THE RED OAKS
SCHOOL

PARENT CURRICULUM GUIDE

2023–2024 Upper Elementary Program
(Grades 3 & 4)

Upper Elementary at The Red Oaks School

The Upper Elementary experience at ROS bridges the ROS Montessori-influenced experience and the ROS Middle School's International Baccalaureate curriculum. Maria Montessori concluded that students at this age were continually attempting to answer questions regarding the world as nature created it and culture as humankind has defined it. The Upper Elementary program is the ROS student's Montessori experience capstone. The commitment to individual student's academic potential continues to be paramount. At the same time, collaborative experiences hold a special place in the Upper Elementary grades. Picture students alongside each other, learning to collaborate and tap into each other's skills within the working group.

Student inquiry is the "secret ingredient" in the Upper Elementary at ROS. Teachers carefully plan to provide an integrated experience full of opportunities for students to initiate their course of study. In each classroom, students read and write to develop their literacy skills. Teachers from each discipline work together annually to craft curricula with deliberate integration across subject areas. The curriculum has breadth enough to allow students to pursue studies in areas of personal interest, maintaining students' interest and autonomy.

The course of study draws from various current, researched educational resources.
ROS teachers and administration consistently evaluate curricula to ensure they are effective, motivating, and consistent with the school's commitment to the "whole child," a phrase used to express Montessori's belief that education must address not only the student's academic needs but their social and physical needs as well. In concert with Montessori practice and the ROS student's previous experience, teachers continue to serve as models, often thinking aloud or demonstrating concepts to "show" rather than "tell." Students also have opportunities to serve as models and leaders. Daily, students work collectively and in small groups toward common goals. This practice builds confidence in interpreting the nuances of group dynamics.

The upper elementary schedule provides lengthy, focused academic periods to enable students to delve deeply into their studies. Students move between three classrooms, each with a subject-specialist teacher. Students use "period" scheduling to improve their organizational skills and develop flexibility. Music, Art, Spanish, Makerspace, and Physical Education are important program elements. Specials are highly engaging, and students attend two enriching specials each afternoon.

Specific Areas of Study:

Language Arts

Language Arts at ROS includes comprehensive reading, writing, word study, and vocabulary instruction. The ROS Upper Elementary curriculum uses a reading and writing workshop model based on Columbia Teachers College's Reading and Writing Workshop. The program also incorporates *Thinking Maps*® and Judith Hochman's *Teaching Basic Writing Skills* as well. The workshop structure fosters independent, capable readers and writers through an "I do, We do, You do" approach. First, the teacher introduces a specific strategy and then models it for the whole class or small group. Then, students have repeated opportunities to work together in small groups or partnerships to practice the new strategy. Eventually, students begin to use strategies independently with ongoing teacher support until they have internalized the skills, and it becomes an automatic part of the reading and writing process. While third and fourth-graders complete the same reading and writing assignments in an integrated multi-age classroom, students learn and grow at individual rates. The teacher provides ongoing support and feedback as students become fluent readers and writers.

Instruction at ROS is highly personalized to the needs of the students. The teacher continually conducts purposeful assessments to ensure each student remains challenged and that academic groups engage and inspire students. Regular individual teacher/student conferencing and teacher reviews of student work are formative assessments that shape the curriculum. This year, we will seek to answer the essential question, *"How does perspective influence stories?"*. Students will thoroughly examine the effects of setting, characters, and conflicts throughout each unit.

Teachers collaborate to integrate the Social Studies curriculum with the Language Arts curriculum to create a balanced approach to Upper Elementary literacy. During comprehensive studies of biographies, mystery novels, poetry, and realistic fiction, students will delve into experiencing multiple characters' perspectives and how this shapes the story they tell. The year will culminate with the student's personal stories shaped by their unique place in the world.

During Grades 3 and 4, students' reading skills pass a developmental milestone. Upper Elementary is a time in which the students "learn to read" and "read to learn." Teachers formally assess students' reading levels several times a year. The *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* helps to evaluate students' fluency and comprehension. Teachers share these results with the student, who, in turn, uses the information to craft personal reading goals. The Language Arts teacher makes a point not only to know each student's reading skills but also their reading interests so they can help the students find joy in reading.

The Reading Workshop curriculum model recognizes the importance of student engagement. The curriculum encourages meaningful interactions between students and the texts they are reading. In the Reading Workshop, the teacher thoughtfully selects texts that illustrate a particular strategy or concept. During group "Think Alouds," the group collectively analyzes texts using the introduced strategy and new content-specific vocabulary before the student is expected to apply a strategy individually.

Independent reading of appropriately leveled books is a core component of the Reading Workshop. The 3rd/4th grade Language Arts classroom has a leveled classroom library. Based on their assessment results, students hone the skill to select texts at a “just right” reading book at school and home. Since exposure to a wide variety of literature and high-interest nonfiction is important to students’ growth as readers, the teachers also guide book choices.

By routinely reading books of their choice, students develop proper reading habits, increase their reading stamina, and learn how to transfer skills from reading lessons to the context of authentic books. Students read at their own pace, moving ahead or rereading as necessary. The teacher assigns activities for independent reading that guide students in applying explicitly taught reading strategies to their independent reading. Students communicate their thinking about reading through various written and spoken comprehension activities, which involve partnership or group work. During the Reading Workshop, students frequently share their thinking with their assigned reading partner and other students. Their rich reflections and discussions with teachers and peers go beyond right and wrong answers to basic comprehension questions. Upper Elementary students are active and engaged readers who develop lifelong abilities to comprehend, question, and wonder as they read.

Writing is a daily part of the Upper Elementary classroom as students develop stamina and written expression skills. The 3rd/4th grade curriculum is a fusion of the Writers Workshop model and the evidence-based *Teaching Basic Writing Skills* program. Students learn that writing improves by following a multi-stage process that includes brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. This process repeats within every unit of study in writing. Through explicit modeling of each stage in the writing process and consistent classroom procedures, students internalize the sequence of steps necessary to compose rich and coherent compositions.

The teacher consistently models rich and coherent writing and shares examples of successful student work to inspire others. Students use the *Thinking Maps*® they have used since Kindergarten to plan their writing pieces. For example, a Multi-Flow Map showing cause and effect helps students organize their reasons and results to prepare for a personal essay or write a personal narrative. *Thinking Maps*® are a way to explicitly teach different text structures in a way that is segmented and understandable to various learning styles, especially visual learners.

The teacher assesses students’ final writing assignments for each unit throughout the year using writing rubrics. Students are exposed to the writing rubric and goals at the onset of the assignments so that they are fully aware of the expectations of each written piece. The teacher shares and discusses assessment results with the students so they grow aware of their strengths and areas to improve. Furthermore, self-assessment drives students' journeys as they think metacognitively about themselves as writers and set personalized goals. Students keep portfolios of their scored pieces and subsequent work to show at parent conferences. The class celebrates their accomplishments at the end of a unit with a “Publishing Party,” in which an authentic audience of students, teachers, or parents read the published compositions and provide positive feedback.

Students will engage in word study using Explode the Code. A developmentally based approach to word study, Explode the Code incorporates phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary,

comprehension, fluency, and spelling. the study of phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction. Since word knowledge is developmental, students explore how understanding word structure at the alphabetic, pattern, and meaning levels successively builds upon one another. Students interact with new words efficiently, fluently, and meaningfully by focusing on a specific rule each week. Students are empowered with their knowledge of word patterns and apply multiple strategies to decode and encode unfamiliar words. Word study instructional groups of no more than six students meet individually with the teacher for lessons. Students use an online system for assessment that tracks their progress.

Vocabulary is an essential component of a balanced literacy program. Using an educational approach developed by Isabel J. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan's *Bringing Words to Life*, students engage with a robust approach to vocabulary. The teacher introduces words directly, and students practice playful, critical thinking activities during the week. By having to explain their thinking as they work through examples/non-examples, word associations, and word relationships, students create a context around the word, and it becomes part of a network of their ideas. Students will also be using Wordly Wise i3000, an interactive online program that provides direct academic vocabulary instruction. The program automatically scores practice activities and assessments so the teacher has immediate insight into student learning.

**Thinking Maps* help students organize their thoughts, categorize, compare and contrast, sequence, and select pertinent facts from all of the information they have collected about a particular subject.

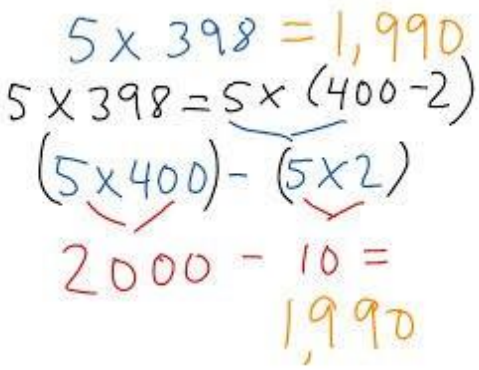
Math

The Red Oak's Upper Elementary Math program seeks to create young mathematicians by tapping into their intrinsic curiosity and fascination with math. Red Oaks School aims for "mathematical proficiency," a broader instructional outcome than simple computational mastery. There are five strands of math proficiency that form the foundation of the program: conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition. Students use a variety of problem-solving techniques. They are encouraged to think deeply, use models, adapt methods, take risks, and enjoy math! The Upper Elementary Math curriculum ensures that students are confident in their understanding of skills and strategies necessary to matriculate to the pre-algebra courses the ROS Middle School offers.

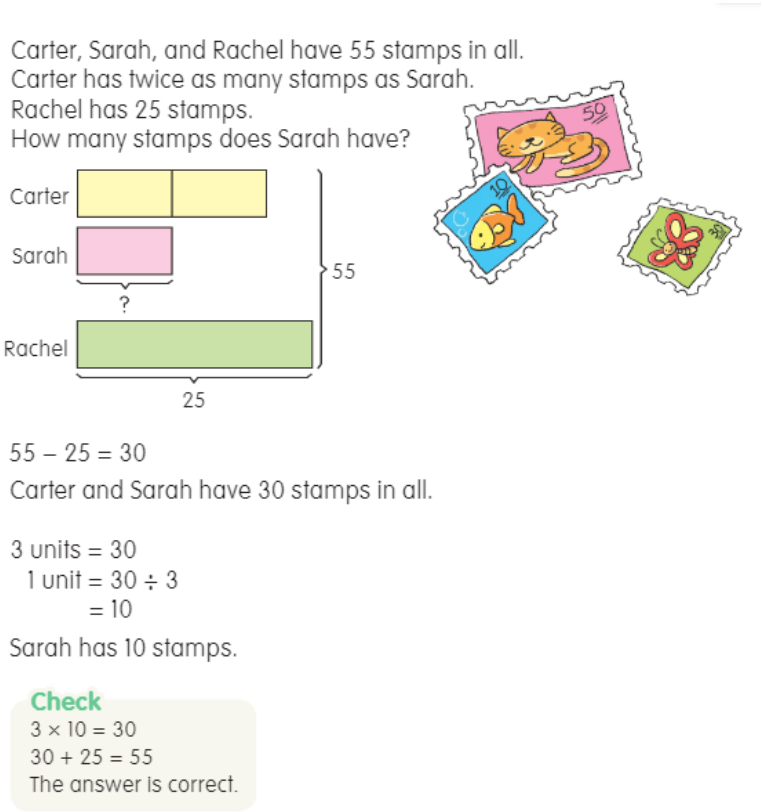
Lessons predominantly follow the Math in Focus scope and sequence, a balanced Singapore math curriculum incorporating Common Core standards. The Red Oak's curriculum provides a coherent sequence of topics that gives students time to master foundational topics, so little repetition is required the following year. Some topics repeat from the previous year, but students study those topics in greater depth.

Students develop a deep comprehension of mathematical concepts and operations by following a path to abstraction. Montessori materials are integrated seamlessly into the learning process. Students begin learning a computation strategy by working with "concrete" manipulatives to act out an operation. They continue their practice by drawing "pictorial" models of the problem.

Finally, they learn to represent a problem in its most abstract form: a pencil-and-paper algorithm. Sophisticated Montessori materials are available in several forms of abstraction, allowing the teacher to individualize instruction to each student.



Some highlights of the Singapore math program include its use of mental math strategies and bar modeling for problem-solving. The teacher models mental math strategies explicitly (making tens, branching, left to right addition, compensation) in order to teach children how to break apart numbers. Students use these strategies to carry out computational procedures flexibly, efficiently, and accurately.



Model drawing is a strategy that helps students interpret and solve complex word problems. Students learn steps to understand a problem and include essential details by drawing a model. Dovetailing with Montessori philosophy, teachers demonstrate how to model the steps to small

groups of students. Because the same steps are consistently applied, students can work independently to approach various challenging problems.

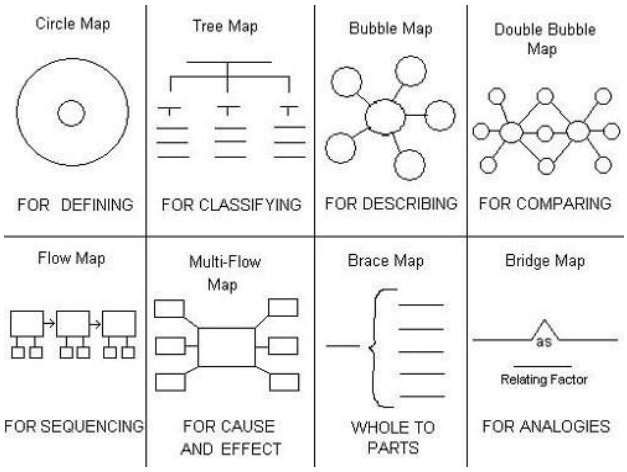
The Upper Elementary program helps students appreciate the value of mathematics by extending experiences "beyond the book." Students work through complex projects and homework assignments based on real-world problems to practice and build confidence. They further develop their strategic competence and adaptive reasoning skills in the process. In addition to frequent model drawing practice, additional problem-solving heuristics (guess and check, logical reasoning, finding patterns, etc.) are embedded in each unit of study to help students become confident and flexible problem-solvers.

Red Oaks tracks students' growth frequently and consistently to ensure they are making appropriate progress. The teacher assesses formatively daily during group and individual practice. Student progress is monitored daily, with summative assessments at the unit's conclusion. Enrichment and remediation are offered flexibly during or after a unit study. This individualization allows students to remain both stretched and excited. Students graduate from the Upper Elementary mathematics program with a productive disposition, inspired and confident in their abilities to do challenging math.

Grade 3 Math Topics:	**Grade 4 Math Topics:**
Numbers to 10,000 Addition and Subtraction Problem Solving with Bar Models Multiplication Tables Multiplication Fractions Metric Measurement Area and Perimeter Time and Temperature Graphs & Line Plots Angles, Lines, & 2-D Figures	Place Value of Whole Numbers Whole Number Multiplication and Division Fractions and Mixed Numbers Decimals Conversion of Measurements Area and Perimeter Angles and Line Segments Polygons & Symmetry Tables and Line Graphs

Critical Thinking

At Red Oaks, critical thinking is an essential part of every academic subject. The School has adopted *Thinking Maps*®, a graphics series that encourage and record thinking. The maps are consistent visual patterns linked directly to eight specific thought processes. By visualizing their thinking, students create concrete images of abstract thoughts. These patterns help all students reach higher levels of critical and creative thinking -- essential components of effective and current educational practice. Schoolwide implementation establishes a common language for learning and sharing. Teachers model using maps across the curriculum and provide guided practice until student proficiency is reached. The maps are a daily part of classroom life and can be seen strewn across hallways and walls throughout the building.



Students' curiosity influences the curriculum as teachers adapt the course of study to address students' own questions. Students are helped to think about how to learn. Students become comfortable with open-ended discussions. They learn to express their opinions while listening and respecting other points of view.

Science

The upper elementary science program at Red Oaks School is adapted from the Smithsonian's Science and Technology Concepts and the National Science Foundation. In a two-year sequence, students engage in an interactive science program that incorporates the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which includes physical, life, earth/space sciences, engineering, and technology.

Science in the Upper Elementary classroom is inquiry-driven, student-centered, and collaborative. The science curriculum focuses on developing observation, measurement, and inference skills. The students are constantly engaged in connecting to their world and exploring patterns and cycles. The activities in science class are hands-on, enabling the students to make discoveries for themselves in concert with teacher guidance.

As our students progress in our science program, we have them apply their understanding of the laws and concepts guiding science to solve problems. In our upper elementary grades, we have our students develop the skills of critical thinking, collaboration, & communication. Our goal is to foster an application of scientific ideas by designing, testing, and refining one's thinking based on conceptual and experiential investigations.

By the time our students enter middle school they have begun to demonstrate proficiency in gathering, describing, and using data/evidence to explain *why* a natural or manufactured phenomenon occurs. We monitor our learners' progress by embedding formative, self, and summative assessments that examine a student's understanding of disciplinary core ideas, cross-cutting concepts, and science and engineering practices.

Units of study: 2023/2024

Unit: How can we provide energy to people's homes?
In the unit, "Energy to People's Homes," learners explore how energy moves and changes and is obtained and converted for practical purposes to extend our study of environmental science. Various energy-based models are engineered by students to help them determine the best energy resource solution for real-world scenarios that are based on different criteria and constraints. Our learners are challenged to demonstrate their understanding of energy movement and resources by seeking a solution to an engineering problem by designing, building, and testing self-created models.

Unit: How do motion and energy change in a collision?
In the unit "Changing motion and energy in collisions," we seek to engage students in the related disciplinary core ideas through game-based learning activities that involve non-digital investigations to enhance students' knowledge of physical science and skill acquisition to examine how motion energy can move and change in a collision. By examining the energy and motion of objects in this manner, students are able to advance the depth and complexity of their understanding swiftly. By the end of the unit, students recognize that force, energy, and motion exist in a proportional relationship that varies in magnitude.

Unit: What Explains Similarities and Differences Between Organisms?
In the unit "What Explains Similarities and Differences Between Organisms?" students will begin to examine biology through genetics on a preliminary level. They will depict the difference between physical traits an organism gets from its parents vs. traits that are obtained due to the ever-changing environment. Through a series of laboratory activities and demonstrations, learners will begin to connect to the changes organisms undergo throughout their lifetime and how unexpected inherited traits may be advantageous to an organism's success. By the end of the unit, our students begin to recognize that how an object is structured determines many of its properties and functions.

Social Studies

Our Upper Elementary social studies courses approach learning with Enduring Understanding and Essential Questions in mind. In every unit, students explore such questions as:

- **Culture:** What are the common characteristics of different cultures? What does it mean to respect other cultures?
- **Time, Continuity, and Change:** What happened in the past? How is the past connected to the present? How do countries and cultures change over time? How are communities changing now?
- **People, Places, and Environments:** How are people interconnected to the natural environment? How does the geography of a place affect its culture, lifestyle, and population? How does location affect how people meet their basic needs? How can I impact my environment?

Upper Elementary students will study early American history. Geography is the foundation for the inquiry as students use different types of maps to learn about the settlement of North America. The students learn from maps and teacher-prepared resources that shed light on how people live as a result of various geographical features.

Units of study: 2023/2024

Third-grade students will explore the reasons surrounding the migration from England to establishing settlements in North America. They will learn about the three colonial regions and compare/contrast the laws, daily life, education, occupations, religious practices, and presence of slavery in each region. Third-grade students will explore the causes of the American Revolution due to the unhappiness of being governed by a faraway power. Students will learn about major events during the revolution and research key figures of the period.

Fourth-grade students' social studies curriculum centers around change and how people, environments, landscapes, and technology interact to create a new nation and culture. Students study the periods of time between the American Civil War and the Industrial Revolution. The fourth graders begin the year studying the American Civil War, investigating the intricate balance between economic and social forces that led to conflict. Next, the students learn about the Industrial Revolution and how new technologies impacted our growing country. To finish the year, the students study westward expansions and its impact on the native peoples, animals, and settlers. All students will complete the year learning about the government's different branches, functions, and citizens' rights. We will also spend time looking at the Constitution.

Spanish

The objectives of the Spanish program for third and fourth-year students are to:

- Acquire fluency in speaking in full sentences and creating original sentences about different themes relevant to the student's life.
- Speak with the correct accent, pronunciation, and enunciation.
- Write sentences and paragraphs and /or create videos applying grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and vocabulary.

Our curriculum will be based on the textbook *Alba y Gael 2*. Each unit introduces a different theme relevant to the students' lives, building and expanding their vocabulary. The themes covered are date, time, weather, school, food, activities, and animals. In grammar, the students learn verb conjugations, the plural of nouns and articles, noun and adjective agreement, and the proper use of pronouns.

The students will practice their skills using their workbooks *Alba y Gael 2.* This book reinforces vocabulary and grammar. Students will move towards proficiency in writing sentences and dialogue and applying all the new vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures

introduced in a particular unit. This year, students will set up a *Duolingo* account online to further practice Spanish vocabulary and grammar.

This year, our area of focus will be Mexico. We will learn about this Spanish-speaking country through songs, food, presentations, books, dance, and geography. In addition, students will participate in role-play, cultural lessons, songs, and games. In the spring, a Spanish assembly will highlight what students have learned throughout the year.

Art

*Students will enjoy a performing arts program until our visual arts teacher returns from maternity leave. Arts educator, director, and choreographer Dawn Lau will train the students to grow comfortable with dramatic expression using improvisation techniques. As the students gain confidence, they memorize a song and dance to perform. The program offers unique methods of exercising a "growth mindset" by taking risks and stretching each student out of the "comfort zone!"

The art program at Red Oaks offers students opportunities to explore a broad range of art-making techniques while synthesizing craft and concepts. Students build their conceptual and historical understanding of visual culture by manipulating materials, observing, and engaging in ongoing discussions with their peers. These explorations in self-reflection and communication provide tools for students to see and respond to the world around them.

Through the fine arts program at Red Oaks, students participate in a rigorous study of the arts comprised of the following components:

- **Art production:** Involves critical thinking and imaginative processes and the expression of the heart, mind, and hand. Students gain a sense of proficiency as they are introduced to various art processes. Each student is given the time and space to learn about tools and techniques and experiment and improvise.

- **The History of Art and Visual Culture:** An integrated approach to the investigation of visual culture includes the history and contemporary application of art, design, and craft. Students develop an authentic kinship with masters of the past and present by relating their own creative process and explorations of concepts to the work of others.

The Upper Elementary art curriculum explores drawing and painting techniques that are essential for basic elements of art and design. Students continue studying famous artists throughout history and present-day artists who have influenced the art world, such as Elizabeth Catlett, Favianna Rodriguez, Swoon, and Kehinde Wiley. Elements of Art and Principles of Design are important in the projects created each year. During their project building, students practice the importance of "drawing what you see and not what you think you see" as an ongoing motto. They deepen their understanding of shadow, light, and value and learn to create compositions using these elements. Students discover diverse cultures worldwide through various art-making experiences and techniques passed down from generation to generation, such as print-making, illustration, three-dimensional sculpture, or painting.

Makerspace

At ROS Makerspace is not just a room, It's a community of young makers. Students from all grade levels come together to explore, create, and innovate. It's a place where imagination knows no limits and everyone is encouraged to embrace their inner inventor.

In our Makerspace, students have access to a treasure trove of materials and tools all carefully curated to support hands-on learning. Applying the 4 C's - Creativity, Critical thinking, Collaboration, and Communication students come together to create, invent, prototype, design, tinker, explore, discover, code, build, craft, draft, draw, and much more. Students work individually or collaboratively using low and high-tech tools and materials.

The objective of this program is to promote:

- **Creativity:** It encourages students to think outside the box, fostering creativity and innovation.
- **Hands-on learning:** It's a place where students learn by doing, applying classroom knowledge to real-world challenges.
- **Problem Solving:** Through trial and error students develop critical problem-solving skills as they tackle projects.
- **Collaboration:** Teamwork is the key in the maker space, promoting communication and cooperation among the students.
- **Engagement:** Learning is fun here! Students eagerly embrace projects that ignite their curiosity.
- **Integration:** Deep learning takes place through cross-curricular experiences. Instead of teaching students in isolated settings, we see the importance of integrating makerspace into their curriculum.

As students tinker they analyze what's working and what's not, and they have to try different tactics to solve problems. Through the *Engineering Design Process,* kids learn to define, ask, imagine, plan, prototype, test, and improve their experiments, accept failures, make improvements, and develop resilience. The Makerspace is interdisciplinary; its projects are an extension of the Social Studies, Science, and Math curriculum units. The design thinking process helps students be involved in finding alternatives/solutions to real-life problems around us and will help prepare students for the Design program at the Middle School.

Music

Music at ROS is both expressive and explorative. Students consider music from a wide variety of sources to understand and foster respect for cultures extending far beyond their experiences. Simultaneously, students learn fundamental skills to engender confidence and creative spirits. Students' early musical experiences help to set the stage for the perseverance needed for later study and practice.

Three principles guide the music program at The Red Oaks School:

- Children respond intuitively to rhythm and melody.
- Musical sounds are created by musical actions upon an instrument.
- Musical concepts are discussed only after they have been experienced.

The Upper Elementary music program expands students' knowledge and skills to bring more emotional depth to their compositions and performances. Advanced rhythms, extended pitch ranges, and expressive elements are explored, practiced, and applied. This year, students will learn to play the recorder, develop instrumental technique and strengthen music literacy in preparation for middle school music pursuits. Composition activities will promote thoughtful consideration and creative application of learning. By reflecting on their experiences, students will grow in self-confidence and self-awareness. Throughout the year, lessons and activities will foster artistic literacy through the processes of creating, performing, responding, and connecting.

Physical Education

The Red Oaks Physical Education curriculum is designed to help develop students' physical literacy. The International Physical Literacy Association (2017) describes physical literacy as, "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life."

Upon entering Upper Elementary physical education, students embark on another path in their lifelong physical literacy journey. They formally encounter the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) framework for the first time. Developed by Bunker and Thorpe in the 1980s, TGfU is an inquiry-based approach to teaching physical education. It focuses on teaching students tactics, decision-making, and problem-solving skills by playing modified, small-sided versions of games that share a similar structure. Games can be broken down into the following categories:

Invasion games	**Net/wall games**	**Striking/fielding games**	**Target games**
Soccer Basketball Hockey Football Rugby Ultimate frisbee Lacrosse Handball	Volleyball Pickleball Tennis Badminton Squash	Baseball Softball Cricket kickball	Bowling Golf Cornhole Archery

Within these categories, students will explore concepts such as positioning and movement, and offensive and defensive strategies and tactics within the modified, small-sided games. Drawing

from the strong base of fundamental movement skills developed in Early Childhood and Lower Elementary, students are introduced to and develop sport-specific skills when they are developmentally appropriate within the context of the TGfU model.

Our units of instruction for this school year are as follows:

- Locomotor Movement Skills
- Invasion games
- Net/Wall games
- Movement Composition (Gymnastics & Dance)
- Striking/fielding games
- Target games

Embedded within these units of instruction are opportunities for Upper Elementary students to continue to develop their teamwork, cooperation, and communication skills through the small-sided games and activities.