

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 cooperative community and that promotes emotional health. The children work together to 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 with “Calendar Time.” 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; vowel sounds)
- following verbal directions
- asking questions
- focusing attention
- being still, mindful, and quiet during “silent seconds”
- counting by 10s and 5s (later in the year)
- reciting planet names in order from the sun (later in the year)

Literacy

Reading and Writing (a.k.a. “ABC Time”)

Much of the beginning reading lessons and writing activities will be conducted via “whole class” instruction and activity. During the fall, literacy lessons will be guided by a K-level structured literacy program [Sounds Sensible (SPIRES.)]. This will be followed by a 3-week focus on handwriting [previously Zaner-Bloser, but trying the similar Handwriting Without Tears program again this year]. Literacy lessons during the spring semester will introduce more advanced concepts from the structured literacy programs and will include regular journal writing (with eventual goal of writing complete sentences) and small group reading activities including decodable readers. Literacy lessons are characterized by lively, dynamic, repetitive, game-like fun activities.

The following skills are developed and reinforced during reading lessons and activities:

- recognizing and matching upper and lower case letters
- associating pictures with written words
- understanding building elements of letter, word, sentence, story
- manipulating sounds via rhyming, segmenting, blending, deleting, substituting
- identifying letter sounds
- practicing left to right orientation
- understanding the concept of sequence
- isolating and identifying the initial and final consonant sounds of words
- blending individual letter sounds into word sounds
- learning basic high-frequency words
- recognizing basic punctuation
- for some: more fluent reading and comprehension activities

The class will also engage in whole group lessons and story activities from time to time in which the students read Bob Books together, play a group game, enjoy a “draw and write” activity, listen to 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. This begins with drawing pictures and practicing letters that they learn. As they become ready, students will be guided to write words related to their illustrations. Some students will be ready to begin writing sentences 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 explicit 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 K-level handwriting workbook activities.

The following skills are introduced, developed, and/or reinforced during writing activities as students are ready:

- 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 patterns such as silent e
- writing the letters in both upper and lower case (when ready)
- producing a book for the spring Authors' Night [a year-end event]

Mathematics (a.k.a. "123 Time")

Math is incorporated into many subject areas throughout the day—particularly during every morning's "calendar time" and during scheduled "math times." BNS utilizes Eureka Math, as a guide, 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.

The following skills are developed and reinforced during math lessons and activities:

- recognizing and producing patterns and classifications (sorting, collecting)
- developing familiarity with daily calendar concepts (day of week, month, year)
- identifying basic 2-dimensional (flat) shapes
- identifying basic 3-dimensional (solid) shapes
- drawing 2-dimensional shapes
- building 2- and 3-dimensional shapes
- utilizing 1:1 correspondence
- understanding (reading, counting, matching) numbers 1 to 10, then 1 to 20, and later 1 to 100
- writing numbers 1 to 20, and to 100 when ready
- 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 and number bonds
- showing different ways to combine numbers to make the same sum
- computing addition and subtraction problems with numbers 1 to 10 and higher
- decomposing "teen" numbers into a group of 10 ones and "x" more ones
- describing length and weight

In addition to the above concepts, kindergartners will be *introduced* to concepts related to telling time to the hour, counting by 2s, 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. Educational videos, class discussions, and the occasional guest speaker 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
- maps
- the 7 continents
- transportation
- inventors and inventions
- consideration of another’s perspective and experience

Coyote Connections

Red Roomers will enjoy a special class every other Monday: Coyote Connections with the Green Roomers. BNS parent and literacy aide teacher, Courtney Grohs, developed this class two years ago and it has become deeply successful. Here is her description:

Coyote Connections is a nature-based education program that provides students the time and space to *See, Think, and Wonder* about the natural world. While the scaffolding for Coyote Connections has been thoughtfully crafted from the mentor’s personal nature expertise with support from the text [Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature](#), this is a student-focused, student-driven program. Student observations and curiosities about the natural world will help guide where we go throughout the academic year as we experience the changes of the seasons together.

Additional Subjects

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

Play

When weather permits, the kindergartners receive a 30+-minute recess following snack time and a 45-minute recess following lunch time every day. We may sometimes have class outside—for the fresh air. They also enjoy daily playtime indoors during “Free Choice Time.”

Rest and Reading

Students are read to on a regular basis. In the afternoons the Red Roomers often rest at their desks while listening to “chapter books” or other literature read aloud. “Rest and Reading” has historically been a favorite time of day for the students 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 Let’s Go Learn DORA Assessment (for phonemic awareness; new last year), the SPIRES assessment tool (for pre-reading/reading), and the Eureka Math 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 offered three times during the school year (October, February, and May) to discuss 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.