

Kindergarten Curriculum

The BNS Kindergarten Program offers a variety of avenues for students to reach the 5 major academic goals listed below. Additionally, the program is focused on creating a learning environment in the classroom that reflects a kind, cooperative community and that promotes emotional health. The children work together to share resources, resolve conflicts, build trust, and articulate experiences. This helps to create a classroom climate that encourages children to take responsible academic and social risks.

The 5 major academic goals of the BNS Kindergarten Program are to have all students:

1. beginning to read and write independently by the end of the school year.
2. demonstrating a comfortable familiarity with the elements of math including addition and subtraction.
3. understanding how to systematically pursue an idea or question.
4. telling sequential stories of past and present events.
5. developing a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward school and learning.

Please keep in mind that the skills listed throughout the curriculum span over the course of the school year and that different students will begin the development of particular skills at different times. Also, for students that are ready, further-reaching goals will be developed as soon as appropriate.

Calendar Time

The Red Room students begin their day on the carpet together. Calendar time provides the opportunity to become reacquainted with each other and oriented to the day in relation to the calendar and number of days in school—a daily mini math lesson routine. It also allows students the opportunity to practice the sign-language alphabet and ASL word signs, to enjoy different letter sounds and rhymes, to review the day's schedule, to practice reading a classmate's "story," and to receive information about the day's activities. The following skills are developed and reinforced during this time:

- reviewing days of the week
- reviewing months of the year
- identifying numbers on the calendar
- counting the days in school; considering odd vs even
- relating counting to place value
- listening to peers
- waiting and being patient
- speaking to the class with increasing confidence
- speaking in complete thoughts and sentences with descriptive vocabulary
- learning the sign-language alphabet, as well as many ASL word/number signs
- noticing letter sounds (beginning and ending consonant sounds; long and short vowel sounds)
- identifying rhyming words/patterns
- following oral directions
- asking questions
- focusing attention
- being still and quiet during "silent seconds"
- counting by 10s and 5s (later in the year)

Literacy

Reading and Writing

During reading time students rotate through the following learning centers (a.k.a. “Station Rotations”): Small Group Instruction with T.J., Quiet Reading (sustained independent reading; reading = reading the pictures, reading the words, or retelling the story to self), Fine Motor Work (pre-handwriting work, illustrating, cutting, etc.) and Math Tickets (a brief practice), and Journal Writing (with eventual goal of writing complete sentences). These rotations typically occur four days each week—Mondays through Thursdays. The “Math Ticket” (a brief practice of single digit addition/subtraction) is often added in the winter.

Each student will read in a small group (about 4 students) with T.J. four days per week. They are grouped according to similarity in reading/pre-reading style and experience. Materials for this instruction include letter strips; cvc (consonant-vowel-consonant; e.g. “cat”) word cards; Bob Books and other phonetically based early readers; easy readers of all kinds; toy-letter matching games, hand bell practice, sight word cards; and class- or teacher-made books, stories, songs, and poems. Some activities are guided by the Words Their Way and/or Sounds Sensible (S.P.I.R.E.S.) programs. The following skills are developed and reinforced during reading activities:

- recognizing and matching capital/upper and lower case letters
- associating pictures with written words
- practicing left to right orientation
- understanding the concept of sequence
- identifying letter sounds
- isolating and identifying the initial and final consonant sounds of words
- blending individual letter sounds into word sounds
- learning basic sight words
- recognizing basic punctuation
- developing look-ahead skills while playing hand bells
- for some: more fluent reading and comprehension activities

The class will also engage in group lessons and story activities from time to time in which the students read “big books” or other stories together, play a group game, enjoy a “draw and write” activity, sing songs that stress phonemic awareness, or discuss a particular reading strategy. When listening to stories students will often be asked to identify characters and setting and to retell the story with attention to the sequence of beginning, middle, and end. They will also consider responses to questions of Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

Students engage in writing activities on a regular basis—often as part of Station Rotations. As they become ready, students will be guided to write words related to their illustrations. Some students will be ready to begin using basic (noun, verb) sentence structure. In all writing activities, students will be encouraged to “listen” for the sounds of words and write the corresponding consonant and vowel sounds. Such “invented” spelling (or “temporary spelling”) is phonetic in nature and allows students to freely express themselves through writing. In later years at BNS they will refine spelling both naturally—as they become fluent readers; and systematically—through word study and direct spelling instruction. Early in the fall, students will receive a practice booklet for the proper letter formation of the letters in their first name. Late in the fall, the students will receive additional direction with regards to proper letter formation (for all letters) through Zaner-Bloser K level handwriting workbook activities. The following skills are developed and reinforced during our writing activities:

- recognizing letters and letter sounds
- recognizing beginning, middle, and ending sounds in words
- writing and sounding out basic cvc words
- identifying short and long vowel sounds in words
- using basic sight words in writing
- including the use of nouns and verbs
- placing a space between words
- placing a period at the end of a sentence
- recognizing and utilizing digraphs such as ch, sh, th
- recognizing and utilizing vowel patters such as silent e, y, and other vowel combinations
- writing the letters in both upper and lower case (when ready)
- producing a book for the spring Authors' Tea

Mathematics

Math is incorporated into many subject areas throughout the day—particularly during every morning’s “calendar time” and during scheduled “math times.” BNS utilizes the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project curriculum, Everyday Mathematics, for grades K-4, in addition to other math resources. Students receive direct group instruction on sequential mathematical concepts (listed below). They will have an opportunity to explore these concepts through conversation, literature, manipulatives, and practice pages. These concepts are further reinforced with particular math games, puzzles, and other manipulatives. During math “drills,” students experience fun ways to put certain “math facts” to memory (e.g. number recognition, counting by 10’s, some basic addition facts, etc.). The following skills are developed and reinforced during math activities:

- recognizing and producing patterns and classifications (sorting, collecting)
- identifying basic 2-dimensional (flat) shapes
- developing familiarity with daily calendar concepts (day of week, month, year)
- utilizing 1:1 correspondence
- understanding numbers 1 to 20, and later 1 to 100 (reading, counting, matching)
- writing numbers 1 to 100
- learning to count up and down for “one more” and “one less”
- counting by 10’s and by 5’s
- adding and subtracting with manipulatives
- representing number stories with number sentences/models
- showing different ways to combine numbers to make the same sum
- identifying missing addends
- computing addition and subtraction problems with numbers 1 to 20
- decomposing “teen” numbers into a group of 10 ones and “x” more ones
- describing length and weight
- sorting by a given attribute
- identifying basic 3-dimensional (solid) shapes
- drawing 2-dimensional shapes
- building 2- and 3-dimensional shapes

In addition to the above concepts kindergartners will be introduced to concepts related to measuring, graphing, telling time to the hour, identifying coin values, and understanding fraction concepts of whole, half, and quarter.

Science, Social Studies, and Theme Activities

Many of the weeklong learning themes will be enhanced by science and social studies activities. Occasional field trips, educational videos, and guest speaker presentations further extend these subject areas.

Key concepts for the science program include:

- Who, What, Where, When, Why, How questions
- predictions, observations, conclusions
- change
- color creation
- five senses
- human body
- nutrition
- seasons
- patterns of weather
- plant growth
- animal growth
- prehistoric animals
- shadows
- magnets
- relative size and weight
- position and speed
- water forms of solid, liquid, and gas
- float/sink
- ecology and “reduce, reuse, recycle”
- the earth in space

Key concepts for the social studies program include:

- self
- knowledge of full name, parents’ names; possibly a street name and a phone number
- families
- social responsibilities (taking turns, sharing, listening, communicating)
- community service providers
- ecology and environment
- history and geography
- U.S. government
- money and economics
- important people of the past
- important groups of people in history (e.g. Native American cultures)
- maps
- the 7 continents
- transportation
- inventors and inventions
- consideration of another’s perspective and experience

Additional Subjects

Kindergarten students at BNS also receive regular instruction in **Art, Spanish, Physical Education, and Music**. These subjects are taught by specialists who are employed by BNS. More information regarding the curricula for these classes is available on the school’s website: www.blacksburgnewschool.org and via the blogs and websites for those subjects.

Play

When weather permits, the kindergartners receive a 30-minute recess following snack time and a 45-minute recess following lunch time every day. They also enjoy daily play-time indoors during “Center Time.”

Rest and Reading

Students are read to on a regular basis. In the afternoons the Red Roomers rest on assigned towel mats while listening to “chapter books” or other literature. “Rest and Reading” is often a favorite time of day for the children as they enjoy resting and creating images evoked by significant works in children’s literature.

Assessment

Both formal and informal assessments are conducted throughout the year. Informal assessments include ongoing observation, discussions, and anecdotal record-keeping during times of academic and social skill development. Formal assessments include the Houghton Mifflin Leveled Reading Assessment (for reading) and the Everyday Mathematics Assessment Handbook (for math). These formal assessments are conducted at the beginning (September/October), middle (January/February), and end (May) of the year. Parent-teacher conferences are held three times during the school year (October, February, and May) to discuss the each child’s progress. A formal written evaluation is presented at the end of the school year and reviewed in the May parent-teacher conference.