CHARLES RIVER SCHOOL
DEEPER UNDERSTANDING, HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN/KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

Our multiage PreK/K was developed to provide students ages four through six with a play-based, nurturing, and collaborative community, where children are celebrated and respected for their individuality. Students who begin the program in PreK spend two years with our PreK/K teaching team, ensuring continuous academic and social growth. Our program is also designed to welcome new students in the Kindergarten year, integrating them into our classroom community and tailoring our program to fit each child's needs.

Our thematic curricula alternate biennially between the overarching themes of "Perceptions" (Year A) and "Reflections" (Year B). Within each thematic curriculum, our students explore subjects rich with opportunities for hands-on learning and play, and full of content that is meaningful and accessible for each child. Within any given year, teachers develop and adjust curriculum content to meet the interests and passions of our students.

Two classroom co-teachers work as a team to meet each child's individual developmental needs, with consistent and ongoing observation, assessment, and support. Core subject areas of Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science are integrated meaningfully into each of our themes. PreK/K students also regularly go to "Specials," where they explore Art, Music and Spanish, P.E., Technology, and Library.

In order to ensure that our students meet curriculum standards and develop necessary skills within our thematic, play-based approach to learning, teachers draw on developmentally appropriate scope and sequence in each subject area.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Literacy is taught in the context of children's explorations, investigations, communications, and background knowledge, otherwise known as *the inquiry process*. In our multiage, constructivist classroom, both reading and writing are tools in learning literacy. Student ownership of the process is at the heart of reading instruction, and skill instruction and exploration are adjusted to correspond to the developmental readiness for each individual child. The multiage environment plays a role in all language arts instruction, as early readers model communication skills, vocabulary, and literacy skills that benefit less experienced students. Every day children engage in literature through the

inquiry process, participating in story times, taking part in dramatic play, dictating stories, performing their work, conversing with their peers, and learning about letters, sounds and their relationship to each other.

-READING

Keeping in mind the wide range of learning modalities in a multiage classroom, teachers use the *Project Read* curriculum to support their constructivist approach in teaching letter formation, sound awareness, and phonics. Children explore environmental print, thematic literature, and vocabulary in a print-rich environment. Direct skill instruction takes place in the context of thematic activities and morning messages in whole group settings, and in weekly small group literacy sessions, during which students work collaboratively on targeted emergent reading tasks with a teacher. In the PreK/K multi-age setting, age-appropriate developmental reading skills range from the emergent reader, working on uppercase letter identification and corresponding sound work, to the semi-fluent decoding reader, who reads a variety of books independently with some support with phonics and vocabulary identification. All readers are met at their individual level of development and brought forward.

-WRITING

Our PreK/K children explore the value of learning to write as they bring their own individual learning, creativity, and discoveries to the class as a whole to discuss and share them with each other. They develop written documentation in the form of illustrations, written stories and narratives, and teacher supported dictations, such as Weekend News, and regular Story Workshop pieces. We practice and use standard letter formation from *Handwriting Without Tears*, beginning with upper case letters and progressing to lower case at an individual pace. Students are encouraged to use inventive spelling, and teachers work both one-on-one and in small groups with students to introduce and practice strategies for hearing and applying letter/sound concepts and early phonetic rules to their writing.

MATHEMATICS

In Math, children build and internalize math concepts by manipulating concrete objects and math tools. Domains of age-appropriate math instruction and exploration include Counting and Cardinality, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Number and Operations in Base Ten, Measurement and Data, and Geometry. Over the course of the two PreK/K years, children work to determine concrete patterns and relationships by exploring manipulatives, and begin to apply numerals and other symbols in their work. Math explorations are designed to encourage multiple levels of access and practice for children across developmental levels, and to differentiate appropriately for students at different levels of comprehension and experience. Teachers draw from Juanita Copley's *The Young Child and Mathematics*, Reggio Emilia *provocations* and *investigations*, and Froebel's *Gifts* in planning math curriculum.

SCIENCE

Scientific inquiry is explored primarily through active exploration of materials, with daily Reggio-style *provocations* and *investigations* designed to engage students' curiosity. We emphasize "fieldwork" throughout the year, using the natural world as an inspiration for discovery and a tool for learning. Students in PreK/K explore science through themes such as water, light, the human body, engineering, and plants. We encourage children to make meaningful connections, construct knowledge and through hands-on inquiry and open-ended discovery.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The PreK/K curriculum responds to the child's developing interest in and knowledge of themselves and the natural world. Through thematic study children explore individual and group identities, awareness and respect for differences, personal responsibility and cooperation and problem solving skills. Teachers encourage inquiry and discovery as children take part in hands-on projects, experiments and discussions. Teachers draw deeply on the four goals of Anti-Bias Education (NAEYC):

1) Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
2) Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
3) Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
4) Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

THEMATIC STUDIES

We begin Year A, "Perceptions," by looking inward — investigating who we are and where we live. We then explore the parts and importance of trees before learning all about noise. We use magnifying glasses to help us zoom in and out on the world around us before completing a long author study. During this time, we look at different books by an author to notice themes and differences, and use these strategies to write our own stories. We end the year by examining the "seed to plant" process and talking about what they need to grow, what we need to grow, and how we have all grown throughout the year.

During Year B, "Reflections," we begin by reflecting on ourselves and each other, and then move on to explore the elemental themes of water and light. We study the six steps of engineering, explore a variety of fairy tales from around the world, and end the year with a hands-on investigation of metamorphosis. The processes of metamorphosis, growth, and change become a lens through which we revisit the beginning of the year, reflecting together on how we have grown and changed as people and as learners.

TECHNOLOGY

The technology program at CRS starts with the why – Why should we teach technology at all? The answer is we don't teach "technology;" we teach self-reflection, empathy, and problem solving (know themselves, understand others, and shape the future). The medium we work within to accomplish this is digital tools, and we teach students both existing skills and how to learn new technology on their own. The process of learning new tools is inherently valuable (growth mindset, exploration, logic, sequential thinking, curiosity), but the purpose we direct them to is ultimately why teach technology.

We approach this through focusing on 4 main curricular categories that spiral throughout all grades (PreK - 8):

- Engineering & Design Thinking
- Multimedia Production
- Programming & Robotics
- Digital Citizenship

In the PreK/K level, we focus on using physical tools, learning to create simple electrical circuits, introducing programming through block-based languages and physically acting out instructions, and engineering physical structures for robots to navigate through. Examples include "programming your teacher", building sky bridges for BeeBots, using conductive play-dough to create light houses from LED's, recording and photographing fairy tale re-enactments, and taking apart old electronics.

ART

The PreK/K Art program is coordinated with classroom studies. The focus is on exploring with a range of art materials and developing self-esteem, with an emphasis on self-expression.

Shapes, Marks and Lines

- Imaginative drawing
- Drawing from life
- Paper collage (positive-negative space)
- Painting explorations (brush movement)

Color

- Painting with primary colors plus black and white
- Mixing secondary colors
- Blending oil pastels

Texture and Relief

- Texture rubbings with crayons

- Multi-media collage
- Surface textures in clay
- Tissue paper collage (creating relief)
- Cut Styrofoam print-making
- Oil/Water resist

3-D Form
- Clay sculpture
- Building with recyclable materials

SPANISH MUSIC

We recognize that the grammar of Romance Languages uses a binary gender system. While we strive to maintain the integrity of the history and culture of these languages, we also seek to create inclusive learning environments for all students.

The PreK/K Spanish Music program is based on *Canta y Baila Conmigo*®, a unique program where young children experience another culture and language firsthand while exploring and developing musically in an age-appropriate manner. With the dual and complementary goals of music and language immersion, children sing songs in Spanish from around the world and develop their musical skills, such as matching pitch and learning rhythms. Songs are also chosen to support classroom themes whenever possible.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Physical Education program is developmental and skill-based. Through movement the students learn how to activate and control the many ways in which their bodies move. Students practice skills through frequent repetition.

<u>Skills</u>
- Manipulative skills - throw, catch, kick, dribble, strike
- Balance, coordination - tumbling, animal walks, partner activities
- Locomotor skills - run, hop, skip, jump, gallop
- Social skills and positive self-concept - cooperative games
- Spatial skills and body awareness - creative exploration
- Sense of rhythm - dance, parachute, lumni stick play, rope jumping

LIBRARY

At the PreKindergarten/Kindergarten level the library is a place to develop a love of books and understand that this is a special place where books are kept, cared for, and respected. In PreK/K library classes children discover the joy of reading, enrich their vocabulary and develop listening skills during read-aloud story-time. They learn about the

great variety of literature available and about the roles of author and illustrator. Students begin taking responsibility for borrowing and returning books, choosing from our collection of picture books, early readers, and nonfiction titles. Students also begin to explore the fundamentals of the inquiry process, implementing the steps Plan-Do-Review in both collaborative and independent design challenges.

Skills

- Listen to, view, discuss and enjoy a wide variety of literature read alouds in order to develop enthusiasm for reading
- Differentiate between the roles of author and illustrator
- Begin to recognize the names and titles of favorite authors and illustrators
- Use the library for pleasure reading
- Begin to recognize the role of the library in the school
- Demonstrate responsibility for borrowed materials by returning them on time and in good condition
- Learn about check-out and return procedures
- Recognize that the library is a place for seeking information and answers to questions through nonfiction books
- Demonstrate the three basic steps of the inquiry process: Plan-Do-Review

Activities

- Listen to stories, non-fiction picture books, and poetry
- Ask and answer questions about a story just read
- Choose age-appropriate books and materials
- Learn the basic elements of the library layout, check-out and return procedure
- Take part in group activities to foster collaboration and explore the inquiry process