themselves and others.

Our Core Values

Four words are used to describe ideas that are important to everyone who spends their days at Black Pine Circle School:

Curiosity

We know that our most essential duty as educators is to protect, nurture, and inspire the curiosity that is inherent in young children.

Community

We also believe that we are charged with helping young people understand their role in the small community that is their classroom at Black Pine Circle School, their larger communities (clubs neighborhoods, etc.), and the world community. Our curriculum and school mission reflect this commitment to community.

Inquiry

The process of education is about learning how to form questions. Socratic inquiry-based learning is the drawing out of ideas around a topic toward a conclusion or further questions. It involves using students' prior knowledge to develop and test hypotheses, examine the possibilities, and make meaning.

Voice

Each day at Black Pine Circle School, students engage in the creative arts: music, visual representations, drama and dance. All of these creative expressions lead to self-discovery, greater self-confidence, cultural understandings, and new strength as communicators. Young people need to be heard, to be listened to, to be encouraged to develop a "voice" in the classroom setting, and to be helped to communicate effectively when navigating friendship/social issues.

Kindergarten

We believe that learning social skills is the foundation for social and academic success. Therefore, social skills are an important part of the kindergarten curriculum. 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 we learn about the importance of respect and kindness in a community.

Academic Focus

Our goal in kindergarten is to provide students a strong foundation from which they can grow to become active participants in lifelong learning. In kindergarten, students 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, to 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, 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 specific 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 integrated with many of the themes studied throughout the year. Art is primarily taught in small groups. Students use art to tell stories and to express their own individuality. We use a large variety of art media 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 books, write stories, learn about the legend of Johnny Appleseed, 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 varieties.

Kindergarten Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Music
- ⇒ Violin/Cello
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Science Enrichment
- ⇒ Conflict Resolution
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Library
- ⇒ Spanish (project-based)
- ⇒ Math Enrichment

Kindergarten Sample Daily Schedule

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------|
| 8:30 | Arrival | 12:00 | Lunch/ Recess |
| 8:45 | Morning Meeting | 12:45 | Violin/Cello |
| 9:15 | Language Arts | 1:30 | Story Time |
| 10:00 | Recess/ Snack | 1:45 | Centers |
| 10:20 | Music | 2:15 | Closing Circle |
| 10:45 | Math | 2:30 | Dismissal |
| 11:30 | P.E. | | |

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

Social Studies

- ⇒ Spring and winter holidays
- ⇒ All about me
- ⇒ Conflict resolution
- ⇒ Thanksgiving
- ⇒ Presidents and national symbols
- ⇒ Mapping and geography
- ⇒ Social skills & character education

First Grade

First graders continue to build on the skills they learned in kindergarten. We create a positive environment where children feel comfortable expressing themselves and enjoy the process of learning. In keeping with the philosophy of Socratic practice, 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 in different groupings, including small groups, partnerships, and teacher-led 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 they 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 and to 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: the study of the Earth's continents introduces 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, traditions, and the lifestyles 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 might map a city (Berkeley), inside a state (California), inside a country (the United States), inside a continent (North America). The students use concentric circles again to learn the make-up of the Earth: inner core, outer core, mantle, and crust. They use patterning to note these areas are solid, liquid, solid, with a break in the pattern (crust being a solid with pockets of liquid). The children work with colored clay to make models of the inside of the Earth. They learn a song to help them remember the countries in North America, discuss the symbolism of countries' flags, and make their own personal flags to represent their own strengths and personality traits.

First Grade Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Math Enrichment
- ⇒ Music
- ⇒ Science Enrichment
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Library
- ⇒ Violin/Cello
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Art
- ⇒ Spanish (project-based)

First Grade Sample Daily Schedule

- 8:45 - Morning Meeting
- 9:15 - Reading
- 10:00 - Recess
- 10:20 - Word Work
- 10:45 - Music
- 11:15 - Science
- 12:00 - Lunch
- 12:45 - Quiet Time
- 1:00 - Math
- 1:45 - Writing
- 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 and 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

- ⇒ Earth in space
- ⇒ Habitats, adaptations and lifecycles
- ⇒ Antarctic and Arctic Animals
- ⇒ Seeds, plants, trees
- ⇒ Rainforest and ecology
- ⇒ Ocean animals

Social Studies

- ⇒ Conflict resolution
- ⇒ Rights and responsibilities
- ⇒ Geography: 7 continents
- ⇒ Building cultural understanding through the study of celebrations, music, dance, art and customs of people from different countries

Second Grade

In second grade, students continue to develop self-reliance, forge friendships, and 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 and 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 academic focus in the second grade is on the development of students' skills, competence, and self-assurance as learners. 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' ability to order and interpret their world. Looking for patterns, making generalizations, logic and reasoning, and problem solving are emphasized, as is 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, social studies, and art. 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 put them in sequence on a timeline. They create pictorial autobiographies, differentiating between physical traits and character traits. They survey their classmates and make graphs to indicate favorites. Students make a book about family members, which includes a family tree.

Second Grade Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Spanish
- ⇒ Vocal Music
- ⇒ Violin/Cello
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Math Enrichment
- ⇒ Art
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Library
- ⇒ Science Enrichment

Second Grade Sample Daily Schedule

- 8:45 - Morning Meeting
- 9:15 - Science/Social Studies
- 10:00 - Recess
- 10:20 - Readers Workshop
- 11:20 - Music
- 12:00 - Lunch and Recess
- 12:45 - Read Aloud
- 1:00 - Math
- 1:45 - P.E.
- 2:15 - Violin/Cello/Writing
- 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

- ⇒ Estimation
- ⇒ Identifying missing elements in number sentences
- ⇒ Coordinate graphs

Science/Social Studies

- ⇒ Our family history and autobiography
- ⇒ Bay Area history
- ⇒ Maps and ships
- ⇒ Explorers and trade
- ⇒ Hypothesizing
- ⇒ Rocks, fossils, dinosaurs, resources
- ⇒ American history and government
- ⇒ Habitats and animals
- ⇒ Life cycles and food chains
- ⇒ Plants, insects, and farming

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

Third Grade

Community is an important aspect of third grade. We strive to create an environment where students feel accepted and respected. Community-building activities are emphasized in the beginning of the year and incorporated into various lessons throughout the year to promote each student's sense of significance and belonging in the classroom. Students are encouraged to show kindness and respect for each other and to take care of our learning environment.

Academic Focus

In reading, the students work together as a whole class, as well as 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 study writing mechanics through activities embedded in our reading and stand-alone lessons.

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, and "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 emphasis in third grade is on fostering deep conceptual understanding of essential mathematical ideas, strategies, and models. Throughout the units of study, the mathematics curriculum promotes reasoning, the development of problem solving strategies, and creative and logical thinking. All students engage in mathematical thinking, problem solving, and skill building through whole-class lessons and discussions, group activities and games, and individual work. The curriculum allows for a varied and differentiated learning experience as students engage in Socratic reasoning lessons, hands-on exploration, and independent skill practice.

Integrated Studies

Third grade students study community and government by exploring 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 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. In our study of ancient Egypt, for example, students learn the importance of mummification as they mummify fish, 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.

Third Grade Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Spanish
- ⇒ Vocal Music
- ⇒ Art
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Science Enrichment
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Library
- ⇒ Orchestra
- ⇒ Math Enrichment

Third Grade Sample Daily Schedule

- 8:45 - Morning
- 9:15 - Math
- 10:20 - Recess
- 10:40 - Spanish
- 11:25 - Language Arts

- 11:55 - Music
- 12:25 - Lunch/Recess
- 1:15 - Science
- 2:25 - Orchestra/Independent Learning
- 3:00 - Dismissal

Third Grade Units

Reading and Language Arts

- ⇒ Sustained silent reading
- ⇒ Response to literature
- ⇒ Oral reading
- ⇒ Paired reading
- ⇒ Brainstorming/graphic organization
- ⇒ Revising
- ⇒ Editing (grammar, spelling, punctuation)
- ⇒ Listening and discussing
- ⇒ Story sequencing
- ⇒ Poems
- ⇒ Creative writing
- ⇒ Story illustration
- ⇒ Writing mechanics
- ⇒ Vocabulary development
- ⇒ Cursive handwriting
- ⇒ Book Reports
- ⇒ Dramatic presentations

Science

- ⇒ Forces
- ⇒ Simple machines
- ⇒ Moon phases/astronomy
- ⇒ Experimental design
- ⇒ Light, optics, and vision
- ⇒ Decomposition and mummification

Math

- ⇒ Word problems
- ⇒ Number sense: place value, ordering numbers, skip counting, rounding to six digits
- ⇒ Addition and subtraction to four digits, across zeroes
- ⇒ Time: telling time to on a standard clock
- ⇒ Money: estimating money amounts
- ⇒ Measurement: including length, area, and volume
- ⇒ Geometry: plane and solid figures, congruence and symmetry, perimeter, and area
- ⇒ Fractions: parts of a whole, equivalent fractions, fractional parts of a set
- ⇒ Problem solving strategies
- ⇒ Collecting, organizing, and displaying data
- ⇒ Multiplication
- ⇒ Division
- ⇒ Use of manipulatives
- ⇒ Spatial skills

Social Studies

- ⇒ Native Americans, Japan, Egypt
- ⇒ Land resources
- ⇒ Community & government
- ⇒ Conflict resolution
- ⇒ State reports

Fourth Grade

In fourth grade, students begin their transition to independence in learning. Students become more confident about their ideas and are increasingly able to contribute to discussions in a way that builds on others' contributions. They learn to be objective about their work so that they can critique it themselves and accept suggestions from teachers and peers positively. They begin to reflect on their own learning and advocate for their needs, both in school and at home. They begin to practice important long-term planning skills. They are now able to take their conflict resolution skills to a higher level as they begin to understand the roots of conflict, and to respect the needs and views of others.

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 begin to analyze historical motivation and use critical judgment about the needs and contexts of other cultures and times. Fourth graders also learn to generate ideas for their own creative and expository writing, select and narrow their topics, and then develop them with related and interesting details.

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, our focus is on problem solving and developing concepts. Students learn to value the process of solving problems along with the results, and they can articulate their reasoning and evaluate their mistakes.

Integrated Studies

The fourth grade reading and social studies curricula are highly integrated. California's history provides the context for many types of lessons, helping students understand how to apply thinking skills from different disciplines to the same subject of study. Through reading both historical fiction and non-fiction research materials, we investigate Native Californian cultures and follow their transformation during successive periods of Spanish, Mexican, and American governance. We study California geography to determine environmental reasons for the patterns of mission settlement, and simultaneously discuss religious and political motivations for exploration and settlement. In their first introduction to primary source research, students explore the perspectives of different immigrant groups and their reasons for coming to California. When we visit nearby Mission Dolores and tour contemporary murals in the Mission District, we consider the lasting cultural impact of the Spanish missionaries and the present-day cultural diversity of our Bay Area communities. Other field trips to the Marin Headlands, Petaluma Adobe, and the Oakland Museum further reinforce topics from plate tectonics, to life on a Mexican Rancho, to the cultural, environmental, and political effects of the Gold Rush. In the largest hands-on project of the year, students use skills developed in art, social studies, and writing classes to research, build and present a whole-class model of a composite Spanish Mission.

Fourth Grade Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Spanish
- ⇒ Music
- ⇒ Science Enrichment
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Math Enrichment
- ⇒ Art
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Library

Fourth Grade Sample Schedule

- 8:45 - Morning Meeting
- 9:10 - Reading
- 9:40 - Music
- 10:20 - Recess
- 10:40 - Social Studies
- 11:30 - Writing
- 12:25 - Lunch
- 1:15 - Spanish
- 2:00 - Math
- 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

- ⇒ Rocks, minerals and the rock cycle
- ⇒ Atomic structure
- ⇒ Electricity
- ⇒ Ecology
- ⇒ Nutrition
- ⇒ The story of food

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

- ⇒ Native Californians
- ⇒ Spanish settlement
- ⇒ Immigration to our state
- ⇒ The Mexican/Rancho era
- ⇒ The Gold Rush
- ⇒ Statehood
- ⇒ California geography: land regions and environments
- ⇒ European explorers

Fifth Grade

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 their transition to the Upper School, 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 teachers and parents, and more on themselves, and to take advantage of the 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. Black Pine Circle School 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 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. If 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. Students use computers to conduct research, publish poetry, and take virtual historical tours on the Internet. During the Science Fair, we use our Writers' Workshop time to work on the written parts of our projects and learn the characteristics of good scientific writing.

Fifth Grade Specialist/Enrichment Classes

To read about our specialist classes, please visit the “Specialists” section of this booklet.

- ⇒ Art
- ⇒ Music
- ⇒ Physical Education
- ⇒ Gardening
- ⇒ Spanish
- ⇒ Science Enrichment
- ⇒ Library
- ⇒ Math Enrichment

Fifth Grade Sample Schedule

- 8:45 - Morning Meeting
- 9:10 - Reading & Writing
- 10:20 - Recess
- 10:40 – Physical Education
- 11:10 - Grammar/Language
- 11:40 - History
- 12:25 - Lunch/Recess
- 1:15 - Spanish
- 2:00 - Math
- 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, grammar, usage, and mechanics
- ⇒ Language topics
- ⇒ Usage-homophones

Science

- ⇒ Atoms, elements and properties of matter
- ⇒ Experimental design
- ⇒ Science Fair project
- ⇒ SF Bay watershed
- ⇒ Human development

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 & the American Revolution
- ⇒ The Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- ⇒ Frontier and Westward Expansion/The War of 1812
- ⇒ Pre-Civil War Conditions, Civil War, life after the Civil War

Art

Kindergarten through Fourth Grade Art

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 cultivate 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 artistic traditions from around the world. We draw from many cultures with the intention of connecting to people through discovering our similarities and differences, learning new techniques, enriching our experience, and inspiring creative thought.

We follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum depending on the grade and interests of the students. We also use a spiral curriculum: each year we return to certain concepts and techniques, representing what we see through self-portraits, still life drawings, figure drawings, garden watercolors, and sculpture, to name a few. Throughout their years at BPC, students continue to deepen their understanding of key concepts by building upon their previous experiences.

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
- ⇒ Printmaking
- ⇒ Weaving
- ⇒ Perspective drawing
- ⇒ Sculpture
- ⇒ Collage and decoupage
- ⇒ Still life studies
- ⇒ Portraits and self portraits
- ⇒ Artistic Movements (i.e. expressionism, cubism, etc.)
- ⇒ Individual artists (Kahlo, Van Gogh, Kandinsky, etc.)

Fifth through Eighth Grade Art

The goal of the fifth grade and 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.

A main project for sixth graders is to study an artist of their choice, write a report on the artist, and make a piece of work in the style of that artist. The project culminates in an oral presentation to the class. The wealth of knowledge gained is built upon in seventh and eighth grades.

Students are required to keep sketchbooks as a place to express themselves and practice/plan projects, as well as to 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, for example, to watch a special show, make a few sketches, look up an artist online, or visit a museum exhibit.

Projects 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 Exhibit in late May/early June.

Gardening/Outdoor Curriculum

The gardening program is an extension of the science curriculum 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 fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

All students have at least one hour of gardening per month in the “outdoor classroom.” Each class begins with students recording the date, weather, temperature, and rainfall in the class garden journal. The students have an opportunity to observe the ecosystems in the garden, and they learn to recognize the cycle of regeneration that exists in nature. The activities of each class are always dictated by the garden; we do what needs to be done depending on the season.

We have been working with the *Botany on Your Plate* curriculum since early 2001. The students are introduced to this curriculum in kindergarten and work with it throughout the grades. Students work in the classroom as well as the garden, investigating, identifying, and dissecting plants, and recording their observations in journals. By fifth grade, students have a deep understanding of the botany of the plants we eat on a daily basis.

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 get to practice at lunch. The “four R’s” are always a part of the curriculum: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot (composting).

Gardening continues in sixth through eighth grades in the garden on the 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 are also part of their journal keeping, and this work is part of their overall science grade. Students 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 Black Pine Circle School’s outdoor environment.

Library

Our library program supports and promotes student reading and a lifelong love of books. All students will be exposed to literature through storytelling, book talks, and author readings. Books will be celebrated and 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 reviews 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, or even just talking one-on-one with the librarians about a favorite book.

Math Enrichment

Black Pine Circle School values mathematics and teaches students the importance of mathematics in their daily lives. The essential point of this program is to help students make sense of mathematics and to teach them to use math as a tool for reasoning and problem solving. Throughout the school year, the core teachers and the math specialist collaborate on developing and teaching math units as well as providing support and challenges when needed.

Math problems are carefully crafted for students' age and skill levels, and many of them come from children's everyday lives. Students often work with a partner or in a small group setting, where they can explore problems and find solutions together. As a class, the students 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 may be more than one correct answer. The goal is 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 achieve a better understanding of numbers and other mathematical concepts. As students get older, we replace concrete objects with models (e.g. drawings, graphs, tables, open number lines, and function machines). With the use of models and carefully chosen math puzzles and problems, students are introduced to some big algebraic ideas (e.g. variables, and functions) and the door to abstract mathematics begins to open for them. This is a big and important step for 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. These projects are often integrated with art, technology, and science.

Music in the Classroom

Kindergarten through Third Grade

Music has always been an important aspect of Black Pine Circle School, where 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 the Winter Concert and the Spring Concert, in talent shows, and for the annual Generations Day assembly.

The primary objective of the kindergarten through third grade music classes is to create a fun and challenging atmosphere in which students receive a strong foundation in basic musical concepts through participation, listening, and cooperation. Incorporating elements from both the Kodály and Orff teaching methods, students in these grades will all be participating in singing, rhythm, movement, and the use of instruments. Singing games, chants, body movement, and percussion help to develop a sense of rhythm and coordination. 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 is on using circle dances, line dances and, for third grade, beginning square dance.

Fourth and Fifth Grades

In the fourth and fifth grades, students continue to sing, play, move, listen, and create, continuing to build a sequenced set of musical skills. More emphasis is placed on reading and writing standard music notation, using both Kodály and Orff pedagogies, in order to increase their fluency with recognizing notes on the staff, rhythmic values, and Italian terms.

Proper vocal production is developed through body awareness and singing in unison, in canon, with descants, ostinati, and in parts. Students prepare choral repertoire, which often also includes instrument playing and movement, to perform at the Winter and Spring Concerts, and they may also share their music at other events such as Generations Day. Students in third through fifth grades also have the opportunity to join the voluntary Lower School Chorus, which meets Mondays at lunch, to prepare songs for fun and performance.

Studying the recorder gives fourth and fifth grade students another practical application for the reading, breathing, and phrasing skills we work on during singing. Emphasis is placed on learning recorder fingerings, developing the ability to sight-read notes, playing with accurate articulation, and using rehearsal time well, which includes disciplined home practice.

In fifth grade, students enhance their critical thinking skills and their understanding of different types of music. They spend more time listening to masterworks from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods, and they 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.

Music, Instrumental

Kindergarten through Third Grade Strings Program & Fourth through Eighth Grade Orchestra and Band

Instrumental instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade, 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 (second and third grade) or Advanced Orchestra & Beginning Band (starting at fourth 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 strings program for kindergarten through third grade is a pull-out program on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons during independent activity time in students' regular classrooms. The kindergarten and first grade program is open to beginners. The Junior Orchestra is for second and third graders and is open to students who have had Beginning Strings in kindergarten and first grade, or who have had private lessons. Band and the Advanced Orchestra meet before or after school and are open to students of all levels third grade and up 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. 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 or she may be able to increase daily practice (10-15 minutes for first grade, 15-20 minutes for second and third graders). Parent involvement is necessary in the beginning and may be needed up to third grade. 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. Of equal importance is helping children remember both the instrument and music for each rehearsal period.

Students enrolled in the instrumental music program perform in two all-school music concerts per 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 in those concerts.

Physical Education (P.E.)

Physical education in the Lower School at Black Pine Circle School encompasses three main objectives:

- ⇒ Cognitive learning: games and activities that involve thinking, problem solving, creativity and brainstorming
- ⇒ Affective learning: team work and social-psychological interaction
- ⇒ Psychomotor coordination: through practice, students will develop balance and hand-eye coordination and integrate motor learning skills.

Kindergarten and first grade students will participate in activities that help develop large motor skills through running, jumping, skipping, catching, etc. They will gain finer large motor coordination as they learn to handle the ball, kick the ball, use targets for concentration, and participate in other activities designed for this purpose. All activities will increase hand-eye coordination, balance, and large and small muscle development.

In second grade, students are introduced to different sports. Games and activities that lead up to team sports are introduced for affective learning, which is the beginning of team work. Students will develop greater confidence in their own abilities and appreciate the contributions and efforts of others as they learn good sportsmanship and fair play.

Third grade builds on second grade activities with further emphasis on fitness activities. Warm-up and cool-down exercises are incorporated into class time.

In fourth and fifth grades, we emphasize the refinement of techniques, such as the proper way to bat a softball, dribble and pass a soccer ball, and use a hockey stick. The game of volleyball is also introduced. Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning skills are discussed and emphasized. These students will also learn middle school-level activities, as we focus on some basic gymnastics and self-defense wrestling skills.

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

It is one of our main goals in physical education that students learn to love physical activity and develop a lifelong appreciation of sport for health, enjoyment, and longevity.

Science Enrichment

Touch it, draw it, build it, grow it, watch it, push it, mix it, make it fly as high as you can, and do it one more time! Sensory exploration of the physical world is at the heart of science learning in Black Pine Circle's Lower School, while important science process skills are carefully integrated into each lesson and scaffolded across grade levels.

General Objectives and Content

At BPC, we strive for a science curriculum that helps students expand their natural sense of curiosity and wonder and engages them in contemporary scientific practices. At each grade level, we use a combination of content-specific lessons and cross-cutting concepts to build and reinforce important science skills. Content is taught primarily through age-appropriate, hands-on investigation, and it often supports cross-curricular learning with other subject areas. Skills introduced at each grade level are reinforced and built upon in subsequent years.

Kindergarten units may include: human biology (sensory, skeletal and digestive systems), properties and changes in matter (solids, liquids, and gasses), magnets, natural and manmade substances, weather, insect biology, ecology, and comparison of flowering plants, fungi and ferns. In kindergarten we focus on skills like observing & communicating, comparing, predicting, and using computational thinking.

First grade units may include: composition of the Earth, leaves, animal adaptations for survival in Antarctica, mirrors, reflections and symmetry, insect diversity, seeds, rainforest plants, fish. In first grade we focus on skills like measuring and making & using models.

Second grade units include: physical forces, pushes and pulls, the solar system, properties of liquids, plants and their uses, characteristics of living things, tools of science, comparisons of animal and plant life cycles, insect behavior, and farm animals. In second grade, we focus on skills like classifying and asking questions.

Third grade units may include: physical forces (gravity, friction and air resistance), simple machines, vision, phases of the moon, the ecology of decomposition and mummification, and the connections between light, color, and heat. In third grade, we focus on skills like constructing explanations and obtaining, evaluating, and interpreting data.

Fourth grade units may include: rocks and minerals, the rock cycle, atoms, electricity, food webs and ecological relationships, and where our food comes from. In fourth grade, we focus on analyzing and interpreting data.

Fifth grade units may include: the nature of science and experimental design, BPC Science Fair projects, water conservation, and San Francisco Bay watershed ecology. In fifth grade, we focus on planning and carrying out science investigations.

Spanish

The goals of the Lower School Spanish program are to expose our students to the Spanish language and to encourage exploration of Hispanic cultures. The primary method of instruction used to promote language acquisition in our classes is Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). This method is based on providing comprehensible input, consisting of various listening and reading activities that are repetitive and can be easily understood by every learner. In the early grades, students build confidence with listening comprehension, then beginning in third, fourth and fifth grades students are given more opportunities to foster reading, speaking and writing skills. Cultural activities from Spain, Mexico, and many Latin American countries are also a focus, bringing a global awareness to the classroom and reflecting the school's commitment to the appreciation of different cultures from around the world.

Kindergarten and First Grade

During the first two years, the Spanish specialist collaborates with the classroom teachers to integrate elements of the Spanish language and Hispanic culture into their classroom studies. Stories, songs, and games are common activities used to introduce basic greetings, sounds, colors, and numbers, and to gain understanding of holidays and traditions that are important within Spanish-speaking countries.

Second Through Fifth Grades

In second, third, fourth and fifth grades, students participate in weekly lessons led by the Spanish specialist. Total Physical Response (TPR) activities, storytelling, story-asking, personalized questions, and skits are used, in combination with songs, games, and art-projects, to develop their skills. Each year more of the class time is conducted in Spanish. Students' skills are assessed and their knowledge is applied by showing understanding of the key structures from class and by telling and writing stories completely in Spanish.

Common areas of focus throughout all grades:

- ⇒ Greetings and introductions
- ⇒ Numbers 1-1000 and telling time
- ⇒ Colors
- ⇒ Days of the week and months of the year
- ⇒ Themes such as food, animals, feelings, family, and body parts, weather, school, clothing and household objects
- ⇒ The alphabet and letter sounds
- ⇒ Common verbs and commands
- ⇒ Interrogative words
- ⇒ Gender agreement
- ⇒ Personal and possessive pronouns
- ⇒ Latin American geography and maps
- ⇒ Cultural events: Independence Days, Días de los Muertos, Las Posadas, Los Tres Reyes Magos, Cinco de Mayo, and Cesar Chavez Day

Reports & 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 area where improvement is needed. In addition, most specialists write a one-page report that summarizes the term's curriculum, and the child's progress is conveyed through both a rubric of desired skills and behaviors and a short written evaluation.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

There are also two half-hour conferences each year during which parent(s) meet with their child's classroom teacher. This will be an opportunity for both teacher and parent(s) to express the successes, concerns and needs of 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, and tutoring assistance for remedial work or outside testing, if needed. Teachers are also available via phone or email for any concerns parents may have.