



CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

WELCOME TO THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

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Executive Summary

At North Park Elementary School curriculum is the school's utmost priority. It is imperative that all students experience the most current and well-researched academic programs. This curriculum overview outlines the key features of our programming and highlights important focuses at each grade level.

While administrators and teachers are continuously reflecting, evaluating, and adapting to stay in line with best practices, during each school year, a subject area is the focus of a comprehensive curriculum study in order to ensure that all areas are reviewed in an extensive and thoughtful way on a regular basis. During the 2014-2015 school year, an NPES teacher committee led by the Director of Curriculum will be working on reviewing and updating the science curriculum. The math goals and plans outlined in the 2013-2014 school year will begin to be implemented as well.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

LANGUAGE ARTS

Kindergarten-8th Grade Language Arts:

North Park Elementary School teachers use the **Reading and Writing Workshop** approach to develop skills for reading and writing while also building student proficiency and stamina in both areas. This program allows for authentic differentiation as students work to improve their own writing in a meaningful way, and asks students to make real connections with reading and writing in the world around them. The curriculum is primarily based on the work of Lucy Calkins from The Teachers College, Columbia University.

- The benefits of a Reading and Writing Workshop include:
 - **INDEPENDENCE:** Students can develop the independence they crave during choice time when students work alone, in pairs, or in small groups.
 - **GUIDED PRACTICE:** The blocks of time available during workshop allow students to practice and apply strategies and skills to new materials under expert guidance of the teacher.
 - **SOCIAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING:** The collaborative and interactive nature of the program allow students to learn from one another in an engaging way.
 - **FLEXIBLE GROUPING:** Students learn to work independently allowing teachers to meet with individuals or small groups and focus on the specific needs of each group.
- Teachers supplement the Reading and Writing Workshop approach with spelling, word-study, and grammar lessons.
- The scope and sequence of the language arts curriculum is based on the National Council of Teachers of English Standards as well as the Illinois State Standards.
- Essential Units have been chosen for each grade. As a result, the program is spiraled K-8. For example, students work on narrative writing in a different, more advanced format alternating years.

MATH

In the 2013-2014 school year, the math curriculum was reviewed by a committee of teachers guided by the Director of Curriculum. As a result of the examination of our program, relevant research, and parent/teacher feedback, a math philosophy and several goals with accompanying plans were identified.

While greater details are outlined in the full report, some main findings are:

- Everyday Math is generally positively received by parents and teachers, and aligns with the NPES philosophy of math education. While there is interest in examining other programs, due to the upcoming principal transition, ongoing work of publishers to align with Common Core Standards, and the effectiveness of the current program, it does not seem prudent to adopt a new formalized curriculum at this time. Instead the focus will be on improving the quality of our teaching and support for students and the community.
- Math education at NPES can and will be improved in key areas. These are:
 - differentiation for both high and low students
 - quality and type of data available to teachers to guide instruction
 - extracurricular math opportunities for students
 - integration of math and science (and potentially art) topics (STEM)
 - teacher knowledge base about math concepts and specific math pedagogy skills (particularly for general elementary teachers)
 - integration of common core with a particular focus on 8 Mathematical Practices
 - literacy in the mathematics classroom
 - inclusion of the broader community in math learning
 - move toward more problem-based, experiential learning activities

As we move forward our work will be guided by the following philosophy:

The NPES mathematics curriculum, through the use of Everyday Mathematics, aligns with National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and Common Core State Standards and combines computation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills in a format that ties math to students' lives.

At NPES we feel that math is a common language that is living all around us. At all grade levels, math is about exploration and discovery. Within this approach, we allow students to examine multiple methods to finding a solution and emphasize a true conceptual understanding prior to utilizing algorithms. While students form their own meaning, teachers shape learning environments, guide the development of reasoning, share strategies, and help students learn to analyze their understanding together through communication. Laying this foundation of authentic number sense and meaning making allows for deeper examination of mathematical problems. With that said, at NPES we also value and develop the skill of automatic recall of number facts and procedures at an appropriate age. We believe it is fundamental that traditional methods of learning quantitative skills are blended with engaging projects to help students enjoy being lifelong learners of mathematics, and continue the focus on "playing" in math as the student progresses through the grades. A balanced approach creates well rounded math students.

Math education hones in on many of a student's general cognitive and life skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, reasoning, finding patterns, and examining the logical. Math students exhibit patience, flexibility, perseverance, creativity, and ingenuity. Communication is a key skill for all math students and NPES mathematicians are expected to explain their thinking verbally and in writing, and engage in dialogue around mathematics problems. Within this context of collaboration and community, it is imperative that authentic differentiation happens in the math classroom and that students of various abilities have their needs met.

The NPES math student:

- takes risk and approaches problems from multiple angles.
- perseveres in the face of difficult tasks.
- supports ideas with evidence.
- uses appropriate tools (technological and other) strategically to support learning.
- accesses the understanding of peers and critiques the reasoning of others.
- identifies new discoveries and finds patterns.
- examines the logic of discoveries.
- builds on pre-existing information.
- demonstrates knowledge and understanding in writing and discussions.
- shows metacognition about mathematical thinking and sets goals when age appropriate.
- utilizes appropriate vocabulary and communicates precisely.

The NPES math teacher:

- creates a safe, interactive, and stimulating learning environment.
- assesses students frequently and authentically in order to determine areas of strength and areas for growth.
- modifies lessons to meet the needs of each individual student.
- applies the appropriate technologies to enhance math learning.
- models life-long learning through participation in on-going professional development and research around math best practices.
- follows the chosen curriculum while continually evaluating the needs of the particular group of students and adapting appropriately.
- explicitly models good mathematical practices such as persistence, curiosity, risk-taking, and collaboration.
- communicates math learning goals with parents and educates parents about the approaches to math education.
- designs an environment that allows students to engage in the Common Core 8 Mathematical Practices.
- provides problem-based, open-ended learning opportunities that foster experimentation.

Please see the [Math Curriculum Evaluation Report](#) in order to read the entire document.

Kindergarten-6th Grade Math

Kindergarten-6th grade utilize the Everyday Math curriculum The Everyday Math program is rooted in six main principles:

- **Real-life problem solving:**
 - Everyday Math emphasizes the application of mathematics to real world situations. Numbers, skills, and concepts are not presented in isolation, but are linked to situations and contexts that are relevant to everyday lives.
 - The curriculum also provides numerous suggestions for incorporating mathematics into daily classroom routines and other subject areas.
- **Balanced instruction:**
 - Each Everyday Math lesson includes time for whole-group instruction as well as small group, partner, or individual activities. These activities balance teacher-directed instruction with opportunities for open-ended, hands-on explorations, long-term projects and on-going practice, which allows for authentic and meaningful differentiation.
- **Multiple methods for basic skills practice:**
 - Everyday Math provides numerous methods for basic skills practice and review. These include written and choral fact drills, mental math routines, practice with fact triangles (flash cards of fact families), daily sets of review problems called Math Boxes, homework, timed tests, and a wide variety of math games.
 - NPES has adopted its own Math Computation Benchmarks. Students are expected to exit each grade level meeting or exceeding expectations.
- **Emphasis on communication:**
 - Throughout the Everyday Math curriculum students are encouraged to explain and discuss their mathematical thinking, in their own words. Opportunities to verbalize their thoughts and strategies give children the chance to clarify thinking and gain insights from others.
- **Enhanced home/school communication:**
 - Daily Home Links (grades K to 3) and Study Links (grades 4-6) provide opportunities for family members to participate in the students' mathematical learning.
 - Study Links are provided for most lessons in grades 4-6, and all grades include periodic letters to help keep parents informed about their children's experience with Everyday Math.
- **Appropriate use of technology:**
 - Teachers utilize Promethean slides for each Everyday Math lesson. This fosters a more interactive environment.
 - Everyday Math teaches students how to use technology appropriately. The curriculum includes many activities in which learning is extended and enhanced through the use of calculators.

7th-8th Grade Math:

At this point in an NPES student's math career, much of the focus is on application. Students are given opportunities to analyze the world around them through a mathematical lens. Much of the emphasis of the upper middle school years is actually on utilizing math to examine situations. This approach is in line with the authentic and meaningful practices that define our NPES math philosophy.

Math instruction focuses on **pre-algebra** in 7th grade; students learn algebraic notation and problem solving, order of operations and properties of the arithmetic operations.

- Seventh graders participate in four main projects:
 - Students learn about coding and then write their own code as a way to practice algebraic equations and substituting variables.
 - Seventh graders create an original and unique ruler using any type of measurement system. Students then measure different objects using the ruler, and in the process, practice fractions and measurement.
 - The Fibonacci project asks students to look more deeply at ratios and proportions. Students learn about golden numbers and the effect that they have on architecture, music, art/beauty, and nature.
 - The final project of the year requires students to create an original water bottle. Geometry concepts like volume and surface are the focus.
- General Units of Study:
 - Unit 1 Operations with integers
 - Unit 2 Solving algebraic equations
 - Unit 3 Decimal operations and solving decimal equations
 - Unit 4 and 5 Fractions operations, exponents, and solving fraction equations
 - Unit 6 Ratio, Proportions, and percents
 - Unit 7 Graphing and writing linear equations
 - Unit 8 Geometry - Surface Area and Volume

NPES eighth graders study **algebra** including algebraic terms and operations, binomials, polynomials, exponents, order of operations, absolute value radicals, solving algebraic equations of the first degree, inequalities, factoring and solving quadratic equations, solving simultaneous equations and inequalities, algebraically and geometrically.

- Eighth graders participate in four main projects:
 - The fractal project connects many previously learned skills: looking for patterns, exponents, geometry, and probability.
 - Students create Calder Mobiles as part of a cross-curricular project with art. This project is designed to make the connection of solving algebraic equations with variables on both sides and how levers and fulcrums work.
 - Students grow mold in class to model exponential growth.
 - The final project of the year asks students to build trebuchets in order to learn about quadratic equations.

- General Units of Study:
 - Unit 1 Number systems, rational and irrational numbers, square roots
 - Unit 2 solving and writing algebraic equation and inequalities
 - Unit 3 and 4 Graphing linear equations and writing equations
 - Unit 5 Systems of equations, where two linear equations cross
 - Unit 6 Exponents
 - Unit 7 Polynomials
 - Unit 8 Quadratics

SCIENCE

Kindergarten-8th Grade Science:

NPES' science program is teacher-designed (2010) to specifically fit the needs and the culture of the NPES community. The scope and sequence is based on the National Science Teachers Association standards as well as the Illinois State Standards.

- The program is broken down into four branches representing four strands of science; **physical science, human body and health science, earth and space science, and life science.**
- Topics are spiraled among the grade levels providing ample opportunities for cross-curricular and cross-grade level collaboration. For example, kindergarten and 4th grade students study the life cycle. Baby chicks are raised in the kindergarten classroom, while 4th graders partner with kindergartners to study how the chicks grow and develop.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Kindergarten-8th Grade Social Studies:

Social Studies is broken down into five major strands of content. Strands include **history, geography, culture, economics, and government.** In addition, the curriculum is integrated with **current events, community service** and **social-emotional learning** enabling students to learn more than history; they learn what it means and how to be thoughtful and participatory citizens.

- The scope and sequence is based on the National Council of Social Studies Standards as well as the Illinois State Standards.
- The foundation of NPES' Social Studies Program for grades K-5 is rooted in the *Harcourt Social Studies, HMH Publishers, Copyright 2010.*
- The foundation of NPES' Social Studies Program for grades 6 and 7 is rooted in *World History, Holt Social Studies, Copyright 2006.*
- The foundation of NPES' Social Studies Program for grade 8 is rooted in *The American Journey, Glencoe Publishers, Copyright 2003.*

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Our work around social emotional learning (SEL) is rooted in the belief that when children feel safe and recognized in the classroom, they can excel academically. Social and emotional learning is the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively. Our curriculum is deeply embedded in research and an understanding of the developmental needs of our students at various age levels. The framework and general structure for social-emotional learning at NPES is based on the research at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The five competencies on which we base our work with students are **self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills.**

Preschool-5th Grade SEL:

Responsive Classroom frames our SEL teaching at the PK-5 grade levels. This program consists of teaching strategies for bringing together academics and social-emotional learning. It is based on the three domains of **engaging academics, effective management, and positive community**. The guiding principles that define *Responsive Classroom* are:

- The social and emotional curriculum is as important as academics.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.
- Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills that include cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control, all of which fit into CASEL's 5 competencies.
- Knowing the children we teach - individually, culturally, and developmentally - is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children.
- How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence.

In lower school NPES classrooms you will see students socializing and collaborating around academic choice, class meetings that encourage connections, a "time out" area (think spot as we call it at NPES) where students can gather their minds and bodies, teachers speaking in a positive and respectful way, the use of logical consequences, rules that were developed as a community around student hopes and dreams, students reflecting on their learning and thinking about their thinking, and teachers who are modeling expectations and setting clear paths to success.

6th-8th Grade SEL:

As students enter middle school and their needs change, they transition into the Advisory setting where our curriculum is authentic and responsive to the nuances of each advisor and advisory group (on average about seven students from 6th-8th grade). Advisory groups meet twice weekly to discuss relevant hot topics, work on executive functioning issues, experience team and trust building activities, meet independently with the advisor and set individual goals, work with Lil' Buddies from the lower school, and participate in a service learning project.

The CASEL competencies and *The Responsive Classroom* domains still frame our work at the middle school level, but the structure is adapted to meet the needs of teens. While specific goals and learning objectives are set in Advisory, there is more autonomy and freedom to respond to the needs of adolescents, and the specific advisory group. The academic curriculum is still based on the domains of engaging academics, effective management, and positive community. As students move from class to class for academic subjects, they find a consistent and common approach that fosters a strong connection between academic and social growth.

To read in greater depth about our SEL programs please see the [NPES SEL Philosophy/Approach](#).

GRADE LEVEL OVERVIEWS

PRESCHOOL

The NPES preschool program is developed within the [Reggio Emilia approach](#). At this age children are eager learners who test their knowledge through interactions with the world. The NPES preschool program offers a developmentally appropriate play-based curriculum that builds the foundation for academic success with periods of small group work in social skills, literacy, math, art, fine and large motor skills. The environment and materials made available are fundamental to the program. Cooperatively working with friends, preschoolers explore through their senses—building with blocks, experimenting with art materials, interacting with nature, creating a dramatic play scene. The teachers observe to identify common interests to build "studies". These studies allow teachers to embed the learning of foundational skill into high interest topics. Children enjoy counting and measuring; listening to and dictating stories, and songs; learning to write letters and numerals authentically; problem solving social situations with friends, self-regulating, practicing how to be part of a group; expressing themselves through paint, clay, found materials; going on outings; questioning and seeking answers; and conducting science experiments. NPES preschoolers leave knowing home and school are connected, and that they are competent citizens through active learning.

KINDERGARTEN

Much of the goal of kindergarten is to teach students to become more independent learners while continuously building social emotional skills and fine tuning gross and fine motor skills. Exploration and imaginative play continues to be an important part of the learning process.

- Kindergartners look forward to their first **Shining Moment** of their NPES career. This presentation is a celebration of the completion of their first thematic unit of the year - the circus. Students invite friends and families to watch a performance of a real circus.
- For **language arts** class, there is a strong emphasis on letter and number identification. As emergent readers and writers, reading and writing workshop is introduced, and students are given appropriate tasks for their level. Students also receive handwriting, phonics, spelling and word study instruction in language arts.
- **Math** study focuses on number identification, counting by 1s, 5s and 10s as well as beginning basic addition and subtraction. By the end of the year, students are expected to be able to add and subtract numbers up to 18.
- One of the highlights of **science** is the chick unit. Kindergartners raise live chickens in their classroom. They complete this unit along with the fourth graders during life cycle study units in the spring.
- **Social studies** focuses on what it means to live in America and identification of American symbols.
- **Social emotional learning** happens throughout the day. The environment, approach, and teacher language uses the *Responsive Classroom* program. Students are taught to be positive members of the community and the five competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are reinforced. Kindergartners thrive with clear expectations and consequences, and need an empathetic setting in which to make mistakes.

FIRST GRADE

First graders are full of eagerness, curiosity, and imagination. They have a lot of energy and relish new ideas and love to ask questions. First graders learn well through games, poems, riddles, songs, and any type of hands-on projects. At this age, students are also more able to understand past and present, and how and why things happen. Classroom communities deepen as students grasp the reasons for rules and are increasingly able to see the viewpoints of others.

- The **Shining Moment** of first grade is the patriotic play that is performed in February. Students sing, dance and perform a play about the founding fathers of America as a way to demonstrate their understanding.
- First graders develop reading fluency, word recognition and decoding skills through the reading and writing workshop during **language arts** time. Writing units include an expository piece on school and a non-fiction piece on animal habitats to coincide with the science unit. Students receive handwriting, phonics, spelling and word study instruction in language arts as well.
- **Math** class focuses on more advanced addition and subtraction. Students begin basic geometry, measurement, problem solving as well as data and chance; learning the foundation for building strong math skills. First graders are expected to be proficient in addition and subtraction with 0, 1, doubles, sum equals to 10.
- **Science** units are comprised of interactive topics including matter, paleontology, animal habitats and human body systems.
- **Social studies** focuses on patriotism and emphasizing what it means to be an American, and why we have rules and laws. This unit allows for an examination of citizenship both in the classroom community and in the broader world.
- Much of the **Social emotional learning** in first grade revolves around friendships as students become increasingly social. The classroom environment, approach, and teacher language is built around the *Responsive Classroom* program. The importance of being a part of a community of learners continues to be the focus. First graders take on greater ownership of this idea as they begin to reflect on what type of community member they will work to be. The five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are continually reinforced throughout the year.

SECOND GRADE

Second graders develop a deeper understanding of time, space, and quantity. They can listen well and respond appropriately which allows for more, and better quality, class discussions. At this age, hands-on exploration and frequent repetition is important to maximize learning.

- The highlight of the second grade year is the culmination of the study of the fifty states with a **Shining Moment** celebration. This event takes place on the 50th day of school and honors the 50th state to join the union, Hawaii. Students share the culture of Hawaii with families in order to demonstrate their understanding.
- Through the reading and writing workshop, students continue to practice writing skills and create a state report during **language arts** class. Second graders end the year writing a research report about endangered animals – utilizing writing skills and integrating a unit from science class. Students receive handwriting, phonics, spelling and word study instruction in language arts as well. All second graders continue to build reading stamina and read lengthier and more complicated books independently.
- In second grade **math**, students progress in their skills and focus on more advanced measurement, place value, geometry and beginning fractions. By the end of the year, students are expected to be proficient with all addition and subtraction facts through 20.
- **Science** begins with learning about simple machines – where they discover how many simple machines assist us in our everyday lives. Other units include the food pyramid and nutrition, and a unit on the water cycle.
- **Social studies** introduces all 50 states as they entered the union, as well as learning the geography, culture, economics, government and history of own community.
- Friendships deepen and **Social emotional learning** evolves in reaction to this shift. Students often explore different peer relationships at this age and need empathetic and responsive adults to help guide them. The classroom environment, approach, and teacher language is built around the *Responsive Classroom* program. Second graders rely on the security of rules, routines, and physical boundaries to feel safe and confident. The five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are continually reinforced throughout the year.
- Friendships deepen and **Social emotional learning** evolves in reaction to this shift. Students often explore different peer relationships at this age and need empathetic and responsive adults to help guide them. The classroom environment, approach, and teacher language is built around the *Responsive Classroom* program. Second graders rely on the security of rules, routines, and physical boundaries to feel safe and confident. The five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are continually reinforced throughout the year.

THIRD GRADE

Third graders are an enthusiastic group. They approach academic challenges with excitement and are full of new ideas. At this age, students engage in deeper conversations and discussions, and can explain ideas confidently.

- Third graders revel in the opportunity to examine their own immigration histories, and especially enjoy inviting friends and family to “experience” Ellis Island during the turn of the 19th century at their **Shining Moment**.
- The third grade **social studies** curriculum is known for its in depth coverage of Chicago History, as well as a more detailed look at the history of immigration in America. Students examine the geography, governments and culture of various places, and frame their work around the theme of community.
- **Language Arts** continues to follow the model of the Reading and Writing Workshop. Students sharpen previously learned skills and focus on personal narratives, informational pieces, and historical fiction. Reading consists of read alouds and guided reading with an emphasis on the strategies of a good reader. Students continue to practice choosing “just right” books and experiment with different genres. Differentiation allows for readers of various abilities to find success. One milestone that defines the third grade year is the introduction and expected use of cursive handwriting.
- In **math** third graders focus on operations and algebraic thinking, numbers and operations in base tens and fractions, data and chance, measurement and data, Geometry, patterns, functions, and Algebra. Along with the content goals, students continue to grow in and expand their understanding of the 8 Mathematical Practices outlined in the CCSS, and exhibit habits as outlined in the NPES math philosophy. These habits include traits such as perseverance, resilience, curiosity, and collaboration. By the end of third grade, students are expected to be confident with math facts and have mastered automaticity.
- Through an interactive, hands-on approach students study the ear, the eye, light, and sound in physical **science**. Making connections between science and the body is a meaningful and exciting experience for third graders. The science curriculum also exposes students to the earth and life science topics of astronomy and plants.
- **Social emotional learning** really focuses on the importance of working collaboratively in an effective way. Students continue to expand friendships and particularly excel at group activities. Third graders are particularly focused on rules, logic and fairness. The teacher acts a guide to help students define what makes a classroom community productive and positive. The classroom environment, approach, and teacher language will be built around the *Responsive Classroom* program in the 2015-2016 school year. The five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are continually reinforced throughout the year.

FOURTH GRADE

Fourth graders are deeper thinkers. They begin to look at the world with a critical eye and strive for fairness around them. For many children, this is an age of budding intellectual curiosity, and many seek out the answers to how things work and why things happen. As part of this developmental leap, fourth grade transitions students completely to intermediate elementary school. Coursework and expectations increase, and the focus becomes more global.

- Fourth graders celebrate their **Shining Moment** with a culmination to the unit covering the regions of the United States. They invite friends and family to watch and read their projects and reports about the geography, climate, transportation, and evolution of a selected region.
- **Language arts** continues with the reading and writing workshop and Rebecca Sitton's spelling program. Reading units are varied between independent reading and whole class literary circles. Literary units include reading a book about survival and then discussing similar themes and ideas from such books.
- **Math** advances as students continue to progress with multiplication and division. They learn estimation and place value with decimals. By the end of fourth grade, students are expected to be proficient with related division facts.
- In **science** class fourth graders examine such topics as chemistry, electro-magnetism, meteorology, and cells. Students participate in a cross-grade level unit on life cycles by studying eggs and chicks alongside the kindergartners.
- The regions of the U.S. is the main focus of **social studies**. Fourth graders learn about the geography, culture, economics, government and history of each. A comprehensive unit on the thirteen colonies starts off the year.
- **Social emotional learning** really focuses on the importance of working collaboratively in an effective way. Students continue to expand friendships and particularly excel at group activities. The teacher acts a guide to help students define what makes a classroom community productive and positive. The classroom environment, approach, and teacher language will be built around the *Responsive Classroom* program in the 2015-2016 school year. The five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and self-management are continually reinforced throughout the year.

FIFTH GRADE

Fifth grade is a structured academic year that focuses on preparing for yet another transition, the transition to middle school, and the increased independence and accountability that comes with it. Expectations are high, but the high-interest content ensures there is plenty of motivation for success. This is truly a year of growth in collaborative skills. Fifth graders love to share their knowledge and are more naturally cooperative than previous years. This age is proud of accomplishments and enjoys teaching others as part of the learning process.

- The fifth grade **Shining Moment** is an art, science and technology integrated project on biomes. Students develop presentations that focus on a particular biome and share their learning with the greater community.
- **Language arts** continues to be rooted in the reading and writing workshop. Students complete a unit of literary circles and project based reports.
- **Math** stresses fractions, percents, decimals, multiplication and division. By the end of fifth grade, students are expected to know all of their related multiplication and division facts.
- **Science** topics range from the periodic table, the endocrine system, a detailed unit on human reproduction with a field trip to the Museum of Science and Industry, and a unit on the Earth's waters and environmental science.
- In **social studies** the basics of geography, timelines, and ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China are studied. The focus is on early humans and evolving civilizations. As part of this discussion the focus is on how geography affects culture. The main skills developed are map skills, formulating arguments and opinions, engaging in meaningful discussions, and making predictions.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle school is an exciting, as well as challenging time. Adolescents undergo an enormous amount of physical, social, and cognitive changes during this time. Beginning in sixth grade, students develop an increasing desire to apply their higher order thinking skills to meaningful, “adult-like” work. Students are more able to think abstractly and begin to challenge adult explanations. They frequently want to find answers independently and do so through researching and experiencing. In seventh grade frequent questions about identity and self-perception emerge. Students become more adept at metacognition and begin to recognize individual passions and strengths, and pursue those. As seventh grade is a notoriously difficult and high pressure year for students, much support, both emotional and academic, is put into place. The curriculum is designed to support students as they prepare for the high school entrance exams. By eighth grade, NPES students are experts at engaging in debate and dialogue. Students at this age level enjoy taking sides of an issue and can write passionately about their opinions. The highlight of this year is the graduation ceremony. Students design, write and practice their graduation speeches and the entire NPES community is invited to their commencement ceremony.

As a result of these myriad of changes, expectations and work-loads increase significantly as students prepare academically for the high school application process, and for the rigors of high school itself. The structure of middle school also more closely mirrors a high school setting.

- The Middle School is departmentalized by subject area and classes are taught by experts in each area.
- One day a week middle school students choose among a variety of elective options including Band, STEM, Drama/Glee Club, Classroom Aides, and Project of the Day.
- All Middle School students participate in an advisory program to learn about and practice social-emotional competencies.

ADVISORY

NPES strives to teach the “whole” child. Graduates will leave with a strong sense of self, the knowledge of how to set and reach goals, a deeply rooted ability to empathize and connect with diverse people, the capacity for successful and rewarding relationships, and as thoughtful and reflective problem solvers in a global world. Through a focused and deliberate advisory program, students will develop a strong social and emotional identity that will lead to greater academic and personal success.

Advisory is a program that pairs middle school students with one primary teacher. Students meet in a small group of about 8, with 1 advisor, twice weekly. Additionally, each student has a daily “check out” with the advisor at the close of the school day. Advisory meetings consist of activities that focus on the 5 social-emotional (SEL) competencies outlined in the Illinois SEL Learning Standards: **self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills**. The advisory program also emphasizes the development of a connection with a trusted adult. These goals are accomplished through various protocols, journaling, one-on-one meetings, and projects.

The purpose of Advisory is to develop competency in the five areas in each child at NPES.

We do this by:

- Providing a forum for age-appropriate meaningful topics (such as bullying, digital citizenship, gender issues, stress) that may not fit in the academic classroom
- Giving daily opportunities to be heard or to have a "voice" and internalize that "I matter"
- Creating a space in which to discuss problems or concerns – academic, social, or emotional
- Allowing a chance to struggle appropriately, problem-solve and correct mistakes in judgment
- Creating genuine student relationships in multi-age groups that are not cliques or affinity groups
- Ensuring that every child has a meaningful relationship with an adult advocate in order to connect with the "whole child"
- Fostering a safe and nurturing environment in which to learn and be recognized
- Setting goals and learning how to stay organized
- Facilitating self-advocacy and appropriate student-teacher relationships
- Encouraging students to take action in the world around them through service projects that emphasize positive local and global citizenship
- Explicitly teaching peer mediation and empowering students to solve conflict in effective and appropriate ways

PROJECT FAIR & RESEARCH PAPER

Middle School students complete two significant cross-curricular projects each year, a comprehensive project and a research paper. The project fair and the research paper are designed to provide students with cross-curricular study, as well as to build independent study and time management skills. Additionally, all of the skills taught in conjunction with the projects build preparation for high school history fairs and science fairs.

- Project guidelines and expectations increase with each middle school year.
- Students are expected to complete work in class as well as at home.
- Students invite friends and family to a presentation night.

The **project fair** topics are:

- 6th grade: World Religions
- 7th grade: Science Fair
- 8th grade: Graphic Novels and Math

The **research paper** topics are:

- 6th grade: Historical Person
- 7th grade: Historical Event
- 8th grade: Free Choice Topic

SIXTH GRADE

- Sixth grade **social studies** focuses on the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. The curriculum then moves through European history, focusing on events such as the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the Industrial Revolution.
- The **Shining Moment** for sixth graders is a cross-curricular unit where students share their knowledge of Renaissance art, music, and inventions. Parents and friends are invited to celebrate the culmination of this unit with a Renaissance Festival.
- **Language arts** utilizes the reading and writing workshop approach. Students complete extensive creative writing and short story units. Students also do varied literary circles covering topics such as “reflecting on your past” and India. Among varied novel selections, students read J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*.
- This is the last year that NPES students use Everyday Math in **math** class. Topics covered include algebra and variables, data and chance, geometry and spatial sense as well as other age appropriate topics. Math advances significantly in order to prepare for pre-algebra and algebra for 7th and 8th grade, respectively.
- **Science** class moves to the science lab where students study units including electromagnetism, body organization, astronomy and living things from bacteria and animals.

SEVENTH GRADE

- **Language arts** utilizes the reading and writing workshop approach. Students complete a narrative writing unit where they interview a relative. Reading selections include a science fiction literary circle and Harper Lee’s controversial tale of Scout Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- **Math** is transitioned to pre-algebra in 7th grade. Students learn the foundation for algebra. They learn algebraic notation and problem solving, order of operations and properties of the arithmetic operations.
- **Science** class begins the year with a unit called *What is Science?* Students complete an independent experiment, create a two-fold board and demonstrate their findings. Seventh graders also study units on atoms and bonds, the circulatory and respiratory systems, geology, minerals and rocks, and an extensive cell unit.
- **Social studies** class begins with the Middle Ages and ends with the modern world and the Industrial Revolution. Students study the Illinois constitution and the U.S. Constitution with trips to either Springfield, IL or Washington DC on alternate years.
- The **Shining Moment** for seventh graders is a cross-curricular unit where students share their knowledge of Renaissance art, music, and inventions. Parents and friends are invited to celebrate the culmination of this unit with a Renaissance Festival.

EIGHTH GRADE

- **Language arts** utilizes the reading and writing workshop approach. Students complete an extensive graphic novel unit. Reading units include literary circles based on an utopia theme, holocaust theme and WWII theme.
- NPES 8th grade **math** students study algebraic terms and operations, binomials, polynomials, exponents, order of operations, absolute value radicals, solving algebraic equations of the first degree, inequalities, factoring and solving quadratic equations, solving simultaneous equations and inequalities, algebraically and geometrically.
- **Science** class begins the year with a unit on scientists and physicists and then moves into energy and heat, healthy eating, digestive and excretory systems, geologic time and paleontology, evolution and alternatives of evolution. The final unit of the year is cell division and genetics.
- **Social studies** focuses on American History in the 20th century. Students study the turning points in each decade until the 1960s. War and conflict resolution are the major themes of 8th grade social studies. Topics include World War I, The Great Depression, World War II and the Cold War. Students travel to either Springfield, IL or Washington, DC on alternate years.
- The culminating **Shining Moment** for eighth graders is the graduation ceremony. This final event of their North Park career, is truly a celebration of all that has been accomplished. The community is invited to the ceremony to hear students reflect on their experiences at NPES and define their hopes and dreams for the future.

CO-CURRICULARS

Art

Art students learn how to be engaged fully in the artistic process and gain skills and confidence by working in the following two and three dimensional mediums: drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, collage, fiber, and computer arts. Drawing receives the greatest emphasis because it provides the basis for all other creative activities. Drawing is the single most accessible form of art and provides a direct link to reading, writing, and math.

The goals of the visual art program at NPES are to provide students with the tools to understand human experience; to learn to adapt to and respect others way of thinking; to learn creative methods of problem solving; understand the historical and cultural influences of art; to make decisions in situations where there is ambiguity; to analyze non-verbal communication; and to communicate thoughts and feelings using a practiced and developed visual vocabulary.

- NPES students in Kindergarten through 5th grade meet for art once a week, while 6th, 7th and 8th grade classes meet for art class twice a week.
- The art program is integrated with the core curriculum in order to establish historic relevance and offer students the opportunity to *create* and *do* in all subject areas. The program nurtures inventiveness as it engages students in a process that aids in the development of self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and self-motivation.

CREATIVE DRAMA

Research shows that creative drama improves students' language and communication abilities; the creative drama program is taught in conjunction with the language arts program at NPES. Creative drama class empowers students to speak publicly with confidence and encourages creative expression and teamwork in a supportive environment.

- NPES students in kindergarten through fifth grade experience creative drama once per week, with the class is offered as an elective to 6th-8th grade students.
- Part of NPES' after-school program involves producing an original musical show involving students from kindergarten through eighth grade at a local auditorium.
 - Almost all students from kindergarten through eighth grade participate. While students in upper grades are given significant roles, all students from second grade on have speaking parts. The youngest cast members are featured in their own musical number.
 - With the assistance of parent volunteers creating costumes, sets, and props, over 100 students rehearse and prepare for their performance.
- Throughout the year, students participate in acting workshops and after-school drama activities.

LIBRARY

The NPES library seeks to provide materials that satisfy the students' general interests and support the teachers' curricula. The goal of the library curriculum is to promote the library collection and foster a love of reading in all NPES students. Additionally, media skills such as search techniques will be added to the library curriculum. In the 2014-2015 school year, NPES is introducing a new catalog program called Alexandria. Students will also learn skills in effective online searching and proper citing of online sources, as well as other search skills.

- Classes visit the library on a weekly basis for story time, assisted research and book checkout. The library is open to students during study and free periods and for homework and study after school.
- Birthday book donations and the annual Scholastic Book Fair helps the book inventory grow.
- Annual reading programs, such as the winter reading program, the annual Rebecca Caudill books and the Battle of the Books, help to stimulate students' appreciation for reading.
- Middle school students complete various projects in conjunction with the language arts program. Projects include an oral interpretation unit, independent book reviews and projects and age appropriate reading competitions.

MUSIC

In their general music classes, students become familiar with music terminology, aesthetics of music, creating music, and history and culture as it relates to music. Also, within the curriculum, students learn how to write and orchestrate music either by rote, manipulatives, and/or technology.

- All K-2nd grade students meet for general music once a week. Third-8th grade students meet for music twice a week.
- The music curriculum relates the social studies curriculum. Music class provides students the opportunity to gain insight into different cultures by studying the music, musical techniques, musical instruments, and folk dances of various cultures.
- Beginning in fourth grade, students have the opportunity to learn how to play an instrument and be a member of the NPES band program.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Physical Education (PE) program at NPES promotes favorable attitudes for active lifestyles, physical fitness, and safety through teaching the fundamentals of lifetime and leisure sports. Instruction focuses on instilling a positive self-image, teaching appropriate social behavior, promoting sportsmanship, and helping students learn how their bodies can perform more efficiently. PE provides students with multiple opportunities to assess fitness levels, to engage in opportunities that will strengthen already developing gross and small motor skills. Students develop lifetime skills that enable them to lead full and productive lives both in and out of school—an active body for an active mind.

- All students have gym sessions three times a week. Depending on curriculum content, students have the opportunity to utilize the refurbished play-lot, utilize a neighborhood full-size gym or can walk to Welles Park to enjoy gym outdoors on full-sized fields.
- Two before-school programs -- Motor Moms and Dads and a “Brain Gym” adaptation -- supplement the PE program to develop core strength in conjunction with body and mind connection.

SPANISH

By emphasizing the four language skills--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--NPES strives to develop a passion in students for comprehending, using, and connecting Spanish language with the Hispanic culture in order to communicate with Spanish speakers in the United States and around the world.

- Kindergartners through fifth graders meet for Spanish twice a week for 30 minutes. The sixth, seventh and, eighth graders meet four times a week for 40 minutes.
- NPES Spanish classes are filled with Spanish-language activities, games, music, art projects, books, and more. The Spanish program is based on the five Cs to learning a foreign language:
 - **COMMUNICATION:** Students learn how to communicate orally and in writing using the Spanish language in "real life" situations.
 - **CULTURES:** Students are exposed to cultures different from their own and develop a better understanding and appreciation for language and culture.
 - **CONNECTIONS:** Content from other subject areas, including character education, is integrated into lessons.
 - **COMPARISONS:** Students compare and contrast languages and cultures. They analyze similarities and differences which strengthens understanding of their native language and culture.
 - **COMMUNITIES:** Students experience field trips, cultural activities, and are given opportunities to hear Heritage speakers at school and in the classroom. They are encouraged to continue language learning outside of the school setting and use what they have learned in their communities.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology promotes engaged learning, critical thinking, and differentiation. The NPES technology program is designed to instill literacy and competence and create meaningful technology engagement in a dynamic learning environment. At NPES technology is integrated throughout the curriculum in authentic ways.

- NPES has expanded the broadband connection and upgraded the access points throughout the school, allowing for more traffic through the network.
- The NPES iPad 1:1 program has been launched in grades 3rd-8th. Teachers have actively assessed apps for their classroom curriculum. Students in K-5th have access to iPad carts in the classroom, while students in 6th-8th grades have been issued personal devices for use at school and at home.
- School specific Gmail accounts have been established to allow students to access Google Drive both at school and at home.
- Teachers and students receive support from the newly expanded technology staff in basic application overview, troubleshooting and assistance with project development.
- The website has undergone a complete revamp and is now linked with Blackbaud/NetCommunity database through our parent portal, allowing for better access to information and communication throughout the NPES community.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

North Park Elementary School strongly believes in communicating consistent and accurate feedback about student progress.

MIDTERM REPORTS:

Mid-quarter progress reports consist of a rating system that includes Habits of Heart & Mind and Habits of Learning (included below). As a result of conferencing, teachers and students develop 2-3 goals that address any concerns and serve as the narrative portion of the mid-quarter. In grades 3-8, goals are student produced and there will be one/content area for middle school. Goals are formulated with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) criteria. Setting and monitoring goals allows students to work on self-awareness, self-management, and decision making competencies of social emotional learning.

REPORT CARDS: At the end of each quarter, teachers are responsible for reporting student progress. Kindergarten-2nd grade teachers report on skill acquisition only. Grades 3rd-8th teachers assign a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) and report on student progress in skill acquisition. All report cards in Kindergarten-5th contain a full narrative that addresses the whole child. Narratives include strengths and areas for growth for the student and plans for action. Middle school content area teachers include comments specific to the student. Co-curricular teachers will comment periodically throughout the year for K-8th grade.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS: Teachers conduct daily, weekly and monthly formative and summative assessments in all academic areas. The goal of assessment is to inform instruction and differentiation strategies, as well as to ensure that students are progressing appropriately. Assessment types range from traditional tests and quizzes, to project based and observational assessments.

BENCHMARK ASSESSMENTS: Students are “benchmarked” in reading levels, math computation and grammar skills. Benchmarking allows teachers to have a more accurate picture of students’ skills.

- For reading all students will be tested with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Leveling for reading in the fall and in the spring. This information allows teachers to provide differentiated instruction during guided reading instruction.
- In math students are expected to master grade level expectations identified on NPES’ Computation Benchmarks. Students take timed tests weekly and are assessed regularly.
- In language arts, students are expected to master grade level expectations as identified on NPES’ Grammar Benchmarks. Grammar skills are incorporated into grade level instruction in language arts classes.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADING: Grades are weighted by subject. Depending on class structure, weights vary as follows:

Middle School Grading Levels

Level	Assessment	Examples	Percentage
1	Formative	Prep, Homework, Drafts, Labs	5%
2	Formative	Participation, Homework, Labs, Projects	15%
3	Summative	Participation, Quizzes, Projects, Test	35%
4	Summative	Projects, Tests	45%

NPES HOMEWORK POLICY

INTERMEDIATE GRADES HOMEWORK POLICY

Short Term Homework Assignments:

3rd Grade:

- If a student is missing a short term homework assignment, he/she will receive a verbal warning.
- After a second missing assignment, the student will be held in for recess until his/her homework is completed.
- After a third missing assignment, parents will be notified via a “Missing Homework Sheet” that will need to be signed and returned.

4th Grade:

- If a student is missing a short term homework assignment, the student will receive a verbal warning and must complete the assignment that night.
- Parents will be notified of missing assignments via a “Missing Homework Sheet” that will need to be signed and returned.
- If the assignment is not turned in within a week of when it is due, the student will not be able to earn higher than a C for the assignment.

5th Grade:

- If a student is missing a short term homework assignment, the student will write in his/her assignment notebook that it is missing and an email will be sent to the parent.
- If the assignment is not turned in within four days of when it is due, the student will receive a zero on that assignment.

Long Term Homework Assignments:

- If a student does not turn in a long term homework assignment when it is due, the student will write in his/her assignment notebook that it is missing, and an email will be sent to the parent.
- The teacher will deduct 10% off of the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is missing.
- As these assignments weigh more heavily upon the student’s grade, the teacher will continue to notify the parent about the importance of the assignment until it is turned in.
- After four days the best grade that the student will be able to receive on the assignment is a 68%.

MIDDLE SCHOOL HOMEWORK POLICY

Short Term Homework Assignments:

If a student does not turn in a short term homework assignment when it is due, the student will input the assignment that is missing into the MyHomework app on the iPad and an email will be sent to the parent. The teacher will deduct 10% off of the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is missing. If the assignment is not turned in within four days of when it is due, the student will receive a zero on that assignment.

Long Term Homework Assignments:

If a student does not turn in a long term homework assignment when it is due the student will input the assignment that is missing into the MyHomework app on the iPad and an email will be sent to the parent. The teacher will deduct 10% off of the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is missing. As these assignments weigh more heavily upon the student's grade, the teacher will continue to notify the parent about the importance of the assignment until it is turned in. After four days the best grade that the student will be able to receive on the assignment is a 68%.

NPES HABITS OF HEART & MIND

NPES **SHARKS** show...

Self-management by:

- managing emotions in an appropriate way
- exhibiting self-control
- setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals
- managing stress

Harmony in relationship by:

- communicating clearly and listening actively to others
- collaborating
- resisting inappropriate social pressure
- striving for peace during conflict
- seeking and offering help when needed

Awareness of others by:

- taking the perspective of and empathizing with others
- thinking about how our actions will affect others
- respecting diversity

Responsible decision-making skills by:

- considering ethics when taking action
- keeping myself and others safe
- following rules and norms
- evaluating consequences of our actions

Knowledge of self by:

- standing up for beliefs
- striving for our personal best
- showing awareness of strengths and challenges
- demonstrating originality, critical thinking, and creativity

Service in the Community by:

- learning about injustice in the world around us
- working to improve the school and general community by responding to needs
- helping to protect the Earth

NPES HABITS OF LEARNING

NPES students show...

preparation by:

- coming to class prepared with necessary materials/supplies
- handing in assignments on time without reminders – meeting deadlines
- adequately preparing for assignments and assessments
- managing materials in an organized way, knowing where assignments are and when they need to be turned in
- prioritizing tasks and devoting appropriate amount of time and attention to work

participation by:

- demonstrating active listening and monitoring air time
- staying focused on topic at hand
- avoiding side conversations or inappropriate interactions
- adding new, valuable information or questions to a discussion
- articulately expressing ideas
- following routines independently
- demonstrating resourcefulness and independence while working

self-advocacy – taking responsibility for learning by:

- seeking out teacher with questions
- taking initiative by making corrections and trying to solve problems or answer questions
- being a self-starter – understanding what is expected and doing best work independently
- following up after an assessment or paper or project is handed back to understand how to learn more effectively

the use of teacher feedback to be a more effective learner by...

- utilizing rubrics/assignment descriptions to improve work
- applying advice given in writing conference to improve a piece of writing
- using feedback from assessments/homework to improve
- responding quickly and appropriately to redirection from teacher or peers