

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

This month, we will continue to orient ourselves with the classroom and our school routines. Our academic and extra curricular programs are underway, please read the following for further information.

LEARNING CIRCLE

Circles are learning experiences in which the children listen, discuss and explore a variety of topics. During circles, the children are able to learn about the world around them, engage in critical thinking and experiment with new skills and knowledge. Circle time also provides opportunities for the children to strengthen their receptive and expressive language skills, as well as enhancing their pro-social skills, such as understanding each other's point of view and turn taking. Circles vary in structure and use a variety of materials on a daily basis. Teachers may use books, the calendar, active games, physical movement, math manipulatives and the Smart Board to create interactive and engaging learning moments.

COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES

Throughout the day, children are engaged in cognitive activities during morning circle, when exploring new academic topics, when playing with cognitive games and when engaged in classroom activities. Our writing centre and math centre are also always available and help develop a child's understanding of language and literacy as well as helping them explore new math concepts. These daily activities provide opportunities for:

- * Letter and number recognition.
- * Math readiness, including:
 - Number Sense and Numeration (one to one correspondence, counting and operational sense).
 - Measurement (attributes, units and measurement sense).
 - Basic Geometry and Spatial Sense (geometric properties, relationships and movement).

- Patterning and Sorting.
- Data Management (collection and organisation of data and data relationships).
- * Exploring phonics and language development.
- * Sight Word memorization through games, songs and books.
- * Exploring emerging writing skills with a variety of writing tools, games and puzzles.

SCIENCE

Children are natural scientists, they are curious, adventurous and they love to ask questions about the world around them. Our program seeks to build on this enthusiasm by giving them chances to explore science topics through hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences. The teachers also make full use of Hillcrest's beautiful grounds to allow the children to investigate inquiry projects that are meaningful to them. Our science activities, projects and our science centre help the children:

- * Define, classify, make connections and predictions, test theories and use their imaginations to discover the world around them.
- * Reinforce or challenge previous experiences and explore new themes.
- * To see themselves as scientists and extend their sense of wonder.

At Hillcrest we approach our science program using the STEAM model. STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. These disciplines are integrated throughout a lesson or unit and applied as access points for guided student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. The end results are students who take thoughtful risks, engage in experiential learning, make meaningful connections, and persist in real-world problem solving.

LITERACY PROGRAM:

Our literacy program provides a balanced and engaging approach to learning to read and write. We choose to have small group literacy workshops that allow for direct and differentiated instruction, ensuring principles are being taught in the most nourishing and enticing way! Every child is set up for success! To do this we draw upon 'The Daily 5' method, which is a rotation between the following five tasks: *read to self*, *work on writing* (Handwriting Without Tears), *read to someone* (Jolly Phonics, teacher-student conferences, etc) *word work* (letter recognition and sight words, etc) and *listen to reading* (listening centre, class story time and comprehension, etc.).

HANDWRITING WITHOUT TEARS (HWT)

Handwriting without Tears is a simple, developmentally appropriate program designed to teach letter formation and recognition in a child friendly and enjoyable way. The multi-sensory lessons appeal to all learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic. The teachers and children use the Smart Board, mini chalkboards, white boards, songs, dancing and sensory play to explore and learn to write the letters of the alphabet. Our Handwriting Without Tears program and Hillcrest's excellent child to teacher ratio, quickly improves a child's self-confidence in writing, their fine motor strength, letter formation and legibility.

JOLLY PHONICS

Our Jolly Phonics program is a fun and child-centred approach to teaching literacy through phonics. The children learn actions, songs, play games and read stories for each of the 42 letter sounds. The multi-sensory method is very motivating for children and they quickly learn the sounds that create our everyday language. We introduce these concepts in our Nursery program and build upon the learning each year to Senior Kindergarten.

The children do not learn the letters in order, instead they are introduced in different letter groupings, in conjunction with our Handwriting Without Tears program. Once the children become familiar with each letter and its sound, they can then transfer that knowledge to words they see around them in everyday life and in books. Once they have a good phonetic awareness, they will be able to start using this knowledge to start sounding out unfamiliar words and ensure their success as future readers.

READING PROGRAM

Our reading program uses a variety of mediums to encourage and develop your child's reading capabilities. Your child will be introduced to a Word Family in class. Words in a "word family" are words that share common features or patterns. They have the same combination of letters and sounds in them and so make it easy for the children to sound out and recognize independently. We explore the Word Family books through group and independent reading, word games and activities in the class. We then send the book home for you to read with your child. We also encourage you to read to your child every day to model reading and to help foster a love of reading within your child. Also in your child's reading bag you will find a word puzzle that you can complete with your child as an extension and reinforcement of the work we have done in class.

SIGHT WORDS

Sight words or high frequency words are commonly used words that young children are encouraged to memorize as a whole by sight. A child can then automatically recognize these words in books and in the world around them, without having to use any strategies to decode. Furthermore, sight words can have irregular spellings and are easier to learn by sight. Once your child has memorized their sight words, they will find themselves able to identify a great deal of words in children's print, encouraging their self-confidence, their ability and their interest in reading. Your child will be given a word ring with new sight words in their reading bag. Please make time to read and practice these with your child. Use the words to make reading fun: play games with the words and give plenty of positive reinforcement for success! We will revisit these words in class together when the reading bags are returned.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

The children are provided with a variety of materials and media with which they can create unique masterpieces either at the art easel, at the Art Centre or during art lessons. Through creative and student-centred art activities, the children can:

- * Explore and manipulate a variety of creative materials, such as paints, fabrics, wood, etc.
- * Develop readiness to write through improving physical coordination and fine and gross motor skills.
- * Participate in activities that require following directions and learning new skills.
- * Develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in one's work and one's self.
- * Enhance imagination and creativity.
- * Develop aesthetic awareness.

SENSORY ACTIVITIES

The children use our sensory centres and sensory activities to extend learning through the use of their five senses. We rotate our sensory activities weekly and they are used to build upon and enhance the learning that is taking place in the classroom. Sensory activities provide opportunities to improve:

- * Language development.
- * Cognitive growth.
- * Fine and gross motor skills.
- * Problem solving skills.
- * Social interactions.

BOOK CENTRE

The book centre is a quiet area for reading and relaxing that we visit twice a day. Here children are able to:

- * Stimulate an interest in stories.
- * Enhance their imagination.
- * Develop their language skills.
- * Extend their understanding and interests.
- * Enhance their concentration skills.

SMART BOARD

Smart Boards are implemented into our Nursery, JK and SK classrooms. Children use them to participate interactively in cross-curricular activities whilst also strengthening their fine motor skills. Teachers use them to facilitate hands-on learning experiences and promote a student's self-confidence and interest.

FREE PLAY

During free play, the children are able to independently choose the centres, puzzles or toys that they would like to explore. The activities available enable children to grow in the following areas:

- * Decision-making.
- * Gross and fine motor skills.
- * Imagination and creativity.
- * Problem solving and concentration.
- * Social and emotional development through learning key skills such as cooperation, sharing, turn taking and respect for others.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Our playground provides many fun and exciting opportunities for the children to develop and enhance a number of skill areas. Outdoor play provides opportunities for:

- * Muscle development.
- * Socialisation and language development.
- * Imaginative and dramatic play.
- * Exploring nature.
- * Social and emotional skills.
- * Extending classroom projects.
- * Inspiring interest and enquiry-based learning.

THE IMAGINATION STATION AND CLASSROOM DRAMA CENTRE

During the week the children are given an opportunity to visit the Imagination Station and the in-class drama centre in small groups and on occasion with other classes. The small group setting and the play environment that has been set up (with dramatic props, costumes and furniture), enable the children to explore and extend their learning, their social and emotional skills and their imaginations.

TRIPS

Trips provide the children hands-on opportunities to learn about the world around them. Our trips are chosen based on student interest and are closely related to the children's topics of study.

HEBREW

During our weekly Hebrew program, the children are encouraged to use the language through games, songs, repetition and by labelling visual props. The children will learn Hebrew names for the Jewish holidays and their symbols. They will also acquire an everyday basic vocabulary to enable them to say greetings, label people in the family, body parts, seasons, colours, counting and more!

FRENCH

We also have a weekly French program, which through the same methods highlighted above, will give your child the basis of understanding necessary in Canada's multi-lingual society.

JEWISH HERITAGE PROGRAM

The children celebrate Shabbat every Friday. You are welcome to join in at this special time with your child. Please contact your child's teacher to sign up for a date to attend a Shabbat celebration.

Jewish holidays are introduced and celebrated through story telling, songs, creative activities and in the Imagination Station.

Our regular communications and emails will advise you of all our special and school wide events.

MUSIC WITH KAYLA & GREG

Daily musical activities are incorporated into our everyday routines in the classroom through songs and access to musical instruments during centre times. We are also privileged to have an experienced music team who carefully design lessons to encourage children's auditory and rhythmic skills. Group participation, imaginative expression and building of self-esteem are naturally incorporated into the musical experience. Unique songs, school wide music circles and day-to-day musical opportunities provide endless opportunities for fun and laughter.

MUSIC WITH MISS DRISCOLL

In this music program, the children are introduced to the basic vocabulary to understand music. Through the use of interactive games on the Smart Board, playing musical instruments, singing and group activities, the children will learn about beat, pitch, tempo and rhythm. In addition, children will be exposed to a variety of music and instruments from around the world and will be given an opportunity to make music of their own.

ART

Children are never too young to start learning about art and its history. The classes will be comprehensive and process-focused and will balance learning, exploring various artistic techniques and creative/emotional expression. The program will involve a variety of art media including painting, collage and sculpture.

POTTERY

We are fortunate to have a kiln at the school and the children enjoy making a variety of ornaments and art projects using clay throughout the year. This helps the children to improve their fine motor skills, their creativity and to present you with special handmade gifts!

SEE SAW APP

We are happy to have incorporated "SEE SAW" into our program. It is an app that is downloadable to any smart phone, where teachers post photos and classroom news. It helps to keep you informed of the fun activities that take place during the school day and enables teachers to share important and general information with you!