



# THE WEST HILL SCHOOL

Connect. Learn. Grow.

## Curriculum Framework

### Mission Statement

The West Hill School offers pre-school age children a safe and nurturing environment that encourages a life-long celebration of learning. Through our rich and varied curriculum, balanced with play and multisensory academic instruction, the children explore and satisfy their curiosities while developing their cognitive, social/emotional, and physical skills. Children experience and practice the self-regulation skills of careful listening and focus and attention that promote school readiness. Through activities that reinforce the development of empathy and emotion management, children learn to build friendships and successful interpersonal relationships. Children develop a sense of appreciation and respect for our natural world. It is our goal that each child progresses to kindergarten with the tools to achieve a balanced education that promotes self-confidence, joy of discovery, pride in accomplishment, and respect for differences in our school, our community, and our world.

### Daily Experiences for Children that Support the West Hill School's Mission Statement

During a child's preschool years and beyond, experiencing a meaningful connection to oneself, to other, and to his/her learning creates a strong foundation for a fulfilled future that includes a healthy sense of identity, meaningful relationships, and a lifelong love of learning.

Keeping the importance of connections as a daily priority, each of the nurturing and skillfully trained West Hill School classroom teachers begins the day with a morning meeting to recognize and value each child, to build relationships among peers, and to create a safe, positive and care classroom community. Planned activities throughout the day focus on helping children to develop the interpersonal skills needed for building relationships with both peers and adults.

Child-Choice play in the Discovery Room lays a solid foundation for learning and academic success. Through daily Child-Choice play in experience centers (construction, dramatic play, math and manipulative, science, creative arts, music and movement, and literacy), the children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, and investigate, question, and ponder problems. Child-Choice play guides children in encouraging the skills of independence, initiative, and decision-making while strengthening the necessary social skills to lead them to powerful connections with others.

The children practice social and self-regulation skills taught to them from the research-based *Second Step* program from the Committee for Children. This preschool program addresses skills for learning, emotion management,

friendship building and empathy through the use of puppets, stories, music, movement, and role-playing. Caring, experienced teachers model, practice, coach, and reinforce the use of the skills in all aspects of the children's day. These interactions involve learning to form and to value relationships with others by emphasizing an appreciation of oneself and a respect for the differences of others, the confidence to take risks, and the empathy needed to care for others.

Recognizing that parents/guardians play a critical role in supporting the growth and development of the children, The West Hill School staff members view families as members of the school team. Input about their children, families, culture, and the school are exchanged through Brightwheel messages and pictures, parent/ guardian teacher conferences, school handbooks, orientations, surveys, and questionnaires, and in both informal and formal meetings. The West Hill School families volunteer their time, talents, and resources to further fosters a strong relationship and connection between home and school.

Throughout the day, in both indoor and outdoor large and small group settings, the children engage in joyful and enriching experiences that nurture the development of their cognitive, social/ emotional, creative, and physical growth.

Small group classroom settings provide the children with an extensive learning exploration founded on a researched-based program about how young children learn, *Learn Every Day*. This theme-based and customized curriculum is aligned with current research, linked to and guided by the *Pennsylvania Department of Education's Early Learning Standards*, and written by national experts. This innovative, interactive, and developmental curriculum was designed to foster curiosity and wonder, respect individual differences, honor every child's culture, and recognize that family members are partners in a child's education. The award-winning *Get Set For School* readiness curriculum uses lively music and multi-sensory activities to build a solid foundation for school success in literacy, mathematics, and writing. The *Foundations* Prekindergarten activity program supports students' emerging understanding of the alphabetic principles of letter-sound association and change order, and written language skill manuscript letter formation. Enriched experiences in Spanish language and culture, yoga, creative movement, music, and in-house science field trips taught by science specialists, promote an enhanced learning environment for the children.

The large Discovery Room is filled with engaging experience centers that offer opportunities for children to immerse themselves in the tools for inquiry in the areas of literacy, science, mathematics, movement, music, dramatic play, and creative arts. The Discovery Room includes well-designed spaces for active and self-directed play and learning, as well as, area for quiet activities. The intentional and fun multisensory experience centers are interest-based and focus on extending creative thinking and fostering language interactions while promoting play, exploration, and discovery.

We celebrate the love of learning each day and further enhance the experience of the children with and school events through Community Service Projects, Holiday Celebrations, Spirit Days, Festivals, Special Reader Days, the *Bucket-Filler Program*, Curriculum Based Assemblies, Holiday Festivals, and a Family Night where children showcase their learning.

## Thematic Unit Objectives

In a nurturing and loving atmosphere that supports all learners, children grow into curious, independent learners while developing important self-identity and interpersonal skills. The relationship between teachers and children, the implementation of a comprehensive multisensory, hands-on curriculum, and the emphasis on the individual child, are designed to build enthusiasm for learning and an appreciation and respect for others. All learning domains are interrelated, and the developmentally appropriate skills and concepts addressed are aligned with the PA Early Learning Standards and contained in the thematic units that integrate all subject areas. The thematic units build upon the skills and concepts gained in the previous years at The West Hill School and include the following:

## Red & Green Group Themes

- All About Me and My Family
- School Community and Norms
- Friendship
- *Bucket-Fillers* and Kindness
- Recycling
- Our Green Earth
- Five Senses
- Down on the Farm
- Seasons
- Food Groups and Healthy Choices
- Holidays, Customs, and Celebrations Around the World
- Storybook Land
- Animals and Habitats
- Down by the Sea
- Wheels and Wings
- Family Night Theme
- Emergent Theme

## Red & Green Group Objectives

### Art and Creativity – By the end of the school year, the child will...

- Respond with body movements to changes in music's tempo, loudness, and style;
- Enjoy singing aloud by humming simple tunes or joining an adult;
- Seek out favorite songs;
- Participate in finger plays, songs, and body plays,
- Use gestures and hand movements to convey meaning;
- Understand that instruments make different sounds;
- Enjoy shaking and manipulating rhythm instruments;
- Make random marks and scribbles on paper using crayons, markers, paint, etc;
- Use a variety of art tools to draw, paint, and make collages;
- Imitate roles of family members in play;
- Use dramatic play actions to express and regulate feelings;
- Build creativity through participation in sensory activities;
- Explore a variety of art mediums and materials;
- Develop fine motor skills as he/she uses the tools provided;
- Use play items with props appropriately (a bottle to feed a baby).

### Cognitive Skills – By the end of the school year, the child will...

- Make simple choices;
- Finish an activity or project with teacher support;
- Ask questions and be willing to try new experiences and different ways of using materials;
- Become more engaged in learning and activities;
- Solve simple problems with a trial-and-error method and utilize more language and physical approaches;
- Begin to explore different options to solve problems;

- Complete short-term, self-chosen, concrete tasks;
- Engage in pretend play with familiar objects and experiences;
- Explore and learn using their senses;
- Ask for teacher help and assistance when needed;
- Focus and attend for longer periods of time when activities are age-appropriate and interesting to him/her.

### **Communication – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Increase vocabulary to include nouns, action words, question words, descriptive words, pronouns, quantities (more, some, etc.), location words (here, there, etc.), and connecting words (and, so, etc.);
- Understand one-to-two-step directions involving familiar object and experiences;
- Understand routines and be able to follow simple directions related to the routines;
- Enjoy chanting, mimicking, adults, repeating syllables, and hearing and repeating nursery rhymes;
- Recite familiar phrases of songs, books, and rhymes;
- Show an increased ability to listen to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems;
- Begin to initiate the telling of personal experiences with teacher guidance and support;
- Ask and answer simple questions;
- Begin to make improvement in pronunciation making it easier to be understood by others.

### **Literacy – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Enjoy frequent exposure to simple predictable stories;
- Look at books, hold it right side up, view pictures, and go from front to the back of the book; page by page;
- Retell simple, predictable textbooks, while using the illustrations to prompt recall;
- Begin to look through a variety of printed materials;
- Name items in books;
- Begin to answer some simple comprehension questions about characters and events;
- Recognize some simple, highly visible signs, such as stop signs, logos, etc.;
- Show an increased attention span while listening to stories;
- Attempt to make the first letter of his/her name;
- Have an emerging understanding of the uses and forms of writing;
- Become familiar with the Alphabet Song and sing it;
- Recognize a few uppercase letters.

### **Mathematics – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Rote count some numbers by ones up to ten;
- Use size, height, and weight words appropriately;
- Play shape sorting games;
- Use blocks to represent familiar objects;
- Use position words;
- Identify basic shapes;
- Differentiate between some letter and numbers;
- Develop number recognition skills;
- Use one-to-one correspondence in counting objects;
- Order objects by size and shape;
- Understand that numbers represent quantity;
- Complete increasingly complex puzzles;
- Create two-dimensional shapes and three- dimensional buildings;
- Begin to understand the concept of same and different;

- Increase a sense of time and understanding of the order of the day;
- Understand patterns in the environment, such as tomorrow, yesterday, day, night;
- Demonstrate interest in patterns and sequences;
- Classify, label, and sort familiar objects by a known group such as large vs. small.

### **Personal Health & Development – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Make vertical, horizontal, circular strokes and some shapes with marker or crayon;
- Turn book pages on at a time;
- Screw and unscrew jar lids, nuts, and bolts;
- Print and draw with purpose;
- Play simple, organized games;
- Refine the use of eating utensils;
- Dress and undress oneself;
- Wash and dry hands without help;
- Turn rotating handles;
- Roll, pound, squeeze, and pull play;
- Demonstrate increasing ability to coordinate movement in throwing, kicking, and bouncing balls;
- Improve eye-hand coordination in building blocks, putting together simple puzzles, stringing beads, drawing shapes, putting large pegs into holes, and pouring liquids;
- Build awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules;
- Put on own coat;
- Develop independence in manipulating materials;
- Take responsibility for own belongings.

### **Science Constructs – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Gather information using all five senses and show curiosity about unfamiliar objects;
- Use simple categorizing and sequencing, by size;
- Make simple statements about what he/she experiences;
- Engage in some cooperative play;
- Build vocabulary for talking about characteristics of sound and light and properties of objects;
- Observe the movement of people and things in everyday environment;
- Experiment with how objects move by pushing, pulling, etc.;
- Learn ways of moving people and things;
- Discover cause-and-effect relationship with wheeled toys;
- Identify things in the environment that move;
- Recognize the symbol or label of food items;
- Learn about the sounds and movement of various animals;
- Learn about animals on the farm and their value to people and the environment;
- Learn to identify some plants and animals and their parts;
- Begin to understand needs of animals and people (food, water, etc.);
- Develop problem-solving and questioning skills;
- Begin to make comparisons between animals, like size;
- Know vocabulary for major features of the sky;
- Know about the weather changes of the seasons and major features of each;
- Learn about ocean life;
- Begin to learn names of colors and color recognition.

### **Social and Emotional Skills – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Listen attentively during group time;
- Follow simple directions;
- Begin to ask for what he/she wants and needs;
- Being to show care and concern for others;
- Show awareness for fair ways to play (play together, trade, take turns);
- Interact with other children appropriately;
- Choose activities independently,
- Follow classroom routines,
- Cooperate in clean-up;
- Share teacher’s time;
- Work and play in groups with adult support;
- Begin to develop some strategies for resolving conflicts, usually with teacher support;
- Use self-help skills with occasional reminders;
- Adjust to changes in the daily routines;
- Recognize feelings when emotions are labeled by an adult.

### **Social Studies – By the end of the school year, the child will...**

- Play along, by the side of others, and with others to elaborate his/her social understanding of oneself and others;
- Learn to be a member of a school community;
- Try different roles in his/her play;
- Imitate the jobs of various people who make up a neighborhood in the Discovery Room;
- Name familiar places in their community;
- Learn that there are different cultures around the world;
- Learn how to be a friend to others;
- Be exposed to the way others eat, live, dress, and play;
- Explore and express some feelings, engage with other, and become more independent when it comes to life skills.

## **Red & Green Group Assessment of Students**

Teachers monitor and record children’s progress over time. Assessment is linked to instruction, enabling teachers to respond to children’s needs and to identify children who might need additional reinforcement for a learning objective. Assessment also enables teachers to keep parents/ guardians informed and involved. Ongoing assessment practices include observation, questioning of students, note-taking, formal assessment of developmental skills, portfolios of children’s work, and checklists that are completed twice a year and discussed with parents/ guardians at conferences.