

Lower School (K-4) Overview

Reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic are the foundation upon which the tower of learning is built, and they are given the highest priority in the Lower School. The basic skills, work habits, and attitudes formed in the primary years are of critical importance.

Phonics and Reading

Phonics is the system of letter-sound association taught to children for the purposes of learning to read and spell. Phonics is most effective when taught systematically, thoroughly, intensively, and in a logical and time-tested sequence. Our primary resource for phonics instruction in kindergarten is our own Memoria Press First Start Reading, a program which teaches correct pencil grip, manuscript form, consonant and short vowel sounds, three-letter word formation, consonant blends and long vowels/silent e. Common words which do not fit into any word family are introduced after students learn to blend three-letter words. *First Start Reading* teaches students to read in kindergarten using stories with a high percentage of phonetic words. Phonics and spelling continue in 1st and 2nd grades using the *Core Skills* phonics series and *Traditional Spelling*, books I and II. In 1st grade students continue to develop reading comprehension with whole books, which captivate and motivate children and are preferred over basal readers. Teachers monitor student reading skills through daily oral reading. First graders read children's classics such as *Little Bear*, *Caps For Sale*, *The Story About Ping*, and *Billy and Blaze*. Second graders read *The Courage of Sarah Noble*, *Little House in the Big Woods*, and *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Spelling, penmanship, composition, and vocabulary lessons for each book are provided by our Memoria Press study guides, written by HLS faculty in Louisville, Kentucky. A rich language experience, provided both at home and in school, is an important factor in reading success. Students memorize poems and Scripture and enjoy children's classics read by teachers and parents during read-aloud time.

Spelling and Printing

Students develop the visual memory for accurate spelling by a systematic study of phonics, word families, and spelling rules, and by a lifetime of seeing, reading, and writing words correctly. It is very important to reduce opportunities for children to write or see misspelled words; young students who are allowed to spell creatively or phonetically have a confused visual memory that is difficult to overcome. *Copybook* is an exercise consisting of copying sayings, maxims, Scripture, and poetry in the student's best handwriting. *Copybook* is an important step in developing good penmanship, punctuation, and spelling. Habits of good penmanship are instilled early and required at every grade level by every teacher. The discipline of neat and legible handwriting is an aid to spelling and instills the value of accurate, careful work—an important academic skill that carries over into every aspect of learning. In the 1st and 2nd grades students continue to practice manuscript while also



beginning cursive script with Memoria Press's *New American Cursive* program. Cursive is required for written work in grades 3 and up. At Highlands Latin School our teachers work to help students form and maintain a proper pencil grip. Correct pencil grip reduces hand fatigue and as a consequence also reduces resistance to written work in general.

Arithmetic

Immediate recall of addition and subtraction facts through 18 is the focus in primary school. Number formation, counting, time, calendar, measurement, and money are the initial skills of the primary grades. In 2nd grade the students also begin multiplication with the 1x, 2x, 5x, and 10x facts. Students learn number sense by skip-counting, games, and drills, all of which make math time enjoyable.

Geography, History, and Science

Our Read-Aloud Program consists of a set of thirty books, one set for each grade in K-3, one book for each week. These books provide a rich language experience for students, as each book is read aloud every day the class meets and is accompanied by oral questions and discussion. Students learn new and interesting words and delight in rhyme and word play. They learn about holidays, history, geography, science and more. The read-aloud books, which are beautiful in both art and language, were chosen after extensive research and reading. K-3 students study globes and maps to learn continents, oceans, major countries, and basic geography terms. Second graders are introduced to states and capitals. In science, students learn about seasons, weather, and local flora and fauna.

Christian Studies, Music and Art

In Christian Studies students read or listen to Bible stories and memorize Scripture verses and prayers. K-1 students have weekly music instruction and 2nd-3rd grade students have music twice weekly; they have lessons in the basic elements of music, including ear training, note reading, and choral performance. In music appreciation, students are introduced to a well-known composer and piece of music weekly. Students draw and color in their composition books, illustrating copybook verses, poems, and composition lessons. In art appreciation, primary students learn about an artist and study an art masterwork every week.

Physical Education

Students have Physical Education twice a week. P.E. provides 30 minutes of vigorous exercise as well as opportunities to play childhood games.