Forest Avenue School Narrative

2022-2023

Approximately 160 students attend the Forest Avenue School where a highly qualified staff instills the ideals of "Excellence in Education" to the young population. The major goal of the Forest Avenue School is to provide all students with a love of learning in a stimulating, caring, safe educational setting which will ensure that each child meets his/her fullest potential.

The academic program in the PreK - Grade 2 Primary school is comprehensive and enriched with instruction in developmental reading, mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science being implemented by the self-contained classroom teachers. Subject area specialists enrich and coordinate the program of instruction through scheduled classes in health, physical education, music, art, world language, and library science.

Students are taught by a group of caring professionals who teach the whole child. Teachers are well versed in the rigorous core curricular offerings and utilize the two major programs: ***Reading Wonders Language Arts Program*** from Macmillan/McGraw-Hill and the ***Everyday Mathematics 4*** program from the University of Chicago.

Reading Wonders is the first and only reading program designed specifically for the Common Core State Standards for Reading and Language Arts. The program provides support for building a strong reading foundation, accessing complex text, finding and using text evidence, engaging in collaborative conversations and writing to sources. It utilizes a rich range of diverse print and digital media to provide the instructional support and materials created to teach to the rigor, intent, and depth of the Common Core State Standards.

Some of the components include Writer's Workshop, a literature anthology, leveled readers and *eBooks* which are compatible with tablet technology to help children to track print with audio support. Specific skills in phonics, phonological and phonemic awareness and high frequency words are emphasized as well as built-in acceleration plans for helping students to make progress up to the next reading levels. For each phonics lesson there are tools to build a strong reading foundation such as sound spelling songs, word sort activities, and phonics/spelling practice.

New Initiatives on the Prek/K level include the ***Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program*** is a new initiative for the PreK/K curriculum. It is a program designed to supplement our existing literacy curriculum with explicit teacher modeling and scaffolded support in

reading, spelling, and writing as the students learn to hear the sounds in words. Phonemic awareness skills, alphabet knowledge, phoneme-grapheme connections, and language awareness activities along with rhymes, blends and phoneme isolation in initial, medial, and final sounds in words are included.

Grades 1 and 2 will pilot the ***Phonics First*** reading system this year to supplement our literacy program. This program is a multisensory, systematic, structured, sequential, phonics-based, research-based direct-instruction approach to teach students systematic processes for decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling). It is rooted in the Orton-Gillingham principles of instruction and contains numerous lessons which include reading/spelling concepts, sight word identification, decoding and encoding practice. In addition, lessons include structured syllabication study for decoding mastery of multisyllable words, and skill development with vowels, consonants, digraphs, blends, Magic-*e* words, and many other layers of literacy skills.

The ***Everyday Mathematics 4*** program is the result of the collaborative efforts of researchers, mathematics educators, administrators, students and classroom teachers. Everyday Mathematics does not teach topics or strands in isolation. Concepts are interwoven over time and in a variety of applications. Each unit incorporates many of the content strands such as numeration, operations and computation, measurement and reference frames, data and chance, geometry, patterns, functions and algebra. Everyday Mathematics encourages teachers and students to go beyond arithmetic to explore more of the mathematics spectrum by investigating, data gathering and analysis, probability, geometry, patterns and algebra.

The ***McGraw-Hill Social Studies*** program ignites students' social studies learning beginning in Kindergarten by helping children explore and learn about themselves and others. They will develop an understanding for civic ideas, community and country, and cultural identity. In Grade One, students learn about special holidays, civic ideals, maps in the community and classroom and explore physical maps. Grade Two students learn about who we are as Americans through map and globe exploration. They will uncover concepts in American history, explore cultures and communities from the past and learn about their own community.

Mystery Science is a hands-on program that leads the students in the doing of science and engineering. Online science lessons are easy to use and have outstanding content and helps to make the transition to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and supports Common Core. Film footage, animations, and other illustrations with voice over instruction help children to explore science concepts while bringing in real life applications. A variety of activities along with discussion and interaction engage student interest as they help them think through scientific concepts, learn practical applications, and begin to apply the scientific method. Each lesson starts by posing a question

commonly asked by kids, like "Do plants eat dirt?" or "Why are so many toys made out of plastic?" A series of short videos and prompts then guides a class discussion, followed by an experiment that can be done as a class. Lessons cover a wide range of topics, including light and sound, biodiversity, engineering, and the water cycle. The goal is to create better thinkers by helping children to find answers to their most common questions about the world**.**

Positive reinforcement for class participation and for taking academic risks is frequently bestowed upon the students by the staff. Appropriate conduct is always modeled and encouraged, for the staff frequently stresses the positive behaviors. Teachers are always mindful of building students' self-esteem and encouraging classroom participation. They validate students' feelings and emotions while keeping them focused on the task at hand. In doing so, classroom cultures reinforce the belief that errors are opportunities for learning.

In order to promote healthy choices and positive decision-making, the monthly character education themes of personal responsibility, self-worth, honesty, and compassion are stressed. Teachers incorporate these themes into their curriculum through direct instruction throughout the month and in conjunction with the Social Decision Making and Responsive Classroom programs. Social-emotional Learning has been incorporated into the program in lessons delivered by the school counselor. In pre-kindergarten through grade two, students are taught to react positively to each other by increasing the students' self-esteem, promoting appreciation for diversity, improving communication skills, and preventing escalation of disciplinary problems. As a culminating activity, each spring a school-wide field day is held that allows students to participate in group athletic activities focusing on teamwork and sportsmanship. Many events designed to build individual and collective pride.

A Reading Specialist and an Academic Support Teacher work with students who need individualized or small group reading instruction. This also occurs on a pullout and/or in-class support basis. Special Services offerings include resource room classes, a Primary 1 class, and a variety of other services to meet the needs of classified students.

All PreK-2 classrooms are equipped with computers and Promethean Boards that are used as part of the instructional process. Students regularly use Chromebooks as part of the instructional process. Students learn to function on their own with the computer and become skilled in accessing and using appropriate software and web-based programs such as BrainPop, Jr., Mathseeds, Reading Eggs, and IXL.

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