Bringing Learning to Life

AN ENGAGING CURRICULUM EMPOWERS STUDENTS

Teachers within the district are committed to delivering a rich and vibrant curriculum through innovative methods. Students are engaged in the learning process through activities that foster creativity and inquiry.

Children learn in many different ways, and teachers deliver their lessons through varied approaches, using many tools for knowledge assessment. Differentiated instruction is essential in ensuring that all children feel empowered to challenge their minds, take risks and accept that failure is an opportunity for growth rather than a reason to be discouraged.

Instructional coach Cindy Quinn said teachers work hard to find out “what makes each child tick.” By discovering the strengths of each student, they can create an instructional plan that includes every student in the learning process. When children are confident, they are joyful and passionate about their education.

“Knowing your children and what their needs are is vital to any instruction that you’re going to have in your classroom,” Ms. Quinn said. “We know that learning improves when students are engaged. When students are engaged, they’re interested and they’re curious.”

The district’s implementation of Reader’s Workshop and Writer’s Workshop gives students ownership of their literacy development. They select books to read and topics to write about that suit their interests. Manipulatives like dice, dominos, pattern blocks and more bring math instruction to life. Students regularly work in groups for engineering-based activities, in which they are given certain materials and have to build an object that solves a problem. The schools are infused with technological resources, such as iPads and small robots, that engage today’s tech-savvy children.

“It is vital that we provide teachers the tools needed to reach all of our young learners,” Superintendent Marie Testa said. “We want our students to be active participants in their educations. We work very hard to stimulate their natural curiosities and their senses of discovery and wonder.”

Mission Statement
Our mission is to inspire all students to be confident, passionate learners with the courage and skills to lead their lives with integrity, while contributing to our global community with creativity and compassion.

Core Values
Communities and individuals thrive when the talents and abilities of all are valued and fostered.

Each individual is responsible for his or her choices and the impact they create.

There is no limit to human potential.

Honesty, integrity and trust are essential to sustaining meaningful partnerships.

All people want to learn and succeed.

A safe and healthy environment optimizes learning.

Human life is precious.
What gets **YOU** excited about learning?

“I want to be a scientist, so I like to do science experiments, like the one where I stretched a rubber band to hear the sound it made when I touched it.”

Lucas E., John G. Dinkelmeyer Elementary School

“I like when we do science experiments because I don’t know what’s going to happen. I guess some of the things right and some of the things wrong, but I always learn something new.”

Ellie J., Martin Avenue Elementary School

“Reading, because I can write about things I like, sports I play or when I caught a fish with my grandparents. I like telling the stories of my life.”

Jayden S., Park Avenue Elementary School

“Writing, because I can write about things I like, sports I play or when I caught a fish with my grandparents. I like telling the stories of my life.”

Patricia Alemany, first-grade teacher, Park Avenue Elementary School

My number one job is to get students to feel as comfortable as possible when they come into my classroom. I establish a connection with them and make them feel like we’re a team, I find out what their personal interests are, and I will talk to them about it. When they are comfortable, they can be more successful.”

Mike Tilley, resource room teacher, John G. Dinkelmeyer Elementary School

“I wish that my teachers helped me to love math earlier in life. My students love math and really embrace numbers. When I say it’s time for math, they’re all like, ‘Yeah!’ Incorporating fun into learning is the cornerstone of what I do as a teacher. There is always more than one way to solve a problem, and we celebrate multiple ways to get an answer.”

Patricia Alemany, first-grade teacher, Park Avenue Elementary School

“I like using technology, like the computers in my classroom. I really enjoy math games. Games are my most favorite thing to do with technology because it’s fun and I learn a lot.”

Aleesha A., Newbridge Road Elementary School

“I wish that my teachers helped me to love math earlier in life. My students love math and really embrace numbers. When I say it’s time for math, they’re all like, ‘Yeah!’ Incorporating fun into learning is the cornerstone of what I do as a teacher. There is always more than one way to solve a problem, and we celebrate multiple ways to get an answer.”

Patricia Alemany, first-grade teacher, Park Avenue Elementary School

“A positive classroom environment overpowers any curriculum. On day one, I establish a positive, nurturing and risk-taking environment with my students. When you teach from the heart, to the heart, you build a rapport. It is a teacher’s delivery that is going to engage the students.”

Stacey Theodore, fourth-grade teacher, Saw Mill Road Elementary School

“Learning through play. We do a lot of investigative work in math where children will play with dice, cards or other manipulatives. When I was a child, everything was dittos. Learning through play is so valuable because children can construct their own meaning.”

Lynda Bost, third-grade teacher, Newbridge Road Elementary School

“I give my students different options for varied responses. They have opportunities to do activities and demonstrate what they’ve learned based on their strengths, whether it is writing a response, drawing a picture or creating a project. When they show what they can do, it builds their confidence.”

Amy Stabile, speech teacher, Martin Avenue Elementary School

What do **YOU** do as a teacher, that you wish your teachers did when you were a student?

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“Reading, because unlike movies and shows, you can be in your own world and picture in your head what it looks like. We had a book tasting so I made a list of books I want to read.”

Alex R., Saw Mill Road Elementary School

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a museum with their handmade house and home collages. Each student stood next to their exhibit to explain or answer any questions as their peers came to visit.

NEWBRIDGE ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Book talks are a favorite activity among sixth-graders in Karen Buran’s class. In lieu of writing book reports, they meet in small groups during class time to discuss the plot, analyze characters and share their predictions. They choose novels from the classroom library, such as “Echo,” “42” and the Alex Rider series. Ms. Buran sits in on many of the book talks and noted the natural and exciting conversation that takes place.

PARK AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

To engage students in the writing process, second-grade teacher Melanie Purificato popped popcorn in her classroom. Students gathered on the carpet with clipboards and used all five senses to observe the transformation from kernels to tasty treat. The lesson prepared children for their “small moment” writing activity by teaching them how to use adjectives, sensory details and similes.

SAW MILL ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Physical education teacher Tom Steinmuller introduced students to volleyball through an activity that combined fitness and technology. Students answered true or false questions about the sport’s rules by performing one exercise if they thought the answer was true and a different exercise for false. Images and videos of the exercises, such as dance moves, jumping jacks and push-ups, appeared on the whiteboard.

DISTRICTWIDE

Students in the Alpha enrichment program participated in the Food Challenge with teacher Gayle Angert. Each student was assigned one or two words and had to bring in a food to match. Food was randomly placed around the room and children walked around trying to match all of the words with all of the foods. One student brought in hot chocolate to represent the word “snug,” another selected a giant chocolate cookie for the word “colossal.”

First-graders have been engaged in technology with Bee-Bots. Each student in a group gets a role, such as leader, materials manager, recorder or peacekeeper. Students figure out how the Bee-Bots work on their own, then the class practices programming together. Every group must program its Bee-Bot to follow a specific path by having it follow directions with forward movements and turns.