

# SENECA ACADEMY CURRICULUM

## INTRODUCTION

The Seneca Academy curriculum is designed to be an integrated, transdisciplinary program of study for students in preschool through 5th grade that facilitates the development of learners who can think and learn independently. The Seneca Academy curriculum is guided by the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) and supported by a variety of other curricula and materials. The framework for our studies is detailed in our *Program of Inquiry*, which outlines the transdisciplinary units of study to be taught and learned in each grade level.



The Seneca Academy written curriculum addresses five essential elements:

- **Knowledge:** Significant, relevant content that we wish the students to explore and know about, taking into consideration their prior experience and understanding.
- **Concepts:** Powerful ideas that have relevance within the subject areas but also transcend them, that students must explore and re-explore in order to develop a coherent, in-depth understanding.
- **Skills:** Those capabilities that the students need to demonstrate to succeed in a changing, challenging world, which may be disciplinary or transdisciplinary in nature.
- **Attitudes:** Dispositions that are expressions of fundamental values, beliefs and feelings about learning, the environment, and people.
- **Action:** Demonstrations of deeper learning in responsible behavior through responsible action; a manifestation in practice of the other essential elements.

- From *Making the PYP Happen*, p.10

## SENECA ACADEMY LANGUAGE ARTS

The Seneca Academy language arts curriculum is designed to develop students who are skillful in reading for pleasure and content, are clear writers of fiction and non-fiction, and are confident communicators through written, oral, and visual media.

In preschool, our language arts instruction is driven by *Creative Curriculum* by Diane Trister Dodge, founder and president of Teaching Strategies, Inc. Elementary language arts is structured around reading and writing workshops, which allow students to engage in the practice of real-life reading and writing on a daily basis. Our writing curriculum is further enhanced by the *6+1 Traits of Writing* curriculum, a nationally recognized writing program. Teachers use

a variety of print and technological materials for instruction, including classic literature, poetry, magazines, e-resources, etc.



Seneca Academy's language arts curriculum:

- Provides daily opportunities for reading and writing
- Links reading and writing to all subject areas
- Incorporates instruction for skills and strategies in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and viewing and presenting
- Integrates spelling and grammar instruction
- Uses large and small group and individual reading activities
- Engages critical thinking skills practiced through projects and discussion
- Provides instruction and practice in handwriting, both manuscript and cursive, and keyboarding starting in grade 3

## SENECA ACADEMY MATHEMATICS

The Seneca Academy mathematics curriculum is designed for students to develop a thorough understanding of mathematical concepts from basic number sense through operations, patterns, measurement, geometry, data, and use of variables. Emphasis is placed on students' application of mathematical thinking to solve everyday problems. Students demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts as they engage in a variety of hands-on problem-solving activities.

Our primary source for elementary math education is *Everyday Math*, an exemplary program developed at the University of Chicago. Our primary resource for preschool mathematics comes from *Creative Curriculum*, created by Diane Trister Dodge, founder and president of Teaching Strategies, Inc.



Seneca Academy's mathematics curriculum:

- Uses hands-on activities to acquire concepts
- Links new concepts to meaningful past experiences
- Provides project-based learning
- Includes games to increase "fact-power"
- Teaches problem solving using multiple strategies
- Offers opportunities for cooperative learning

## SENECA ACADEMY CURRICULUM (CONTINUED)

### SENECA ACADEMY SCIENCE

The Seneca Academy science curriculum enables students to acquire the skills and habits of mind in scientific thinking that allow them to explore the biological, chemical, and physical aspects of the changing world around them. This is accomplished through a balanced study of earth science, life science, and physical science, as well as the integration of technology. Our 6 ½ acre National Wildlife Federation Certified Schoolyard Habitat serves as a laboratory for many of our hands-on explorations of the natural world.

The Seneca Academy science goals are informed by The Next Generation Science Standards, the IB PYP, and the Montgomery County Public Schools science curriculum.



Seneca Academy's science curriculum:

- Is guided by the IB PYP's transdisciplinary themes
- Provides inquiry-based, experiential learning, indoors, outdoors, and on field trips
- Lays a foundation of conceptual understanding, content knowledge, and scientific skills
- Fosters a meaningful understanding of the scientific method beginning in our earliest grades
- Allows for the development and application of transdisciplinary skills

### SENECA ACADEMY SOCIAL STUDIES

The social studies curriculum at Seneca Academy engages students in the inquiry of people in relation to their history, their current personal and cultural identities, and their future roles and responsibilities. In addition, the Seneca Academy social studies curriculum facilitates information gathering, sharing, and analysis about our environment and society in a rapidly changing world. Our hands-on transdisciplinary approach encourages students to develop the critical thinking skills that allow them to identify trends and connections across time and our world.



The Seneca Academy social studies goals are informed by The National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, the IB PYP, and the Montgomery County Public Schools social studies curriculum.

Seneca Academy's social studies curriculum:

- Is guided by the IB PYP's transdisciplinary themes
- Utilizes hands-on activities to fully engage students
- Employs a variety of print and electronic media as well as field trips
- Allows for the development and application of transdisciplinary skills

### OTHER ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE SENECA ACADEMY CURRICULUM

- Foreign Language
- Art
- Music
- Technology
- Physical Education

## PORTRAIT OF A SENECA ACADEMY GRADUATE



When students leave Seneca Academy they are well-prepared to excel in other private, public, or parochial school programs, both academically and socially. They have grasped the attributes of the IB Learner Profile and are ready to be: principled, open-minded, caring, knowledgeable, balanced, reflective, inquirers, thinkers, communicators, and risk-takers.



Private schools accepting Seneca Academy students include:

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| The Barnesville School        | Friends Meeting School |
| St. Andrew's Episcopal School | Norwood School         |
| Sandy Spring Friends School   | Avalon                 |
| Bullis School                 | Mary of Nazareth       |
| Christ Episcopal School       | Holton Arms            |