University Primary School Curriculum Overview

**Philosophy**
The philosophy of UPS is that young children are best served by teaching and curriculum practices that strengthen and support their intellectual growth and development, initiate them into basic skills, challenge them to increase their proficiency in academic tasks as well as intellectual processes, and at the same time foster the development of their social competence.

**Unique Features of University Primary School Curriculum**
The University Primary School Curriculum represents an eclectic approach to early childhood gifted education programming. A blend of student-initiated, teacher-guided, and teacher-directed activities present students with opportunities to pursue their own interest areas and progress at their individual level of instruction. Creativity, problem solving, and self-directed learning are common threads woven through all areas of the curriculum. Students become actively involved in the inquiry process through projects.

**Best Practices**
As a teacher training and research site, University Primary School aims to model best practices, based on research and on accepted learning theories in early childhood gifted education. Best practices for children at this age include a child-sensitive, individually focused curriculum with many opportunities for students to choose and develop their own learning activities. Children will be working individually or in small informal groups most of the time with the teachers often taking the role of guides or facilitators of learning. Teachers assess and address the strengths of each child and build on these strengths for future learning experiences.

**Activity Time and Project-Work**
Activity Time and Project-work is highly valued in our curriculum. Activity time allows students to make choices about their own learning and provides important school time to work in their interest areas. During this time period, teachers facilitate students’ learning by building upon their ideas. Projects present learning to children in real-life contexts and integrate the acquisition and application of basic skills through inquiry modes of learning. Activity Time and Project-work strive to foster “the love of learning” and provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in the learning process with their students.

**Social and Emotional Growth**
Teachers take a proactive role in creating a classroom community that is open, honest, and accepting. To this end, discipline is designed around teachers structuring appropriate choices, students learning how to solve their own problems, and students sharing in the responsibility of developing a caring classroom community. Teachers encourage self-control and strive to develop both intellectual and emotional self-confidence.

**Numeration and Problem Solving Skills**
Math is taught with an investigative approach, with a focus on relating math to real-life situations using manipulatives and other concrete materials. Teachers facilitate learning in the following areas at the child’s individual readiness level: conceptual skills, numeration, computation, measurement, problem solving, and geometry. Many of the students’ projects will reflect integration of these mathematical skills.

**Language Arts**
This program emphasizes a whole language approach where children learn to read by reading and to write by writing. Students are actively involved in both processes throughout the day. Importance is placed on the “making sense” process. They learn within whole context rather than parts. Early literacy involves three reading cue systems: contextual, grammatical, and phonetic. Teachers create a literacy rich environment and model meaningful reading and writing.

**Arts and Aesthetics**
The arts are integral to children’s learning. Teachers guide students toward meaningful experiences in the arts with examples, materials, and cultural artifacts. Teachers promote sensitivity to and an appreciation of the environment.