

## **Harford Friends Lower School Overview**

Throughout the Lower School Harford Friends students develop skills for learning independently and in community—by participating in class meetings, by peacefully resolving conflicts, by participating in service learning, and by investigating, researching, and connecting with the natural world. As they develop these skills, each student’s family plays an important role.

### **Essential Understanding**

Humans create social systems, science, technologies, and ways of communicating in order to meet their needs in a certain place on the planet. We understand our place on the planet, these social systems, science, and technologies, and how to communicate effectively so that we can meet our needs in a fair, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable way. This process is fun, necessary, and full of wonder.

### **Developing a Community of Learners**

In Morning Worship and during social studies time, the students learn how roles, rules, and responsibilities interplay to create a place that is safe, fair, peaceful, and conducive to learning and making friends. The children discuss how rules are made, both in and beyond the classroom. Then they develop the structures to guide classroom life-- whether they’re working as a community of readers, historians, writers, scientists, mathematicians, geographers, or maintaining the classroom itself.

### **Quakerism**

Harford Friends School seeks to acknowledge and enrich the spiritual life within our students. As an institution grounded in Quaker values and practice, we “let our lives speak.” While there is no Quaker doctrine or dogma, there are two beliefs central to all that we do. We act upon the knowledge that there is “that of God in each of us.” Regardless of our personal religious and political beliefs, we are each a living representation of the Divine. We seek truth through openness to “continuing revelation” or new knowledge and awareness. As humans we do not know all there is to know and must learn to question and seek answers to discern truth.

There are also six tenets that guide the program – simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. It is the intent of Harford Friends School to help a child or any other member of our community to become a more mindful, engaged, skilled, and knowledgeable individual capable of making and expected to make a positive difference in our school, our community, and our world.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Throughout each year students directly experience how conflicts can be solved peacefully. Using the “I-to-I” conflict mediation methods, they practice speaking directly and listening actively during mediation sessions. Teachers are trained in this method and students develop the skills to effectively manage conflict by addressing problems with others directly and through a shared vocabulary, set of expectations, and methodology. The Lower School “I to I” process is used as the basis for the Middle School’s focus on building negotiation skills, understanding the sources of conflict and conflict management strategies.

### **Ongoing Nature Connection Project**

During their entire Lower School experience, students develop and strengthen their connection with their natural surroundings—an essential component of healthy

cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development. In fact, stewardship is one of the Quaker testimonies. Starting in first grade and continuing through the Lower School, the students get to know a special place, and the plants and animals that live there, as they:

- visit the place/animal/plant repeatedly during the year
- spend time in that place: playing, dreaming, pretending, observing, drawing, and writing
- explore the topography, colors, growth patterns, textures, movement, hiding places, and nooks and crannies of a place
- talk and write about “their” place/animal/plant with friends and family
- research the plant/place/animal by reading, observing, and talking to others
- choose a way to protect and nurture that place/animal/tree

### **Family Connection**

As one half of the embrace around each student in the Lower School, each child’s family plays an essential role in the learning process. Whether as co-researcher in a home-based project, model for portrait drawing, volunteer on a field trip, interview subject, partner for a cooperative game, responsive audience for a piece of writing, or a first ear for an original song---each member of a student’s family provides important support.

### **Service Learning**

Service learning involves planning, doing, and reflecting. Throughout the Lower School program, Harford Friends School children establish a partnership with Seniors at the local Senior Center, and some of their research and service learning focus on these partners. The relationship is mutual; the giving and receiving two-way.

### **Language Arts**

Each year, the language arts build upon the previous year’s skills and experiences. In the early elementary years, the emphasis on “big ideas” changes in complexity and application. Early and heavy emphasis on phonological awareness, alphabetic principles of letter sounds and combinations gives way to multi-syllabic comprehension and decoding skill development. Key listening skills in the realm of vocabulary and comprehension are developed through grades kindergarten through three. However, reading skills are introduced and developed over the same period with greater and greater weight placed on reading. Ultimately, the objective of the early years language arts program is to create automaticity and fluency with the decoding, reading, comprehension, vocabulary usage, and effective communications. Reading (Comprehension Strategies, Fluency, Community of readers), Writing (Writing Strategies - prewriting, writing, responding, revising, editing, publishing, Community of writers, Grammar/Usage, Handwriting), Word Study (Decoding strategies: Phonemic awareness - 1<sup>st</sup>, Phonics - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Structural Analysis), Spelling, Vocabulary, and Speaking and Listening constitute the components of Harford Friends School’s language arts framework. Teachers select thematic readings, books, poetry, plays, and other literature to augment, enrich, and engage the themes within units and each grade.

### **Science**

Science within the Lower School is a critical component of each unit of study. The content follows the Maryland State Department of Education’s Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) and works to achieve the following essential skills and understandings.

- Careful observations help us to understand our world.

- We learn about our world by asking questions, observing, making predictions, investigating, doing experiments, and sharing our discoveries
- Reasoning helps us to classify and draw conclusions
- We base our scientific beliefs on evidence and reasoning
- Sharing findings help us to reach conclusions
- Physical models help us to explain real things and to understand our world
- Scientific understanding is built and revised
- Scientists use tools to enhance their senses
- Science is a social process

### **Social Science**

Social science concepts and topics provide the basis for many of the Lower School's units of study and follow the Maryland State Department of Education's Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC). Essential understandings achieved through the social studies curriculum include:

- People create systems to produce, distribute, and consume resources.
- Individuals are links in the chain of human history. (I can learn from the past and influence the future.) Learning about the past helps to understand the present.
- History is shaped by cause/effect relationships.
- People migrate for a variety of reasons, which leads to the spread of ideas, beliefs, and customs.
- We organize information in a variety of ways to understand and interpret the world.
- Geography influences and affects the way people live.
- People make rules for how they live together. People interact through conflict, compromise, and cooperation.
- We develop systems to help us obtain and distribute resources.
- Key turning points in history affect the political, economic, and social development of people and places.

### **Research**

During each year in the Lower School students conduct investigations and research in all subject areas. As they explore, observe closely, ask questions, solve problems, make decisions, express ideas, and communicate, students develop essential research skills and content knowledge.

### **Physical Education**

During their physical education times each week, students have fun as they develop coordination, balance, strength, and fitness. They learn the rules of age-appropriate games and sports, take healthy risks, develop cooperative skills and sportsmanship, and learn to take care of their own bodies.

### **Arts**

The arts play a critical role in the Harford Friends School Lower School program of study. They provide a variety of media through which students may demonstrate knowledge, interpret understanding, and broaden their cultural and aesthetic horizons.

#### **Drama**

Students build on their natural affinity for pretend play through dramatization. They act out stories and songs, and create their own dramatic ways to interpret and express what they're thinking and feeling.

## **Visual Arts**

Students explore a variety of materials as they learn about the elements of art (e.g., line, shading, texture, pattern, color, and shape). Art is integrated into a variety of math and reading experiences, as well as the thematic units, and the children enjoy the time set aside for expressing themselves and interpreting others' art. Fine art processes, presented through Blue Dog Creative Arts, help students enhance their understanding of themselves through self-expression and teach proper selection and employment of tools, materials, processes, and techniques in order for the student-artist to solve specific visual problems. Central to the process of learning through the visual arts is developing the ability to create visual images or forms from observation, memory, and imagination and works of art that explore the essential elements of art.

The visual arts program in the lower school also builds art appreciation. Students begin to understand how works of art from various cultures communicate feelings, ideas and universal themes and identify ways beliefs and values are communicated and reflected in different cultural works of art.

## **Dance**

The students' natural exuberance and joy in moving find expression in dance. Dance becomes an idea way for children to express their interpretation of melody and rhythm, as well as their own ideas and feelings. In addition, dance is integrated into thematic units.

## **Music**

The music program, presented by professional musicians and music educators, emphasizes music literacy—listening, playing, singing, and reading—as well as appreciation. In each grade and through each topic area, Harford Friends School students work to answer essential questions about what music is and what functions it serves. Students learn about what music is, how it is created, and explore thoughts about why music exists.

Students develop an appreciation for music through exploration and expression. Lower School students begin to identify aspects of the basic building blocks of music in their studies of multiple cultures. The study and performance of music also seeks to help students understand the meaning of music to both the individual human and our society of humans.

## **Computer Technology**

Computer Technology in the Lower School program seeks to develop students' functional literacy of technology and technological systems. It begins by developing basic keyboarding skills and operating system navigation and progresses into multi-media software use and presentation development. Lower School students have access to a bank of desktop computers in the classroom and a portable cart of laptop computers. The use of computer technology is embedded into most academic studies and interdisciplinary and thematic units of study. Students apply their computer skills in a variety of projects and for multiple purposes.

## **Foreign Language**

Students in the Lower School learn to speak and understand Spanish. Spanish class is presented in an immersion-based approach in which Spanish is spoken almost

exclusively in the classroom. Students learn to use Spanish vocabulary and to communicate in Spanish by learning the skills through conversation. Spanish is often used in interdisciplinary and thematic units as a means for reinforcing the learning of a foreign language.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Grade: My World: Basic Needs, Families, and Friends**

(“B” year content of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade program)

Spheres of Learning: Classroom, Schoolyard, Home

Units of Study: *Sun and Earth: Light, Dark, and Shadows*  
*Survival: Food*  
*Survival: Clothing*  
*Survival: Shelter*  
*Family*  
*What if everybody did?*

Mathematics: *Establishing Routines; Everyday Use of Numbers; Visual Patterns, Number Patterns, and Counting; Measurement and Basic Facts; Place Value, Number Stories, and Basic Facts; Developing Fact Power; Geometry and Attributes; Mental Arithmetic, Money, and Fractions; Place Value and Fractions; End of Year Review and Assessments*

Language Arts (see above for a general philosophical overview of the HFS Lower School Language Arts program)

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Elements: Parts and Place, Small to Big**

(“A” year content of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade program)

Spheres of Learning: School, Schoolyard, Neighborhood

Units of Study: *Water*  
*Sky*  
*Place/Habitat: What is our relationship to place?*  
*Life Cycle*  
*What is it made of?*

Mathematics: *Numbers and Routines; Addition and Subtraction Facts; Place Value, Money, and Time; Addition and Subtraction; 3-D and 2-D Shapes; Whole Number Operations and Number Stories; Patterns and Rules; Fractions; Measurement; Decimals and Place Value; Whole Number Operations Revisited; End of Year Review and Assessments*  
Note: Sadlier-Oxford Mathematics will be used during the 2009-2010 school year as a “phase-out” curriculum. Second grade students in 2010-2011 will be taught the Everyday Mathematics curriculum.

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### **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Adaptation and Growth: Culture and the Piedmont**

("A" year of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade program)

Spheres of Learning: U.S. Culture, Harford County, Baltimore City, the Piedmont

Units of Study: *Native Americans of the Piedmont*  
*Motion*  
*Culture*  
*Cities*  
*How did things get to be the way they are?*

Mathematics: *Routines, Reviews, and Assessments; Adding and Subtracting Whole Numbers; Linear Measures and Area; Multiplication and Division; Place Value in Whole Numbers and Decimals; Geometry; Multiplication and Division; Fractions; Multiplication and Division; Measurement and Data; Probability and End of Year Review*  
Note: Sadlier-Oxford Mathematics will be used through the 2010-2011 school year as a "phase-out" curriculum. Third grade students in 2011-2012 will be taught the Everyday Mathematics curriculum.

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### **4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Global Connections: Segments, Energy, and Continuity**

("B" year of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade program)

Spheres of Learning: International, Global Communities, Classroom, Deer Creek

Units of Study: *When Cultures Meet: Migration to Maryland*  
*Heat, Electricity and Force*  
*Bodies of Water: Streams and Rivers*  
*Alternative Energy Sources*  
*Preparing, Predicting, Testing, Observing*  
*How do we discover?*

Mathematics: *Naming and Constructing Geometric Figures; Using Numbers and Organizing Data; Number Sentences and Algebra (Multiplication and Division); Decimals and Their Uses; Big Numbers, Estimation, and Computation; Division: Map Reference Frames, Measures of Angles; Fractions and Their Uses, Chance and Probability; Percents; Reflections and Symmetry; Shapes, Weight, Volume, and Capacity; Rates*  
Note: Sadlier-Oxford Mathematics will be used through the 2011-2012 school year as a "phase-out" curriculum. Fourth grade students in 2012-2013 will be taught the Everyday Mathematics curriculum.

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## **5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Conflict and Change: Harnessing of Energy and Building Colonial America**

("A" year of 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade program – when enrollment warrants combination of grades for two or more consecutive years. "B" year content is existing 6<sup>th</sup> grade Humanities and science curriculum with grade-specific math instruction.)

Spheres of Learning: Mid-Atlantic region, Chesapeake Bay, Maryland

Units of Study: *Geologic Change*  
*Mechanics of Industry*  
*Diversity of Life*  
*Diversity of Thought*  
*How can we change the future?*

Mathematics: *Number Theory; Estimation and Computation; Geometry Explorations and the American Tour; Division; Fractions, Decimals, and Percents; Using Data – Addition and Subtraction of Fractions; Exponents and Negative Numbers; Fractions and Ratios; Coordinates, Area, Volume, and Capacity; Algebra Concepts and Skills; Volume; Probability, Ratios, and Rates;*  
*Connected Mathematics, Part II: Bits and Pieces (Part I); Shapes and Designs*  
Note: Sadlier-Oxford Mathematics will be used in the first half of the 2009-2010 school year as a preparatory curriculum. Students will learn through the Connected Mathematics II curriculum in the second half of the 2009-2010 academic year. Fifth grade students will continue to learn through both the Sadlier-Oxford and CMP II mathematics programs until the 2013-2014 school year when Everyday Mathematics (1<sup>st</sup> semester) and CMP II (2<sup>nd</sup> semester) are used as the basis of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade math program.

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