

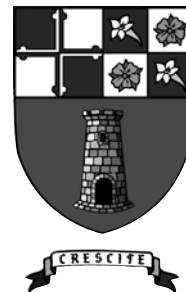


The Heights

LOWER

CURRICULUM GUIDE

SCHOOL



Contents

I. THE HEIGHTS LOWER SCHOOL: THE VALLEY

Educational Approach: Integrated, Connected, Detailed, Alive	4
Academic Subjects, Texts, and Topics	7

II. SUBJECTS

Religion	8
Natural History	9
Mathematics	11
History	12
Literature	13
Language Arts	14
Music	15
Art	16
Physical Education	16



■ The Heights Lower School: The Valley (*of Boys & Men*)

The Classrooms in log cabins, male teachers leading a nature walk or a football game, boys catching insects, climbing trees, reciting poems in a stone amphitheatre, sitting around a fire listening to ghostly Halloween tales, or competing for their clans in Capture the Flag: welcome to The Heights Lower School, welcome to the Valley.

The Lower School consists of grades three through five, is all-boys, and has an all-male faculty. The Heights Lower School offers an educational setting in which boys can thrive. The Valley, the teachers, and the curriculum create an environment conducive and challenging to boys.

The **location** of the Lower School is a broad grassy and wooded area of lower elevation; it is endearingly titled “The Valley.” The Valley includes a forested area with a variety of trees, a stone amphitheater, log cabins for classrooms, and an open grassed area for play. The setting facilitates the integrated and interactive educational experience of the Lower School. For example, the boys explore the woods and learn of the various trees and birds on the campus. Students gather at the amphitheatre for classes, stories, and poetry competitions as well as larger assemblies. The cabins have a sense of strength and adventure that can attract boys to the educational experience. The large setting has many niches and locations for quiet and calm observation—necessary for a whole education and stirring the latent capacities of contemplation and intuition.

The boys are placed in **small homeroom classes** (no more than twenty students, and an average of fifteen per class) and have one principal homeroom teacher. A **male homeroom teacher** and small class sizes have many advantages in the education of young boys who are increasingly looking for male mentoring, encouragement, and example. Heights teachers provide models for cultured manhood: men, who play sports, are friends, work diligently, and are genuinely interested in the world and ideas. Such examples are especially important for prepubescent boys who are

more open to ideals and engaged learning of the world. Homeroom teachers teach most of the subjects to their small classes; this enables the teacher to gain a better understanding of each boy and the boy to be better understood. Homeroom teachers also further a more informed and cooperative relationship between parents and teachers.

Notable aspects of the Valley experience include the number of **recesses** and amount of time allocated for **physical exercise**, and the freedom the boys are given. There are three recesses per day: two short recesses—one in the morning and another in the afternoon—and a longer recess after lunch. Furthermore, each class has a formal gym class four times a week. The recesses and physical education are necessary as breaks to complement the intensive academic studies. But, they are also necessary for development of the virtues associated with team sports, such as courage, discipline, working for a team goal, etc. They also provide healthy occasions for less formal exploration and activities that include fort building or other imaginative play.

Freedom is a vital component of the play and overall tone of the education in the Lower School. This freedom may include snow-ball throwing (with some rules), climbing trees, fort building with sticks, tackle football, or freer exploration of the woods. Freedom is necessary not only to develop authentic moral virtues, but is also necessary for authentic intellectual habits. Good behavior should not merely consist of exterior manners that please adults, but connect with the interior, the heart, of the person who truly desires to do good things. Similarly, learning is not a game of grades and “getting ahead,” but should be truly touched with genuine interest, wonder, and a search for truth and wisdom (though the boys are not necessarily aware of such at the Lower School level). The freedom the boys have is emphasized along with their **responsibility**—always with an eye to the men these boys will become.

Educational Approach: Integrated, Connected, Detailed, Alive

The education of The Heights is characterized as liberal arts; this suggests the basic categories of education—the seven liberal arts—and the approach of liberal as opposed to servile. This distinction indicates that the education is geared toward the end of learning for its own sake, not for the sake of something useful or servile. (Servile in this distinction is not to be understood pejoratively, but simply indicates that this type of education is for a useful end, such as carpentry or accounting). There is not one particular method to this liberal arts education, but there are defining characteristics to the Lower School program. Defining characteristics include the following four: **detailed, connected, integrated, and alive**.

Details and little things are aspects usually loathed by boys. There is a great emphasis and effort towards details academically: grammar, handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, drawing, scientific classification, math drills and homework, historical and geographical data, the Ten Commandments, etc. There also is attention to details in matters of personal development, from the dress code, neatness of lockers, and order in the classroom, to composure, manners, and so forth.



Connecting details and subjects is important in order to place information in context and to understand the relations of things. This is vital to any education and especially to boys who like to separate things into easy-to-study and easy-to-grasp parts. For example, there is much knowledge to be gained by simply studying the parts of trees and comparing trees to other trees, but the study becomes more complete when the relations of birds, insects, weather, and animals are connected to the life of trees and the life that trees support. Furthermore, the study of bluebirds is enhanced with writing a poem of them, and the study of a poplar tree is enhanced with connecting it historically with their use as masts of wooden ships because of their tall and straight quality.

Beyond connecting matters within a subject, and subjects with other subjects, there is a sincere effort to connect learning with **present living** and the **self**—this includes connecting emotions and reason, the heart and mind. This type of connection can better be termed **integration** as it strives to integrate what one learns of the world and reality with how one lives in and perceives the world and reality. For example, the study of history and the books chosen are to connect students with their own history and the historical stories and places that surround them. History is not simply a subject in books, but a story of which one is part and by which one is informed. Similarly, natural history is not merely a classification and observation of objects separate from the self. It is to be integrated as the student notices, understands, affirms, and participates in (even through simply more awareness and observation) his natural surroundings in which he sees himself a part. Furthermore, through quiet and humble observation he can experience **awe** and **wonder** at the mystery and power of creation—proper responses of the heart to the created world.

Integration is a conscious effort across the curriculum. Further examples include the development of compassion (the ability to imaginatively place oneself in another's "shoes") and understanding friendship in literature class, as well as fostering a real sense of being a loved child of God in religion class. Efforts toward true integration also necessarily involve action as a student takes the lessons and begins to apply them to the way he lives, whether this involves increased empathy, more daring in making friendships, or better work.

These aspects of connection and integration, in perception and action, enable the quality of being “**alive**”. It is a quality desired in each subject, but also often referred to as the end of a Heights education: a man fully alive. Education comes to life when it is connected to the world around us and genuine interests are fostered. The importance of the **imagination** for this end of helping the education come alive is clearly understood in the Lower School, from writing historical journals imagining oneself a colonial settler, to writing nature poems in natural history or imagining oneself in the mysterious scenes of Christ’s life presented in the rosary. Not only for fun and creativity, the power of the imagination is involved in all perception, for we think with images, and it is especially alive in the young.

Along with an understanding of the importance of the imagination to make things alive, especially with regard to perception, is a recognition of the importance of **choice and action**. It is understood that along with perceiving truthful realities, good choices and action are necessary for a full integration and to live more truthfully and wisely. The perception of the connection between choice, action, and well being is especially present in literature, as characters’ choices can be seen along with the consequences upon others and oneself. The small class size and homeroom teacher relationship enables this connection with action as the teachers get to know each student more personally and can observe the boys in many different settings, from the quiet and academic situations to the more vibrant and competitive.

Awareness of the above characteristics as well as the importance of the imagination influence the teachers’ methods and style, though there is not a particular method to the **art of Lower School teaching**. Marks of Lower School teachers include: an eye for details and the development of study skills and habits; the use of narrative across the curriculum; field teaching, which includes nature walks and a variety of field trips; and a personal mentoring relationship with each student in his class.

Academic Subjects, Texts, and Topics

As mentioned earlier, the subjects of study are essentially derived from the seven classical liberal arts. The subjects in the Lower School are: religion, natural history, math, literature, language arts, history, music, art, and physical education.

Before noting each particular subject, it is worth noting the topics of homework and grades, and our implementation of a block system for a number of our classes. Homework is not simply to be busy work; it is not given for its own sake. On the average, homework ranges from 45 minutes to 1½ hours. Assignments are given to supplement and prepare for classes, but are limited so as to not diminish healthy hobbies, exploration, personal reading, as well as family relationships. Grades are given quarterly and range from A to F. They indicate performance and mastery of a course and do not reflect behavior. They are helpful to assess the student’s academic process but efforts are made to keep them in perspective. Interest, engagement, and academic habits are of higher importance than grades, especially at younger ages.



Subjects

Religion

Religion is taught two to three times a week and is mandatory for Catholic students. The main text books are part of the Faith & Life series published by Ignatius Press. Classes are supplemented with selected and interesting narratives from the Old and New Testament, as well as monthly chapel services, and occasional devotional practices such as the recitation of the rosary, which includes an imaginative and meditative exploration of the various mysteries. Themes that pervade the religion curriculum include the recognition and efforts of living as a loved child of God, a more personal knowledge of the person of Jesus, as well as the understanding of religion and worship as just and proper responses to the Creator.

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *Our Life with Jesus, Book 3*; Sacred Scripture selections

TOPICS: Survey of key narratives in the Old and New Testaments, Ten Commandments, and the Sacraments—especially as based in Scripture

GRADE 4

TEXTS: *Jesus Our Guide, Book 4*; Sacred Scripture selections

TOPICS: Key Old Testament narratives, particularly Genesis and the Fall; redemption in the person of Jesus; Ten Commandments; Mass and basic prayers; the Seven Sacraments; and the lives of saints

GRADE 5

TEXTS: *Credo: I Believe, Book 5*; Sacred Scripture selections

TOPICS: The Apostles Creed, the Trinity, salvation history from Adam and Eve through the New Testament, and the universal call to holiness

Natural History

Natural History is a key component to the Lower School education. Along with detailed classification and regular notation in scientific journals, the boys actively engage in the natural surroundings on campus and nearby locations such as Cabin John Park, and the Potomac River. The subject fosters a systematic and knowledgeable understanding of the natural world as well as the ability for careful observation, appreciation, and greater awareness of the dynamic natural world surrounding them. Many of the subjects of study are similar across the grades, but the study increases in depth and detail and with different focuses per grade.

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *Golden Guide to Trees, Golden Guide to Insects, Golden Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians, Birds of Eastern and Central North America* by R.T. Peterson

TOPICS:

1. INSECTS—especially lepidoptera (butterflies, esp.), coleoptera (beetles), and hymenoptera, (bees, ants, wasps)
2. TREES—basic identification of 10+ trees in area, focus on trees near water, esp. sycamore, willow, and softwoods (pines and firs)
3. BIRDS—basic identification of 20+ birds in area, generally focus on Perching Land Birds (thrushes, mimic thrushes, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, swallows, blackbirds, starlings); other groups include doves, bird hawks, and some specific woodpeckers (downy and common flicker)
4. REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS—especially cover frogs, toads, and turtles
5. MAMMALS—especially squirrels, raccoons, foxes, and deer

GRADE 4

TEXTS: *Golden Guide to Trees, Golden Guide to Insects, Golden Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians, Birds of Eastern and Central North America* by R.T. Peterson

TOPICS:

1. INSECTS—especially cover diptera (mosquitoes, flies), odonata (damselfly, dragonfly), hemiptera (“true bugs”- stink bugs, water strider)
2. TREES—basic identification of 20+ trees in area, focus on oaks and maples
3. BIRDS—basic identification of 30+ birds in area, generally focus on Swimming, Wading & Sea Birds (geese, ducks, herons, egrets, gulls, terns); other groups include finches, wrens, tanagers, flycatchers, woodpeckers, kingfishers, and osprey
4. ARACHNIDS, ARTHOPODS, SPECIFIC REPTILES (lizards, non-poisonous snakes)
5. WOLF, COYOTE, RABBITS, WEASEL, AND MARTENS
6. BASIC ROCKS AND MINERALS

GRADE 5

TEXTS: *Golden Guide to Trees, Golden Guide to Weather, Guide to Rocks and Minerals, Guide to Eastern Forests, Guide to Venomous Animals and Poisonous Plants* by R.T. Peterson, *The Forest* by Roger Caras, various supplemental materials

TOPICS:

1. INSECTS—especially cover orthoptera (grasshoppers, crickets, katydids), homoptera (cicadas, leafhoppers, aphids)
2. TREES—basic identification of 25+ trees in area, focus on beeches, (American Beech), specific fruit trees (orange, apple, cherry, peach), specific nut trees (pecan, walnut)
3. BIRDS—basic identification of 30+ birds in area, generally focus on Birds of Prey (buteos, eagles, owls, vultures, falcons); other groups include jays & crows, waxwings, and hummingbirds.
4. VENOMOUS SNAKES, ALLIGATORS, CROCODILES
5. BEAR, BADGER, MOLE, GROUNDHOG

Mathematics

Math is taught using the Saxon program. It is an incremental program that constantly reinforces past lessons while introducing a broad range of math problems. Supplements include various games, projects, and narratives of famous mathematicians.

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *Math 54* by Saxon

TOPICS: Addition, subtraction, fractions, decimals, multiplication and division (including memorization of times tables)

GRADE 4

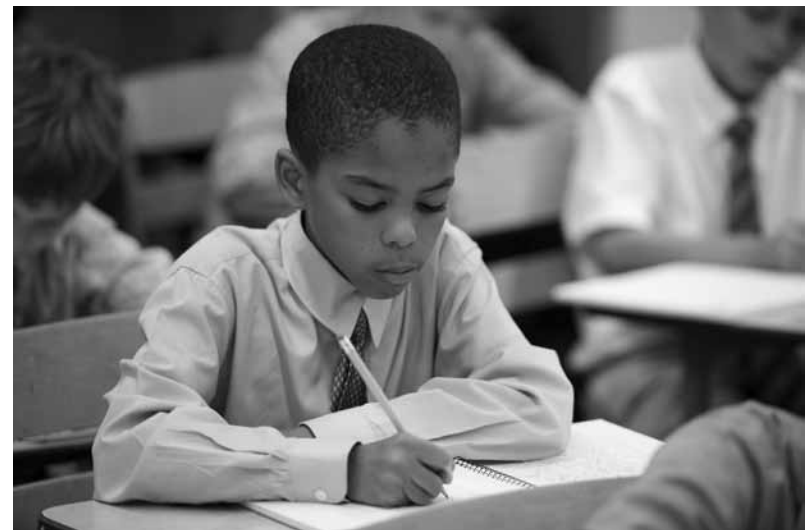
TEXTS: *Math 65* by Saxon

TOPICS: Basic geometry, fractional and decimal operations, continued development of multiplication and division

GRADE 5

Texts: *Math 76* by Saxon

Topics: Fundamental geometry, simple algebra, multiplication and division of fractions and decimals, Archimedes



History

History mostly focuses upon United States history up to the Civil War. Texts, employing a strong narrative method, from Joy Hakim's *History of US* published by Oxford University Press are used in each grade. In addition, the 4th grade uses a Maryland history text book. Various field trips and the use of outside sources and stories, including historical fiction, augment the program.

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *The First Americans: A History of US, Book 1* by Joy Hakim

TOPICS: Early native settlers to the explorers and early colonization

GRADE 4

TEXTS: *Our Maryland* by Jane Eagen and Jeanne McGinnis; *Making Thirteen Colonies: A History of US, Book 2* by Joy Hakim

TOPICS: History, including geography, of Maryland up to the present day; development of the first thirteen English colonies in Eastern North America

GRADE 5

TEXTS: *From Colonies to Country: A History of US, Book 3* by Joy Hakim, *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes, *Rabble in Arms* by Kenneth Roberts

TOPICS: The American Revolution and early development of the Republic



Literature

Literature includes the reading, aloud and silently, of short stories, folk tales, and novels, as well as the memorization and recital of a number of poems. Students also practice creative writing with poetry and short stories. Outside reading and book reports are required. Entertainment and the love and use of language are important aspects of literature, but emphasis includes: heroism in epic stories; formation of the moral imagination; tapping capacities for wonder, especially through folk or “wonder” tales, such as those collected by the Grimm brothers; as well as perceiving the connections between choice, action and well-being. (Books and poems may vary slightly with each teacher).

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *The Great Quillow* by James Thurber, and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis; *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White; *A Door in the Wall* by Marguerite De Angeli, *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl; poetry includes *The Cats of Kilkenny*, *The Daffodils* by William Wordsworth, *A Knight* by Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Tiger* by William Blake, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* by Robert Browning, *St. George and the Dragon* by G.K. Chesterton

GRADE 4

TEXTS: *Farmer Boy* by L.E. Wilder, *The Horse and His Boy* by C.S. Lewis, *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry, *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling; poetry includes *Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll, *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Barbara Fritchie* by James Whittier

GRADE 5

TEXTS: *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tanglewood Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Black Arrow* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame; poetry includes *The Bells and El Dorado* by Edgar Allan Poe, *Concord Hymn* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Pied Beauty and The Windhover* by Gerard M. Hopkins, *The Listeners* by Walter de la Mare, *The Donkey* by G.K. Chesterton, *Casey at the Bat* by Ernest L. Thayer

Language Arts

Language Arts includes handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, dictation, library instruction, reading comprehension, grammar and writing mechanics, and occasional journaling. Students regularly practice with attention to detail the above mentioned aspects of language arts, as well as practice putting the pieces together in regular writing. A love of language and writing is encouraged, though often through different subjects. For example, creative writing is taught in literature, while journaling without necessarily being graded for grammar happens in language arts, history, and natural history.

GRADE 3

TEXTS: *Voyages in English 3* published by Loyola Univ. Press; *New Practice Readers, Book D* published by McGraw Hill; *Spelling Connections, Book 3* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 3* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Wordly Wise 3000, Book C* published by Educators Publishing Service

GRADE 4

Texts: *Voyages in English 4* published by Loyola Univ. Press; *New Practice Readers, Book F* published by McGraw Hill; *Spelling Connections, Book 4* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 4* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots Book 5* published by Educators Publishing Service

GRADE 5

Texts: *Voyages in English 5* published by Loyola Univ. Press; *Spelling Connections, Book 5* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 5* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots Book 6* published by Educators Publishing Service

Music

The classes are a blend of theory and musical experience. The “experience” includes programs of experiencing great music (developed at The Heights) and experiencing music by singing and learning an instrument. Beginning in 4th grade all students choose an instrument and learn to play it. Singing is taught throughout the Lower School.

GRADE 3

TOPICS: Beat, style, note reading, recorder (instrument), voice, instrument families

SONGS: *Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, Good Morning, Young Folks, Old Folk, Kookaburra in a Round, Rockin’ Robbin*

GRADE 4

TOPICS: Experiencing Great Music, Grade 4, instruments (woodwind or brass)

SONGS: *Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, Con Gioia in Cuor, La Canzone del Vino, Pass the Witch’s Broom*

GRADE 5

TOPICS: Experiencing Great Music, Grade 5, instruments (woodwind or brass)

SONGS: *Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, My Country ‘Tis of Thee, Yankee Doodle Dandy, Shenandoah, Home on the Range, Ave Maria, Dona Nobis Pacem, Agnus Dei, To The Heights, Minstrel Boy, Dem Bones, Good Christian Men Rejoice*



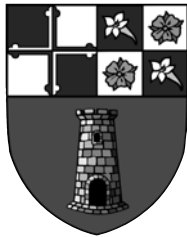
Art

Art is taught one day a week for an extended period of one hour and fifteen minutes. Students learn elements of drawing, from basic three-dimensional shapes to more difficult assignments such as drawing the human person, the use of perspective, etc. Students will also learn some painting, including water colors and some acrylics. Other projects include learning about and coloring heraldic shields especially with regard to understanding the color wheel, and color relationships. Students will also see and study various great works of art.



Physical Education

Physical Education is taught four days a week and involves training in the skills, strategy, and overall development of common team sports. The understanding of sportsmanship is emphasized.



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