

JUNIOR SCHOOL CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The Junior School curriculum ensures students acquire knowledge, concepts and skills by making relevant, significant connections to real life.



PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (PYP)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside.

The most significant and distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years Programme are the five essential elements, including **knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action**.

The six **transdisciplinary themes** and subject areas form the knowledge element of the programme. These include:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- Sharing the planet

These themes relate to issues that have meaning for, and are important to, all of us. They invite in-depth investigations into significant knowledge and ideas, and require the involvement of the teachers and students to direct their learning. The six themes of global significance create a transdisciplinary framework that allows students to "step up" beyond the confines of learning within subject areas.

The **six transdisciplinary themes** collectively constitute a **programme of inquiry** (*see attached*) which has been developed collaboratively by the pedagogical team of the school. The programme offers a balance between learning about or through the subject areas, and learning beyond them. This highly defined, focused, in-depth programme of inquiry, with its emphasis on collaborative planning, aims to eliminate redundancy and avoids the pitfalls of a personality- driven curriculum.

Assessment in the PYP is not solely restricted to paper-pencil assignments; students are required to present their learning through a more holistic approach. Assessment serves a dual purpose: (a) *formative* – it enhances learning, by providing feedback to the learners about what they know and can do, enabling them to improve their learning, and to the teachers to improve their teaching techniques. (b) *summative* – it provides a picture of each student's areas of strengths and shortcomings for reporting purposes.

¹ language; social studies; mathematics; arts; science; and personal, social and physical education



TRANSDISCIPLINARY SUBJECT SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ORAL LANGUAGE (LISTENING & SPEAKING) & VISUAL LANGUAGE (VIEWING & PRESENTING)

We believe that in today's dynamic world, content can be grasped and communicated through varied mediums. Self-expression through oration and drama is as important for children as the written medium to emerge as confident, well-rounded personalities. At The Learning Tree, students experience a range of opportunities to express their understanding through the oral and visual mediums, which enables them to become self-confident, self-aware, and buoyant individuals. They learn to adjust their tone and content while speaking to suit different audiences and purposes, so that they can express themselves accurately and fluently.

This process, in addition, also sharpens their listening skills.

Dramatics is encouraged from the early years. Approaches such as role-play, improvisation and scripted performances enable students to show their competence and extends their self-assurance. Each child is given opportunities to express themselves in original and creative ways, bringing out the shiest of our students. Visual presentations serve as an important medium to express understanding of a concept, be it through role play, dioramas, charts, or PowerPoint presentations

WRITTEN LANGUAGE – READING & WRITING

Literacy is integrated with the units of inquiry, which provide a context for learning the language, and participating in reading and writing activities.

Reading materials are selected carefully in order to enhance the students' understanding of the units of inquiry. Students are encouraged to read for pleasure and for extracting information. A diverse variety of books and reading programs are used, including the 'Signature' series by Harcourt Brace & Company. A training in phonics is imperative for developing good reading and spelling skills; hence, phonetic and sight words reading is introduced at the very beginning. Students are encouraged to read a selection of fiction and non-fiction books to broaden their reading experiences. Literary skills are focused upon, where the students are required to develop new vocabulary by using context clues, identify figurative language and imagery, critically analyze information, and infer meaning using logical reasoning and evidence, .

Students write for a variety of reasons for diverse audiences every day in the classroom. The youngest ones learn writing with the teacher's support with an emphasis on 'emergent' writing. They are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings without constraints, and are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. We believe that creativity should not be curbed by over-emphasis on conventions in the early years of development. As their skills develop, they are then encouraged to use their knowledge of common words and familiar spelling patterns to write with increasing accuracy.

Our units of inquiry provide the context for real-life writing on different topics and genres. We deem it important that students need to be provided with instruction, structure and organization (through modeling, graphic organizers, checklists, rubrics, etc.) to guide their writing process; however, we do not underestimate the need for free-writing and journaling in order to unleash the students' creativity. Self-reflection not only develops written expression, but also serves as a platform for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

At The Learning Tree, we provide students with the opportunity to see themselves as “mathematicians”, where they enjoy and are enthusiastic when exploring and learning about mathematics. It is intended that students become competent users of the language of mathematics, and can begin to use it as a way of thinking, as opposed to seeing it as a series of facts and equations to be memorized. It is important that learners acquire mathematical understanding by constructing their own meaning starting with exploring their own personal experiences, understandings and knowledge. Additionally, mathematics needs to be taught in relevant, realistic contexts, rather than by attempting to impart a fixed body of knowledge directly to students.

The following strands of mathematics are taught, and where possible, mathematical units serve to increase the students’ understanding of the unit of inquiry:

- Number
- Data Handling
- Patterns and Function
- Measurement
- Shape and Space

How children learn mathematics can be described by the following stages: *constructing meaning about mathematics, transferring meaning into symbols, and applying with understanding*. Learners *construct meaning* based on their previous experiences and understanding, and by reflecting upon their interactions with objects and ideas. Only when learners have constructed their ideas about a mathematical concept should they attempt to *transfer this understanding into symbols*. *Applying with understanding* can be viewed as the learners demonstrating and acting on their understanding through authentic activities.

URDU LANGUAGE ARTS

At The Learning Tree, we take pride in promoting our national language, the mother tongue of many of our student population, and we encourage our students to do the same. Literacy in Urdu holds utmost importance, and it holds the place of one of our core subjects.

Urdu language is taught through the following strands:

VISUAL (VIEWING & PRESENTING) & ORAL (LISTENING & SPEAKING) LANGUAGE

We aim to provide a stimulating environment for the development of our students, where they learn to speak with confidence and pride. Role-play, class and group discussions, nursery rhymes, and stories- telling are an important part of our Urdu curriculum.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE (READING & WRITING)

A conceptual approach to teaching literacy skills in Urdu is adopted. Students are encouraged to read interest-based texts in order to pique their curiosity, and develop the love for the language.

To the younger students, recognition of Urdu alphabet and common words are reinforced through flashcards in the early years. We provide students with a large selection of Urdu resource books from renowned publishers like Oxford and Book Group. Over-emphasis on reading skills enables the students to develop fluency from an early age.

While reading is encouraged through a number of strategies, writing goes hand in hand. Students start learning to write the Urdu script with the help of trained Urdu teachers. They begin by writing letters, analyze and synthesize letters in simple words, and gradually progress to constructing simple sentences. Our ultimate aim is to develop the students’ skills in writing to enable them to express themselves in different kinds of writing (creative, expository, etc.).



VISUAL ARTS

Art is the vehicle that is used to enhance the understanding of the transdisciplinary themes by providing both students and teachers with a range of mediums with which to access the units of inquiry. Arts teaching and learning is infused in all areas of curriculum, particularly in the PYP units of inquiry, which are relevant and assist in furthering the understanding.

CREATING

Students are exposed to a broad range of experiences in order to develop their observational skills. They have the opportunity to experiment and display their creativity through various mediums. Their creativity is fostered and valued for the effort involved rather than the finished result.

Resources are easily accessible to the students. Age-appropriate curriculum, planned collaboratively, aims to coach the students to use a variety of material (water and oil-based paints, pencils, charcoal, crayons, pastels, etc.) in varied activities so that they are free to explore their strengths and preferences. The instruction imparted is grade-appropriate, and care is taken so as not to curb the creativity of the students.

RESPONDING

Opportunities are provided to experience visual arts beyond the students own initial involvement by inviting artists into the school, or by visiting art galleries, artists' studios and exhibitions. Students will experience visual arts created by diverse artists – locally and globally, now and in the past, by women and men, and by people of different backgrounds.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

A pilot foreign language program was initiated at The Learning Tree in January 2016, exposing students from Grade IV onwards to the French and German language. Students who learned one language during the term from January to May will be engaging in the other language next term, before they make a decision to take up any one language of their preference, which they will continue till upper Senior grades.

The courses are planned by the respective cultural institutes (Alliance Francais and Goethe Institute), providing native level instruction, and using high quality resources. As the program moves into its second year, we plan to introduce other languages like Mandarin and Arabic.

The introduction of an internationally-spoken language is evident of our mission to make our students internationally-minded, caring and respectful individuals.



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

We believe in creating tolerant individuals, who respect their own and others religions. The tenets and laws of Islam are introduced to young students, and studied in depth in higher grades. The ethical values promoted by Islam are stressed upon so that students develop their morality. Short Surahs and duas are recited at weekly assemblies and in the classrooms.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is an important medium of development that keeps our students active, while acquiring and practicing athletic skills. In addition, it is an important part of the day where students get an opportunity to expend excessive energies, and is known to help them focus better in class, and stay healthy. Our physical education department focuses on aerobic exercises, usually for warm-up sessions, before organizing games. Team sports promote skills like following rules and instructions, cooperation, fairness, sportsmanship, and leadership, amongst others. Competitive inter-class games are organized, and after-school activities are scheduled catering to the young athletes of our school.

LEARNING MODULES

In our quest towards the development of a holistic educational experience, we believe in offering opportunities to our students to learn diverse skills promoting physical, intellectual, emotional and social development; also, these skills encourage present and future choices that contribute to long-term healthy living, and help students understand cultural significance of activities.

To this end, we offer students a choice of learning module activities each term to foster their personal, social, physical and artistic development, which is as much a part of our curriculum as the conventional academic disciplines. Some popular module choices include: pottery, yoga, Robotics, rowing, tennis, Zumba, Taekwondo, ballet, dance, music (guitar), horse-riding, roller- skating, cooking, etc. These modules are held once a week during school hours. Each student's progress is monitored by the module leader who assigns a grade which is included in the term report. Each module is supervised by one or more school representatives.