



WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

LOWER SCHOOL

2021-2022

Curriculum Guide

GRADES 4-6

Philosophy

Our work with our youngest students is grounded in the belief that young girls are capable of nuanced thinking and opinions, as well as having a voice in their world. In fourth grade, a girl's sense of self is taking root, shaped by her intellectual pursuits, friendships, and emerging passions and talents. It is a critical time in her development, and a time when an all-girl environment, designed specifically for how she learns best, will allow her to come into her own in powerful ways.

The Westridge Lower School offers a curriculum that fosters independence, self-discipline, and an enthusiasm for learning within a structured classroom environment. Using an intentional, spiral approach in all subject areas ensures continued intellectual growth and skill development in academics, arts, and physical education, as well as the application of these skills through creative activities and group projects in grades 4-6.

Lower School

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Language Arts/Humanities

An integrated language arts program focuses on a variety of literary forms. It is organized thematically, often connecting literature units with social studies or science units. There is significant emphasis on the development of expository and creative writing, in addition to instruction in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Students develop their voices through their own daily writing and conscious engagement with the writing of others. Small group discussions and Socratic discourse are key elements to the curriculum.

Mathematics

Using the Everyday Mathematics program developed by the University of Chicago, students learn to explain their reasoning in solving problems and discuss multiple methods for finding solutions. They master basic skills and knowledge so they are comfortable computing with abstract and complex concepts. Through the study of economics, girls learn about consumerism, finance, and the global marketplace. At Westridge, math rigor is more than just procedural fluency. It means understanding concepts at a deeper level and applying them in new contexts.

Science

Our students learn what it means to think as a scientist through an engaging, hands-on, lab-based curriculum that explores topics in both the physical and biological sciences. An emphasis is placed on learning the scientific method and exposing girls to the many tools scientists use to make observations and collect data.

Social Studies/History

Girls study California history in 4th grade, the Western Hemisphere in 5th grade, and ancient civilizations in 6th grade. Students gain knowledge and an understanding of how peoples of the past and present have been shaped by geography, history, belief systems, economics, socio-political systems, and culture. Note-taking and research skills, in addition to how to extrapolate information from various sources, are taught and applied through interdisciplinary lessons and creative projects.

Spanish Language and Culture

Beginning in 5th grade, students study Spanish. Girls are immersed in a language-rich environment that encourages speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. In 7th grade, students can choose to continue with Spanish or opt to take Mandarin Chinese or Latin.

Performing Arts

The Lower School emphasizes a dynamic study of music as an introduction to a performing arts education. Westridge is unique, as girls study choral music and music theory in 4th grade every other day. Instruction in music takes place in the daily schedule when string instruments are added in grades 5 and 6. Students can choose either the violin, viola, cello, or double bass.

Visual Art

Art classes in drawing, painting, and mixed media are featured in grades 4-6, and a semester of ceramics is added in 6th grade. Visual art classes occur every other day. Lower School Visual Art is foundational, establishing the basic concepts, skills, and knowledge for artistic expression and appreciation. Art history, architecture, and the exploration and study of artists are also included.



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AVERAGE
LOWER SCHOOL
CLASS SIZE

More detailed curriculum
information can be found at
www.westridge.org/lowerschool



Physical Education

P.E. class occurs every day because, in addition to being good for the body, physical activity boosts brain power and improves learning. The program is designed to develop skills and coordination, as well as to introduce traditional sports, cooperative games, and activities while emphasizing the importance of health and fitness.

Computer Science and Technology

Beginning in 4th grade students explore a range of fundamental concepts including coding, robotics, the internet, and digital citizenship. In addition, students learn to use technology as a tool to support their own learning — a crucial skill in a connected, digital world. Each Lower School student is provided with a Lenovo Yoga laptop computer as part of our 1:1 laptop program, the cost of which is included in tuition and program fees.

Council

Once a month, Lower School students meet with the school counselor and the director of the Lower and Middle School to address topics that are relevant and timely to their development and growth. Council is a non-graded discussion and activity-based program that covers how to be a friend, conflict resolution, health and wellness, puberty, identity, DEI, and organizational skills. Students experience a sense of belonging and develop sensitivity for others. Council fosters the skills of deep listening, listening without judgment, and storytelling.

Student Leadership

The Student Activities and Leadership Council (SALC) is a service learning group that also serves as the student government leadership of the Lower School. They arrange and host activities that serve the larger community, such as Petridge, an annual event that benefits animal rescue organizations.

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FULL-TIME
FACULTY
MEMBERS

Think, Care, Act Project (TCAP)

This year-long project in 5th grade celebrates our students' compassionate participation in the world with student-led service projects. Beginning with self-discovery, students look outside of themselves into their communities, the country, and the world to identify and research a problem they can help solve, using both their strengths and interests. They are challenged with generating innovative ideas that raise awareness and lead to concrete action.

Women of Character & Courage Wax museum

The Wax Museum is an important rite of passage for Westridge Lower School students that occurs just prior to 6th Grade Recognition. Each student selects and conducts research on a woman who has made a great impact on her community or the world. At the "museum," she poses as a wax figure of her selected woman and performs a monologue explaining the woman's story.

Baking a Better World

In 6th grade, students lead the Baking A Better World fundraiser, an interdisciplinary project that uses 3D printing technology to create social awareness. Students design cookie cutters in our STEAMWork Design Studio and sell them along with baked goods to raise funds for local and global charities.

Water Rockets & Robots

The culminating projects of our 5th and 6th grade science programs are rocketry and robotics, respectively. Students design, build (and decorate!), and launch rockets, with iterative design changes to improve launch performance. The highlight of the robotics program each year is a visit from a JPL rocket scientist with a functioning Mars Rover.

Lower School Schedule

During a typical year of full-time, on-campus learning, all grades at Westridge operate on a six-day cycle. Days are designated as 1-6 and referred to as odd or even days.

4th Grade

Fourth grade students have math, language arts, and physical education every day, while science, history, visual arts, chorus, and computer science are every other day.

SAMPLE 4TH GRADE SCHEDULE

	8:00	8:25-9:25		9:50-10:50	10:55-11:40		12:25-1:10	1:15-2:00	2:05-2:50
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Class Meeting	Math	Recess	P.E.	Chorus	Lunch & Recess	Physical Education	D.E.A.R.	Science
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Class Meeting	Math	Recess	Language Arts	Math or Language Arts	Lunch & Recess	Physical Education	Art	Computer Science

5th Grade

Fifth grade students have math, language arts, and physical education every day, while science, history, visual arts, and chorus occur every other day. Every fifth grader begins our strings music program and Spanish, with both classes offered every other day.

SAMPLE 5TH GRADE SCHEDULE

	8:00	8:25-9:25		9:50-10:50	10:55-11:40	12:25-1:10		1:15-2:00	2:05-2:50
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Class Meeting	Math	Recess	Language Arts	Art	Lunch & Recess	Science	Physical Education	Strings
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Class Meeting	Math	Recess	Language Arts	Math or Language Arts	Lunch & Recess	Chorus	Physical Education	Spanish

6th Grade

Sixth grade students have math, humanities, and physical education every day, while science, history, visual arts, strings, and Spanish are every other day.

SAMPLE 6TH GRADE SCHEDULE

	8:00	8:25-9:10		9:30-10:15	10:25-11:25		12:10-1:10	1:15-2:15	2:20-3:05
Odd Days (1, 3, 5)	Class Meeting	Math	Recess	Spanish	Math	Lunch & Recess	Social Studies	Language Arts	P.E.
Even Days (2, 4, 6)	Class Meeting	Art	Recess	Chorus	Math	Lunch & Recess	Language Arts	Science	P.E.



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