

STAMFORDAMERICAN | HONG
SCHOOL | KONG

Elementary School Curriculum Guide

Pre-Primary to Grade 5



Elementary School Overview

This guide focuses on the educational elements of Stamford American School Hong Kong's learning program for Pre-primary to Grade 5.

Standards based program

Stamford American School - Hong Kong has a standards based curriculum, assessment and learning environment. The program focuses on the total growth of the developing child addressing social, physical, emotional and cultural needs in addition to academic achievement.

The program combines the best research and practice from a range of national systems with a wealth of experience from international schools to create a relevant and engaging educational program. We offer an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. It incorporates guidelines on student learning styles, teaching methodologies and assessment strategies.

The program emphasizes the importance of children making connections between their experience and the incremental pieces of new information they encounter. The program supports the child's need to gain understanding of the world and to learn to function comfortably within it, to move from not knowing to knowing, to identifying what is real and what is not real, to acknowledging what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. To do this, the child must integrate a great deal of information and apply this accumulation of knowledge in a cohesive and effective way.

Inquiry Based

Teaching methods build on students' prior knowledge and emphasize learning "how to learn" and "how to find out", using both traditional and contemporary media. Inquiry, as the leading but not exclusive pedagogical approach, is recognized as being intimately connected with the development of children's comprehension of the world.

Inquiry is the process initiated by the learner or the teacher which moves the learner from his or her current level of understanding to a new and deeper level of understanding.

This can mean:

- Exploring, wondering and questioning
- Experimenting and playing with possibilities
- Researching and seeking information
- Collecting data and reporting findings
- Clarifying existing ideas and reappraising events
- Deepening understanding through the application of a concept or rule
- Making and testing theories
- Making predictions and acting purposefully to see what happens
- Elaborating on solutions to problems

Inquiry involves an active engagement with the environment in an effort to make sense of the world, and consequent reflection on the connections between the experiences encountered and the information gathered. Inquiry involves the synthesis, analysis and manipulation of knowledge, whether through play for younger children or through more formally structured learning in the elementary years.

Integration

The subject areas of Mathematics, Language Arts, Science (STEMinn), Social Studies, Art, Personal and Social Education, Physical Education and Modern Languages are taught through interdisciplinary units in order to help the students make connections between the subjects, thereby facilitating more effective learning. Technology is integrated across our curriculum to enhance student learning, and build student confidence in their ability to effectively use technology to acquire, process and communicate information. Stamford American aligns challenging AERO standards in subject areas with the PYP framework to set learning goals.

Concepts

The key concepts have relevance within and across subject areas. Expressed as questions, these ideas are explored through each unit studied. The concepts shape the extended, structured inquiry that are a distinguishing feature of the program. Stamford American plans and implements a set of these units each year at each grade level. Collectively, these units form a transdisciplinary, coherent, school wide component called the program of inquiry.

Transdisciplinary Themes

The program offers a comprehensive, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. It provides an internationally-designed model for learning and incorporates guidelines on student learning styles, teaching methodologies and assessment strategies. The curriculum framework is an expression and extension of three inter-related questions: “What do we want to learn?”, “How best will we learn?” and “How will we know what we have learned?” Students are also expected to begin learning a foreign language in order to enhance an international perspective.

The traditional disciplines retain a role in the program. The six specified subjects are listed below, and the overall expectations for each subject area are defined for each year of the program:

- Language
- Social studies
- Mathematics
- Arts
- Science (STEMinn)
- Personal, social and physical education

International Perspective

In order to make the most of the diversity of background and experiences of our students, the program emphasizes the concept of being internationally minded.

Standards and Benchmarks

The implementation of the program is supported by standards and benchmarks, which have been written in the United States. See the points below which reflect the standards and benchmarks Stamford American use for each academic discipline:

- AERO/Common Core Plus standards are used in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Humanities
- The Next Generation Science Standards (NSGG) are used for the framework of the Science (STEMinn) program
- SHAPE standards are used in Physical Education
- The Massachusetts Arts curriculum framework is used in the Visual and Performing Arts
- ISTE standards are used in Informational Technology
- ACTFL standards are used in Modern Language

Standards and benchmarks define what students understand as well as what students do, to demonstrate understandings. These documents provide focused and specific progressions of understandings, content knowledge and skills that lead to college and career readiness

American Education Reaches Out (AERO) Standards

AERO standards are supported by the U.S. State Department's Office of Overseas Schools and the Overseas Schools Advisory Council to assist schools in developing and implementing American standards-based school curricula. AERO began as a project to adapt the U.S. national standards in Mathematics, Language Arts and Social Studies to serve the needs of international student bodies.

AERO provides a framework for curriculum consistency from Pre-primary to Grade 8 and for stability of curriculum in overseas schools. AERO's curriculum and resources are in alignment with research based trends in the development of curriculum worldwide, and in particular with the common core standards in the United States.

The AERO Curriculum Framework connects the process strands (problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication and reasoning and connections), which highlight ways of acquiring and using content knowledge, with the content standards, which outline the big concepts, to develop a coherent understanding.

The relationship between process and content standards is critical as students will not develop proficient understanding if either is taught in isolation. The primary goal of the AERO standards is to develop a framework of voluntary academic standards appropriate for American schools overseas. The AERO standards used the Council for Basic Education's Standards for Excellence in Education as the basis. Standards for Excellence in Education is a condensed, edited version of the U.S. common core standards, so there is a strong relationship between the U.S. national standards and AERO. Twelve international schools lent their expertise to the AERO project, working together as a team twice a year and extensively at the school sites to discuss and refine the standards and benchmarks to ensure that they were appropriate for the international school community. This collaboration led to several changes: they added content or skills they felt were missing, modified the benchmarks for international schools and made the benchmarks more challenging, either by editing or by shifting ahead the grade span during which the benchmark would be targeted for achievement (e.g., from "by the end of Grade 8" to "by the end of Grade 5").

Qualities that students will develop

Inquirers

Students will develop the skills to be able to evaluate the validity and reliability of the information that they gather and use it in an effective way.

Resilient

Students are able to stay the course when challenges become more difficult. They develop strategies that allow them to be successful.

Internationally minded

Students will recognize the special opportunities that being in an international community brings and will use them to benefit the community and the school experience.

Knowledgeable

Students will acquire a knowledge base that allows them to effectively develop their higher order thinking skills.

Thinkers

Students will use their minds to develop new ideas and ways of looking at problems, thereby creating new solution.

Communicators

Student will express their thoughts with clarity and precision.

Principled

Students will understand their responsibility to act in a way that represents the values and protocols of their community.

Open-minded

Students will keep neutral opinions while they are considering different points of view and weigh the value of them in context.

Caring

Students will understand others and the way they behave and will support them in their development.

Risk-takers

Students will know how to define acceptable risk and understand how to take risks in a responsible way.

Balanced

Students will develop an understanding of balance in thought, opinion and action.

Reflective

Students will consider the value of their thoughts before they express them.



Academic Course Overview - Elementary

Language Arts

Course Description

Language is fundamental to learning and permeates our curriculum. By learning language as well as learning about and through language, students develop an appreciation of the richness of language and a love of literature. Our program arranges the essential student development into three main strands:

- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Visual communication

These communication strands are organized into sub-strands which include listening and speaking, reading and writing, viewing and presenting. Each of the sub-strands is addressed separately, although in practice they are interactive elements of the program.

Oral Communication: Listening and Speaking

Oral communication encompasses all aspects of listening and speaking skills that are essential for language development, for learning, and for relating to others. Listening involves listening to people and to texts for general meaning (i.e. for gist) and for precise meaning (i.e. for the key points). Students learn how to listen attentively, to understand and evaluate what they hear, to think about both literal and inferred meanings, and to respond appropriately.

Speaking involves pronunciation, intonation and stress of speech: vocabulary development, communicative competence, the use of grammar, and the speaker's fluency and accuracy. Oral language is used to communicate, reflect, gather, process and present information. Speakers use oral language to ask and answer questions,

relate and retell, persuade, talk about needs, feelings, ideas and opinions – and to contribute to discussions in a range of formal and informal situations.

Written Communication: Reading and Writing

Reading is for enjoyment, instruction and information, and reading helps us to understand and clarify ideas, feelings, thoughts and opinions. Literature in particular offers a means of understanding ourselves and others and has the power to influence and structure thinking. Students are introduced to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts and have opportunities to read for their own interest, pleasure and for information.

The purpose of reading is to gain meaning from text. The process of reading is interactive and involves the reader's purpose for reading, the reader's prior knowledge and experience and the text itself. The reader learns about direction, spacing, punctuation cues and about the general features of text. Effective reading depends on the skillful integration and application of semantic cues (meaning), syntactic cues (structure), and graphophonic cues (sound-symbol relationships), using a variety of reading strategies (e.g. using picture cues, context cues, prediction, phonics, sight vocabulary, punctuation and syntax).

Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts; to think critically about what they read and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in a text.

Writing helps make sense of the world. It is a powerful means by which to remember, develop, organize, gain self-knowledge and communicate ideas, feelings and information.

Purpose and audience contribute to the form and substance of writing as well as to its style and tone. Learning to write is a developmental process and students initially focus on meaning rather than accuracy. Grammar, spelling, handwriting, punctuation and paragraphing are taught gradually through writing practice.

The writing process involves creating an environment where students can acquire the skills to achieve written products for a variety of purposes. The written product can be formal, informal, personal or reflective. It can be informative, persuasive, poetic or in the form of a story or dialogue.

As motivation and a positive attitude are important factors in learning to read and write, it is essential that learners view themselves as capable readers and writers, having acquired a complex set of skills, attitudes, behaviors and expectations related to language.

Visual Communication: Viewing and Presenting

Viewing and presenting are fundamental processes that are powerful and significant in developing literacy. Visual images immediately engage viewers, allowing them instant access to data.

Therefore, opportunities are provided to explore the function and construction of images in order to analyze a wide variety of media. Learning to understand and use different media expands the sources of information and expressive abilities of students. Presenting information is an important skill that requires experience and practice.

Language is a major connection between home and school. In the PYP classroom cooperative activities optimize development of all the languages. Mother tongue development is actively encouraged and supported.

Language Arts teaching and learning is supplemented by a wide range of materials and resources including Writer's Workshop - Units of Study, Fountains & Pinnell Reading, and Words Their Way Spelling and Vocabulary Program.

Mathematics

Course Description

Mathematics is not viewed as a fixed body of knowledge to be transmitted, but as a way of thinking and a language for understanding meaning. To study Mathematics is to inquire into this language and to learn to think in this way.

Stamford American's Mathematics standards identify the expectations considered essential in our curriculum. These expectations are arranged into five interwoven strands of knowledge:

- Number and Operations
- Algebraic Thinking
- Geometry
- Measurement and Data
- Math Practices

In Number and Operations, and Algebraic Thinking, students inquire into the number system and its operations, patterns and functions. This is where students become fluent users of the language of arithmetic as they learn to understand its meanings, symbols and conventions.

Geometry and Measurement and Data are the areas of Mathematics that other disciplines use to research, describe, represent and understand aspects of their domain. Mathematics provides the models, systems and processes for handling data, making and comparing measurements, and solving spatial problems.

In addition to ensuring students have a deep and broad base of Mathematics skills, students at Stamford are also deeply engaged in mathematical practices such as problem solving, reasoning, modeling and real-world application. This balance of skills and mathematical practices enable us to achieve rigor in mathematics that balances conceptual understanding, procedural fluency and application.

Mathematics is a vital and engaging part of a student's life. Students in the classroom are very active with an underlying sense of organization and cooperation. Teachers and students ask questions of each other, trying out and demonstrating ideas in small and large groups, using the language to describe their thinking, generating data to look for patterns and making conjectures.

Students are encouraged to use multiple strategies, developing an understanding of which strategies are most effective and efficient. The students are given an opportunity to communicate their mathematical thinking and strategies to others and to have time to reflect upon them. Students at Stamford American learn both the metric and imperial systems for measurement. They learn to use American money as well as local currency.

American Education Reaches Out (AERO) Mathematics standards are a primary resource for Stamford American's Mathematics instruction. Teaching is supplemented by a wide range of other materials and resources, including the text Math in Focus, published by Marshall Cavendish Education and distributed by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

In line with our Vision statement, we believe that each student can achieve more than they believe they can in Mathematics. Our commitment to student progress in Mathematics is evident in the amount of time in our weekly schedule dedicated to the advancement of Mathematics proficiency, in our Mathematics assessments and by our specialized Mathematics Enrichment Program.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Innovation (STEMinn)

Course Description

Stamford's Science standards are arranged into seven main strands:

- Physical Science
- Life Science
- Nature of Science
- Earth and Space
- Engineering Design
- Technology
- Innovation

In living things, students inquire into issues related to themselves and their environment. In Earth and space, students extend their inquiry to include the study of planet Earth and its relationship to the universe. Materials and matter and forces and energy focus on the study of the origins, properties and uses of solids, liquids, gases and energy sources.

Science provides opportunities for students to engage in scientific investigations by making accurate observations, handling tools, recording and comparing data, and formulating explanations using their own scientific experiences and those of others.

Students gain experience in testing their own assumptions and thinking critically about the perspectives of others in order to further develop their own ideas.

Science is used to provide explanations and models of behavior for phenomena and objects around us. It is used to investigate the interrelationships between the natural, physical and material worlds. Our Science curriculum is driven by skills and concepts as well as content.

Science is a way of thinking and a process that strives for balance between the construction of meaning and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Our Science classrooms provide an environment that stimulates and challenges students' ideas.

Transdisciplinary units of inquiry are entry points into Science that promote learning in which students will experience what it is like to think and act like a scientist. Students and teachers work together to identify things they already know that might be relevant to an inquiry, what they want to know, what they need to know to answer their questions, and how best they might find that out.

The study of Science can be used as a vehicle for teaching critical-thinking skills and as a way of exploring the world. The development of ways of investigating and using evidence enables students to interact with the world around them.

Next Generation Science Standards (NSGG) are a primary resource for Stamford American's Science (STEMinn) instruction. Teaching is supplemented by a wide range of other materials and resources, including the text *Science Fusion*, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Social Studies

Course Description

Stamford American's Social Studies standards identify central ideas that we consider significant.

Social Studies provides opportunities for students to look at and think about human behavior realistically, objectively and with sensitivity. It aims to guide students and teachers towards a deeper understanding of themselves and others, and of their place in an increasingly global society.

Our curriculum provides opportunities for students to:

- Learn how to ask compelling and relevant questions that can be researched
- Gain a secure understanding of their own identity and their place in the world
- Develop an understanding of other cultural groups and an appreciation of other ideas and beliefs
- Gain knowledge that is of genuine importance in understanding the human condition, through the exploration of themes that have significance for all students in all cultures
- Gain conceptual understanding through participating in learning experiences that foster sensitivity, creativity and initiative, and lead to taking responsible action
- Gain a sense of time and place in relation to their own experience and the experience of other people
- Gain an understanding of humankind's role in, and dependence on, the natural world and learn to apply this knowledge in responsible ways

Successful learning in Social Studies develops students who are able to select key ideas and significant understanding from the data acquired for a unit of inquiry. Students are able to frame genuine, open-ended questions worthy of sustained research.

As they conduct their inquiries, they are able to provide accurate information, valid explanations and empathetic understandings. They are able to identify possible causes of an issue, choose a solution and determine appropriate action to be taken. Through these processes, they develop the habits and attitudes of successful lifelong learners.

The Arts

Course Description

The Arts consist of three artistic disciplines: Visual Art, Music and Theater/Drama. The Arts are important areas of learning through which students learn these disciplines, as well as learning about the Arts (artists, perspectives, themes and ideas using the Arts). In all areas of learning, Stamford American values imagination, creativity and original thinking. The creative disciplines of Visual Arts, Music and Drama are closely connected to each other, as well as having strong links to other disciplines. The creative process is seen as a driving force in learning through inquiry, providing:

- A means of communication
- Opportunities for developing skills
- A means of expression of both emotional and intellectual perspectives
- Exposure to other cultures and other times
- A means of accessing other disciplines
- A vehicle for wondering, reflecting and consolidating

The Arts are built into the curriculum as essential areas of learning, not added on as optional extras. Students are exposed to all three Arts (Visual Arts, Music, Drama). Visual Arts, Music and Drama are significant disciplines in their own right and are also important sign systems for interpreting and understanding the world. Students are encouraged to consider the Arts as a means of communication and as an expressive language.

Creativity is at the heart of the Arts. It allows for innovation, interpretation, research, analysis and transfer. Learning through the Arts has a positive influence on self-esteem and creative development, which carries over to all aspects of learning. Valuing imagination and celebrating original thinking promotes initiative and a lifelong love of learning.

Learning through the Arts provides strong links to the student profile. From an early age, students have the opportunity to develop genuine interest, to give careful consideration to their work, to become self-critical and reflective. They are provided with opportunities to communicate about their creative work and to share their understanding with teachers, peers and families. Students are encouraged to develop responsible attitudes and find appropriate ways to take action through the Arts, in order to make a difference in and to the world.

Visual Arts

Course Description

Stamford's visual arts program has two common strands that tie them together:

- Critical Response
- Connections

All of the strands are addressed separately, although in practice they are interactive and include interrelated elements.

- Purposes and Meanings in the Arts
- Roles of Artists in Communities
- Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change
- Inventions, Technologies and the Arts
- Interdisciplinary Connections

There are also independent strands that define Visual Arts:

- Methods, Materials, and Techniques
- Elements and Principals of Design
- Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression
- Drafting, Revising and Exhibiting

In elements of art and design, students consider the practical and theoretical aspects of art and design: line, shape, form, color, texture and pattern as well as balance, emphasis, rhythm, unity, variety, repetition, proportion, tension, contrast and space. They also understand the importance of taking care of tools and materials and are aware of health and safety aspects associated with using a variety of tools and materials. Visual Arts in society looks at its role in society and diverse cultures, both historical and contemporary.

In reflection and appreciation, students study and appreciate artwork from a range of cultures and media (including their own work) to develop their understanding of the principles of art and design in the world around them.

Visual Arts as a discipline includes the development of creative skills, verbal and nonverbal expression, an awareness of the perspectives of others and aesthetic appreciation.

Visual Arts enable students, including English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, to communicate in powerful ways that go beyond their spoken language ability. Through Visual Arts, students can begin to construct an understanding of their community, their environment, their own feelings and emotions and to develop their cultural awareness.

Visual Art is part of everyday life. It is a form of non-verbal communication that allows us to convey our ideas, feelings and emotions. Visual Art contributes to personal, social and physical development. Fine motor control is developed in the use of media and tools. Visual Art is both active and reflective. Students are given opportunities to reflect upon their work and the work of others as well as being actively involved in creating and collaborating with other students.

Students draw on a wide range of stimuli in their Visual Arts education: contemporary and historical literature, music, paintings, dance, their own imagination, real-life

experiences, feelings and beliefs. They display their work informally as well as formally to help develop an awareness of the audience through practical application.

Music

Course Description

Stamford's Music Program identifies the major expectations considered essential in our curriculum. These expectations are arranged into four strands:

- Performing (Singing and Playing Instruments)
- Creating and Composing
- Notation
- Listening and Appreciation

The performing strand is organized into sub-strands of singing and playing instruments.

Each of the strands is addressed separately, although in practice they are interactive and interrelated elements.

In performing – singing, students sing a repertoire of songs to display confidence, expression and an awareness of musical elements such as pitch and rhythm. Singing lies at the heart of the music curriculum as the voice is the most immediately available instrument for all students regardless of their age and ability.

In performing – playing instruments, students play musical pieces using a range of instruments to demonstrate style, expression and an understanding of melodic direction, tempo and dynamics. They perform solo and as part of an ensemble for an audience and follow directions from a conductor.

In creating and composing, students use their imagination and musical experience to organize sounds into various forms that communicate specific ideas or moods.

In notation, students use non-traditional and traditional notation to record their compositions.

In listening and appreciation, students are given the opportunity to identify and describe various musical elements such as rhythmic patterns, melodic patterns and form. They distinguish between a range of instrumental sounds and respond to different styles of music, as well as to music from different times and cultures.

Music as a discipline includes the development of creative skills, non-verbal expression and aesthetic appreciation. Music enables students, including EAL students, to communicate in powerful ways that go beyond their spoken language ability. Through music, students can begin to construct an understanding of their environment, recognize patterns and structure and develop their cultural awareness. Music is a part of everyday life. It is a form of non-verbal communication that allows us to convey our ideas, feelings and emotions. Music contributes to personal, social and physical development.

Music is both an active and reflective process. Students should be given opportunities to reflect upon their work and the work of others as well as being actively involved in creating and performing. Collaborative activities with students (in their own class and other classes) are encouraged. Where possible and appropriate, links are made with the school's program of inquiry.

All students from Pre-primary to Grade 5 will have two periods per week of specialist-led Music classes.

Drama

Course Description

Stamford American's Drama Program identifies the major expectations of our curriculum. These expectations are arranged into six strands:

- Creative exploration and expression
- Technical incorporation
- Performance
- Personal and social development
- Reflection, evaluation and appreciation
- Drama in society

Each of the strands is addressed separately, although in practice they are interactive and interrelated elements.

In creative exploration, students have the opportunity to develop their imaginative skills and creativity and to apply them in a variety of drama situations. In technical incorporation, students develop their understanding of some of the technical aspects of the drama process such as script writing, stage directions and the management of props, costumes, special effects and set design. In performance, students develop and portray characters and remain in a role in a given situation by using voice, body and gestures.

In personal and social development, students develop negotiation skills and are able to work independently and cooperatively in small groups. In reflection, evaluation and appreciation, students take time to reflect on their own work and the work of others in order to enhance performance. In drama in society, students discuss experiences of performing arts, explaining the way a story was communicated, recognizing theatrical conventions from other cultures and periods while identifying those elements of the production that were effective and those that were not.

Drama as a discipline includes the development of creative skills, verbal and non-verbal expression, an awareness of the perspective of others and aesthetic appreciation. Drama enables students to communicate in powerful ways that go beyond their spoken language ability. Through Drama, students can begin to construct an understanding of their community, environment and their own feelings and emotions. They have opportunities to work cooperatively to put together a performance.

Drama plays an important part in the language learning process. Through drama, storytelling and creative expression students are exposed to a language-rich environment that builds language skills. Drama is both an active and reflective process. Students are given opportunities to reflect upon their work and the work of others as well as being actively involved in creating and performing. Collaborative activities with other students (older or younger) are encouraged.

All classes from Pre-primary to Grade 5 have Drama instruction one period per week.

Physical Social and Personal Education (PSPE)

Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE) primarily relates to a student's well-being via the development of specific concepts, knowledge, attitudes and skills. In this way, well-being is central to all aspects of a student's experience at school and later in life. In an effort to gain an understanding of self, a student needs physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and social health skills which then provide a foundation for relationships and an active healthy lifestyle.

At Stamford American, we have two distinct strands which make up PSPE. They are Physical Education (PE) and Personal & Social Education (PSE).

Physical Education (PE)

Course Description

Stamford American's PE Program identifies the major expectations considered essential in our curriculum. These expectations are arranged into five strands:

- Motor skills and movement patterns
- Concepts, strategies and tactics for movement and performance
- Health and fitness
- Personal and social behaviour
- Lifetime physical activity

Body control and spatial awareness focuses on exploring the human body's capacity for movement, how to move around and in-between objects and ensure other individuals' safety. Adventure challenge encourages the students to solve problems collaboratively involving physical and critical thinking skills. PE exposes students to three elements of athletics: jumping, throwing and running. It develops the different techniques for the individual events while striving to improve student performance.

Movement to music is concerned with learning to move the body in a variety of ways in response to music, sounds or situations. It also involves awareness of the position of the body and how the body can be used to convey a feeling or emotion. Games sequentially develop the students' competence, confidence, success and enjoyment of the advanced skills and concepts associated with games and sports. Gymnastics exposes the students to a variety of skills: on the floor, using small equipment and various apparatus. Health-related activities develop an awareness of the importance of physical activity and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.



Through PE, students are learning the “language” of physical movement, exploring the skills associated with different strands of PE. They learn to understand what they can and cannot do physically and become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses in this discipline. Physical activity is an essential aspect of a well-balanced, healthy lifestyle and learning through PE helps to build self-esteem, confidence, cooperation and fitness.

Wherever possible and appropriate, links are made with the school’s program of inquiry. All students from Pre-primary to Grade 5 have two periods of PE per week.

Personal and Social Education (PSE)

Course Description

PSE is arranged into four main strands:

- Self-concept
- Health and safety
- Interaction with others
- Organization for learning

In self-concept, students develop an awareness of their feelings, beliefs and behavior. They learn to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. In health and safety, positive lifestyle choices to promote and maintain health are encouraged, and the development of safe behavior practices at home, school and in the community are considered. In interaction with others, social norms and values are considered, including strategies for the management of conflict as well as the study and acceptance of cultural, racial and religious similarities and differences. In organization for learning, strategies and choices in relation to becoming a successful learner are developed.

Although these strands are considered separately, in practice they are inextricably linked. Students develop aspects of PSE continually, across the strands, through different disciplines and at their own pace.

PSE provides the models, processes and values for handling social and personal issues and ensuring health and well-being. Through PSE, students will develop their self-identity, use appropriate social skills when interacting with others in a range of situations, and learn to communicate and manage their feelings, emotions and opinions. The expectations of PSE emphasize attitudes, behaviors and skills that are closely aligned with the PYP student profile. Students are given guidance to help develop positive attitudes and behaviors in order to meet challenges, make healthy lifestyle choices and serve as responsible, respectful members of society. This guidance is specific, explicit and continuous.

Through exposure to new and difficult issues in a non-threatening environment, students are able to develop their own positive values and prepare for their role as international citizens. The PSE curriculum encourages Personal and Social Education to be a way of thinking that permeates the school. The values, attitudes and concepts advocated within the PSE curriculum are reflected in all areas of school life via the relationships that exist within and beyond the school. They are the founding principles of policies that direct decision making at the school.

Second Step Social Curriculum

At Stamford American, we want all of our students to be successful and to achieve more than they believe they can. Success in school is not just about academic disciplines, it is also about knowing how to learn and how to get along with others. The Second Step Program is incorporated into our Personal, Social and Physical Education Program in Pre-primary through Grade 5 classes. The program helps students to develop critical skills necessary for success in school and in life and helps to prevent the development of problem behaviors. The Second Step Program promotes school success, school

connectedness and a safe and respectful school climate by developing students' self-regulation skills and social-emotional competencies.

Second Step was developed by the Committee for Children, a non-profit organization helping students develop skills that help them stay safe, manage their emotions, solve problems, avoid risky behavior and improve their academics. The Second Step Program received the prestigious "Exemplary" award from the U.S. Department of Education and also received the highest rating from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The Second Step Program focuses on building student skills and empowering students to appropriately express themselves. Some key focus areas of the program include:

- Skills for Learning – Students gain skills to help themselves learn, including how to focus their attention, listen carefully and be assertive when asking for help with schoolwork.
- Empathy – Students learn to identify and understand their own and others' feelings.

Students also learn how to take another's perspective and how to show compassion.

- Emotion Management – Students learn specific skills for calming down when experiencing strong feelings, such as anxiety or anger.
- Problem Solving – Students learn a process for solving problems with others in a positive way.

Instruction in Second Step is scheduled into the timetable on a weekly to bi-weekly basis. It is the primary resource for PSE and is used consistently across the school.

Modern Languages

Course Description

Stamford American requires that children study an additional language during their years in elementary school. We have seen far-reaching benefits associated with learning additional languages. Not only does an individual enjoy cognitive, personal and social gains by acquiring another language, but it provides a competitive advantage for successful participation in a highly globalized society. Language is a key factor in the development of international understanding and, as such, has a major role at Stamford.

Stamford recognizes that the study of languages is a foundation for all learning. Our school-wide Language Policy states that language study, including English, Modern Languages and Mother Tongue Languages, develops understanding, reinforces cultural identity, enhances personal growth and promotes effective communication.

The Modern Language Program encourages students to develop an interest and appreciation of other languages and cultures while also offering the opportunity to develop a useable command of English, Chinese or Spanish. Students work in a positive, encouraging environment to become responsible communicators, engaged in authentic and meaningful learning situations. Skills of listening, speaking and visual communication are strongly emphasized, as well as the reading and writing skills included in the upper elementary grades.

Students have daily lessons in Chinese, Spanish or EAL (English as an Additional Language). Each lesson is approximately 40 minutes long. Language learning instruction focuses on real communication and this focus defines proficiency in an additional language.

The components of competence that learners must possess if they are to be capable of using language for real communication include:

- Linguistic Structural Competence – Knowledge of vocabulary, sound and language structures through a wide variety of multi-sensorial activities. New vocabulary and language structures are presented in a meaningful context. Students see clearly how the language is relevant to their lives, thus increasing motivation and learning.
- Sociolinguistic Competence – Knowledge of how to use language appropriately in different contexts. Students acquire developmentally appropriate cultural knowledge for use in authentic situations, such as in correspondence with pen pals and on school trips.
- Discourse Competence – Linking elements of language together to take part in discourse, for example, conversation, role plays, creative dramatic skits or short oral presentations.
- Strategic Competence – Knowledge of appropriate strategies in learning the new language.
- Cultural Competence – Appreciation of language and culture (includes sensitivity towards attitudes, norms and cultures in which other languages are spoken).

The Modern Language department provides a positive experience in the learning of an additional language and aims to develop the attributes of empathy, open-mindedness and risk-taking.

Information Literacy and Technology

Course Description

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the PYP encompasses the use of a wide range of digital tools, media and learning environments for teaching, learning and assessing. ICT provides opportunities for the transformation of teaching and learning and enables students to investigate, create, communicate, collaborate, organize and be responsible for their own learning and actions. ICT allows students to make connections and reach a deeper understanding of its relevance and applicability to their everyday lives. Through the use of ICT, learners develop and apply strategies for critical and creative thinking, engage in inquiry, make connections and apply new understandings and skills in different contexts.

The aim of the Information Literacy and Technology Program is to develop students' ability to confidently acquire, process and communicate information and explore creative ways of transforming data.

The curriculum determines the use of information literacy. Once teachers have identified the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed during a program of inquiry they consider the most appropriate way to enhance the students' learning and investigate the questions the students are exploring. The ICT Integrationists work closely with homeroom teachers to ensure the maximum benefit is obtained from technology and the LRMC.

Interactive monitors and tablets are used as teaching and learning tools across all areas of the curriculum in order to support the program of inquiry in the classroom. They are used to assist the effective access, storage, retrieval, organization and

presentation of information, and enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills. Teachers incorporate the use of computers into all areas of classroom programs as appropriate. All students from Pre-primary to Grade 5 have 1-to-1 access to tablets in their classrooms. A range of printers, digital and video cameras and other equipment is provided for use by the students. Identified computer skills and knowledge are taught in specific computer sessions or incidentally as the need arises. Students develop presentations, podcasts, videos and mind maps.

Access to technology enhances student learning by:

- Enabling them to access people, resources and ideas that would not otherwise be available
- Enabling them to creatively compile and manipulate information and ideas in various forms from a wide range of sources
- Accommodating varied learning styles, pace and preferences
- Encouraging higher order thinking skills
- Facilitating the production of high quality, creative work
- Increasing motivation for learning, facilitating independent learning

Learning Expeditions

Course Description

The Upper Elementary School Learning Expeditions are unique learning opportunities outside of the school environment. These opportunities include a focus on further developing cultural and environmental awareness as well as physical skills. The Learning Expeditions experience contributes significantly to students discovering more about themselves and their relationships with their fellow students, and develops a closer and more supportive community as students and staff learn together.

Learning Expeditions are viewed as an integral and necessary part in the delivery of a balanced curriculum. Time spent away on grade-level expeditions in this international setting contributes to building the values and behaviors expected of our students in their quest to become global citizens.

Students are expected to attend their grade-level Learning Expedition. If students are unable to attend, parents are requested to make arrangements for children to remain at home throughout the duration of the Learning Expedition and return to school when their classmates return from the expedition.

Grade 4 and 5 Learning Expedition

Students who attend these trips will:

- Continue their commitment to life-long learning
- Gain a deeper understanding of organizations that improve the lives of others
- Promote and encourage CAS (Community Action Service)
- Promote cooperation amongst peers
- Develop teamwork skills
- Build relationships between students and between teachers and students
- Foster cross-cultural awareness and respect

Global Mentor Program

Stamford American enriches the academic program by inviting visiting mentors to present to students on topics that fall within the curriculum but require specialist expertise. In this way, the school seeks to make students aware of the rich diversity of this globalized world and share a variety of experiences with them. Stamford American's Global Mentor Program gives students access to leading global figures in the fields of business, science, social enterprise, athletics and the arts to motivate them to excel in their chosen paths.

Assessment

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to our goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning:

- Understanding of concepts
- Acquisition of knowledge
- Mastering of skills
- Development of attitudes
- Decision to take action

Both students and teachers are actively engaged in assessing the student's progress as part of the development of their wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. The purpose of assessment is to promote student learning, to provide information about student learning and to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

Effective assessments:

- Identify what is worth knowing and assess it
- Have criteria that are known and understood in advance
- Allow students to demonstrate the range of their conceptual understandings, their knowledge and their skills
- Are made of tasks that require the synthesis and application of their learning
- Focus on big ideas and transdisciplinary skills rather than facts
- Focus on producing a quality product or performance
- Highlight a student's strength and expertise
- Take into account different ways of learning and knowing and are sensitive to personal circumstances
- Use scoring that focuses on the essence of the task and not on what is easiest to score
- Produce evidence that can be reported and understood by students, parents, teachers and administration
- Are ongoing and cumulative
- Are subject to continuous review and improvement

Ongoing assessment provides insights into students' understanding, knowledge, skill and attitudes. These are necessary to plan further activities, which address issues of concern to the teacher and the students. Teachers will use some of the following methods for collecting data about students:

- Observations – Students are observed often and regularly, as part of a group or as an individual and both with teacher guidance and without.
- Performance Assessments – Assessments are goal-directed tasks with established criteria. In these tasks there are numerous approaches to the problem and rarely only one correct response. Audio, video and narrative records are often useful for this kind of assessment.
- Process Focused Assessments – Students are observed often and regularly for typical and non-typical behaviors. Teachers use multiple observations and often use checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions.
- Selected Responses – These are single-occasion, one-dimensional exercises. Tests and quizzes are familiar examples.
- Open-Ended Tasks – These are situations in which students are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate an original response. The answer might be a brief written answer, a drawing, a diagram or a solution.
- Portfolios – This is a purposeful collection of a student's work that is designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher order thinking, creativity and reflection. Portfolios should not be thought of as a collection of work but rather as an exhibition of an active mind at work.

Teachers evaluate the types of assessment using the following:

- Rubrics – These are an established set of criteria used for scoring or rating students' tests, performances or portfolios. The descriptors tell the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in students' work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by students as well as by teachers.
- Benchmarks – These are samples of students' work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Generally there is one benchmark for each achievement level in a scoring rubric.

Standardized Testing

NWEA Measurement of Academic Progress® (MAP®)

Assessment of student performance takes place within the school on a regular basis.

External testing provides a benchmark for student progress and allows Stamford to monitor the achievement of individual students and also the value of the written curriculum. Stamford American administers the adaptive NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) standardized testing, which is aligned with the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) standards. Testing takes place in the fall and in the spring and progress of students as individuals and by grade levels will be measured and used to support our highly differentiated approach.

Students will have individual performance targets based on their internal and external assessments. Student reading levels (lexile level) are used in conjunction with other assessments to develop individual plans for reading development. Student mathematics scores are used in conjunction with MAP® mathematics standards to plan a differentiated and targeted path for each student.



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