LOWER SCHOOL

Program Highlights 2024-2025

Children need to "learn how to learn" to be successful in the 21st century. This is our philosophy in the Lower School at Lab. Our youngest Lab students enjoy their own campus on Foxhall Road in northwest Washington, DC. The large building, with its quiet neighborhood setting, gives children ages 6-11 the freedom to experiment and explore in comfortable, age-appropriate surroundings.

Although the Lower School program is generally the equivalent of Grades 1 through 4, there are no designated "grades"; instead students are grouped by age and developmental needs. They move through the curriculum at their own pace, developing the strengths, skills, and confidence necessary for the academic rigors that lie ahead.

Art, music, and drama are core components of Lab's curriculum at every level, starting in our Lower School. Reading and language arts are an intensive part of each day's work. Math, science, physical education, social-emotional learning, belonging time, and The Lab School's ground-breaking Academic Clubs round out the Lower School education at Lab.

Our students are learning HOW to learn.

They learn the strategies that help them:

- Manage time
- Organize things and thoughts
- Make and carry out plans
- Direct and focus attention
- Make connections
- Show flexibility of thinking
- Differentiate relevant information from extraneous
- Recognize and use resources

EACH DAY INCLUDES:

- A Morning Meeting
- Reading
- Mathematics
- Writing
- Academic Club (Social Studies)
- Science
- Art (Music, Performing Art, or Visual Art)
- Physical Education

READING

Diagnostic data is used to develop reading goals, determine appropriate educational approaches, and monitor progress throughout the school year.

Direct reading instruction is delivered five days a week in small, targeted instructional groups focusing on the five pillars of literacy using an *Orton-Gillingham* framework:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** students have daily oral practice in blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds.
- **Phonics:** students are taught how to systematically apply code knowledge to text.
- **Fluency:** students practice reading text using appropriate phrasing and speed to aid in their comprehension.
- **Vocabulary:** students are directly taught the meaning of base words, prefixes, and suffixes to expand their vocabulary.
- **Comprehension:** students learn and synthesize specific strategies to allow for understanding of more sophisticated text.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Written language instruction is taught by infusing the content that our students are learning in their Academic Club, science, math, and reading classes with specific writing instruction at the sentence and paragraph levels using "The Writing Revolution" method. For example, students learn mindfulness through the process of journaling.

MATHEMATICS

Direct math instruction is delivered 45 minutes per day, five days a week in small, targeted instructional groups. The development of math programming is designed to meet individual student needs and is based upon the Common Core State Standards and utilizes Illustrative Mathematics.

Lessons include:

- Manipulatives
- Authentic learning experiences
- Concrete-representational-abstract sequence of teaching and learning

ACADEMIC CLUBS

Unique to The Lab School, students immerse themselves in the humanities through a dramatic framework. Following one multidimensional theme throughout the year, young learners enjoy a hands-on exploration of history, geography, literature, science, sociology, archaeology, and art. The dynamic and hands-on small-group Academic Club experiences are rich and varied.

Our Lower School academic clubs include:

- Discovery Club
- Gods & Goddesses Club
- World Cultures Club

Science

Students participate in a Science class that meets daily.

Lessons are active, hands on, inquiry-based, and guided by standards of learning. Instruction is enriched through our outdoor learning space.

Students are taught strategies to help them think critically:

- Challenge all assumptions
- Suspend judgement
- Review conclusions based on new evidence
- Emphasize data over beliefs
- The never ending testing of ideas
- The perspective that mistakes are data
- The earnest consideration of possibilities and ideas without (always) accepting them
- Looking for what others have missed

STEAM and Design

In the STEAM & Design program, students are celebrated as "makers" who approach challenges with curiosity, creativity, and confidence. Through immersive, open-ended, and hands-on experiences, students develop the skills to engage in the Engineering Design Process and cultivate essential habits of makers, including problem-solving, flexible thinking, self-confidence, reflection, and perseverance. While designing prototypes, tackling skill-building tasks, and experimenting with tools, materials, and cutting-edge technologies, students tinker with new ideas, learn from mistakes, and share their discoveries with others. This program aims to empower young makers to embrace challenges and see themselves as capable problem-solvers.

Physical Education/Occupational Therapy

- Movement, a collaboration of Physical Education and Occupational Therapy, focuses on development of body awareness, sensory-motor skills and self-regulation, memory, motor planning, flexibility, strength, cooperation, self-confidence, and self-control.

Visual Arts

- Build skills in spatial thinking, fine motor control, organization, and planning.
- Provide structured lessons where students learn technique, vocabulary, and use of tools/materials related to creating art with particular media.

Performing Arts

- Provide an opportunity for students to write, direct, edit, and perform in multiple plays, skits, and films and through that process, develop skills in story sequencing, characterization, physical expression, and expressive language.
- Allow for study and development of pitch and rhythm in both singing and instrument exploration.
- Help students learn to take risks, express themselves through dialogue and body language, and incorporate sensory details into performance.
- Involve using dramatic interpretation of music and literature to express ideas and feelings, and are closely linked with the themes emphasized in the other arts and academic classes.

Music

- Use of music that has a historical, traditional, or cultural purpose
- Lessons focus on listening, instrument identification, and movement
- Closely linked to study in other subject areas such as social studies and art
- Exposure to a wide variety of musical genres to help develop an appreciation of music as an art form

The average adult to student ratio is 1:6 and is even lower for our reading and math classes.

EXPERT CLINICAL SERVICES

Related service providers consult, collaborate, and provide professional development for faculty in order to enhance the educational experience for all students. In addition, supplemental individual and group therapy services are available.

Departments include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Psychology and Wellness
- Speech, Language & Literacy

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Restorative Practices program helps students develop the necessary SEL skills to enhance their abilities to meaningfully connect with individuals of diverse perspectives, cultures, languages, experiences and identities, ultimately building healthier, more equitable and inclusive communities. In collaboration with *Responsive Classroom*, components include:

- Morning Meeting and Closing Circle to directly teach cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and practice mindfulness.
- SEL Time to provide direct instruction in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and community building activities.

BELONGING TIME

- "Belonging Time" provides our students with a foundational understanding of the intersections of a person's identity. Within this understanding, students cultivate a respect for and admiration of the differences among people. "Belonging Time" ensures that each student leaves embracing the multiplicity and fluidity of identity while being instilled with an inviolable self-pride.
- During "Belonging Time," students work with age-level definitions of: diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, self-love, and identity – discussing identity in the markers of: age, physical ability, appearance, race, sexual orientation, gender, geographic location, family structure, ethnicity, religion, communication style and thinking style.

TECHNOLOGY

Using Chromebooks, iPads, interactive white boards, and other technology, students acquire 21st century skills, such as how to:

- Ask essential questions
- Find information
- Gain media literacy
- Collaborate
- Communicate
- Connect
- Learn about internet safety
- Problem solve

LOWER SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM

- Small-group *Orton-Gillingham* reading instruction
- Academic Clubs
- Sports, Dance, and Art
- Number Investigations

AFTER SCHOOL OPTIONS

- Monday-Friday, 3:30-5:30pm
- Wide variety of extra-curricular activities

THE LAB SCHOOL

THE LAB SCHOOL OF WASHINGTON

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