

Garrison Forest School



Lower School
CURRICULUM GUIDE
2024-25

Mission and Philosophy of Garrison Forest School

At Garrison Forest School, we prepare our students in and out of the classroom to thrive in a complex, changing world by

- challenging them to strive for academic excellence and to grow into informed, independent, and creative thinkers;
- challenging them to strive for academic excellence and to grow into informed, independent, and creative thinkers;
- creating a diverse and inclusive community built on a spirit of caring;
- inspiring young women to lead and to serve with passion, purpose, and joy.

Our motto informs our mission: *Esse Quam Videri*, To Be Rather Than To Seem.

Statement of Respect

The Garrison Forest School community is deeply committed to equity, honesty, kindness, and respect as part of the educational experience. To this end, we

- celebrate diversity both within our community and our curriculum;
- are concerned for the well-being of all people;
- seek to build the self-esteem of all people;
- aspire to promote the understanding of all people.

We recognize the dignity and worth of all individuals. To protect their rights we confront bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Garrison Forest School does not condone any behavior which is inconsistent with these tenets. We believe that it is unacceptable for our spoken and written language and behavior to demean anyone's physical characteristics, as well as anyone's ethnic, gender, personal, racial, religious, or sexual identities. We, as individuals, must take responsibility for our words and deeds and respect all people.

GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL SCOPE OF PROGRAMS

Garrison Forest School offers an exceptional elementary, middle, and high school program for girls beginning in Kindergarten. For grades 8-12, Garrison Forest also has a regional, national, and international boarding program. The coed Preschool begins with a Parent-Toddler program and has classes for two, three, and four-year-old boys and girls. At the heart of every program are dedicated, talented faculty members helping each child reach his or her full potential to lead a life of purpose. For more information on the Preschool, Lower School, Middle School, Upper School or boarding program, please visit www.gfs.org or contact the Admission Office at (410) 559-3111.

NWEA TESTING

All grades, Kindergarten through Fifth Grade, are enrolled in the Northwest Evaluation Association assessment program in which each girl is assessed two to three times a year in Math, Reading, and Language Usage. The assessments provide information on each girl's yearly progress. The feedback is used in conjunction with our other assessments to provide individualized academic plans.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LOWER SCHOOL

The Lower School is comprised of Kindergarten through Fifth Grade. From Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade, Garrison Forest is a college preparatory school for girls.

Kindergarten through Fifth Grades: daily from 8:00 until 3:30 (with the exception of Friday mornings when school begins at 8:50).

Afterschool Care: beginning at age five, care is available until 6:00 P.M.

Our Classes: In Kindergarten to Fifth Grade, students are placed heterogeneously into homerooms. For reading and math, smaller flexible groupings allow for the challenge, enrichment, and support that best serve the needs of individual students.

Five-Day Schedule: Friday mornings: As faculty members are involved in meetings every Friday morning, the school day will begin at 8:50. Complimentary care will be provided for those children who will need supervision prior to 8:50.

Dear Parents,

Our primary goal is to instill a love of learning in all of our students. We hope this guide gives you a sense of our outstanding curriculum and a feel for the environment of warmth and understanding in which it is provided. We always strive to balance the exhilaration of discovery and exploration with the security of routine and trusting, respectful relationships. As the curriculum engages each student's interest and enthusiasm, every girl is encouraged to advance as far as her maturity, interest, and ability permit in every area. We stress group collaboration and cooperation, just as we recognize and support individual needs and differences.

Close ties between the School and our families allow us to work together to support and appreciate each student as an individual. Communication between parents, teachers, and administrators is encouraged in numerous ways, from formal and informal parent conferences to progress reports. Parent involvement in the life of the School community is always welcome.

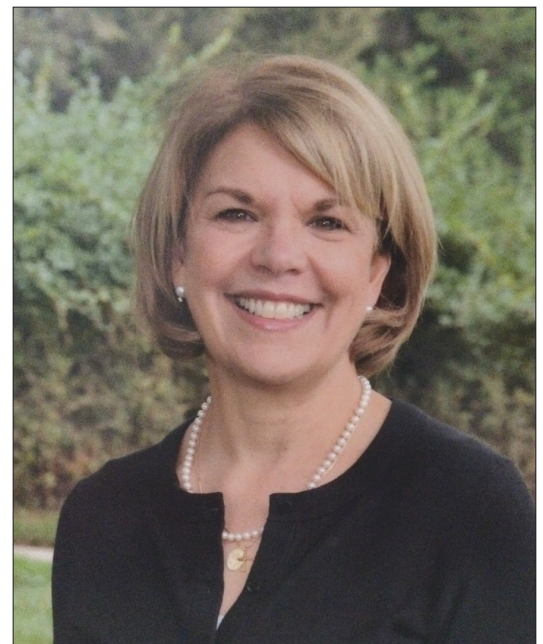
In all aspects of the day, respect, fairness, kindness, and courtesy are given foremost attention. The students learn values through countless "life lessons" where they're guided in their ability to interact respectfully with both adults and peers. Independence and the acceptance of responsibilities, challenges, and limits are also emphasized. As our students move through Garrison Forest School with increased confidence and competence, the teachers revel in their successes, keeping a close eye on those they have taught and those they will teach. Ours is a community in the true sense of the word. Please use this guide as a beginning step in getting to know Garrison Forest. And continue the process with visits to our website (www.gfs.org) and our campus. A warm welcome awaits you!

Sincerely,



Gail E. Hutton

Head of Lower School



Kindergarten

As they begin their journey in the Lower School, our Kindergarten students learn through curricular themes, projects, plays, field trips, and daily playground/outdoor time. The program offers a wealth of cognitive and social experiences within a developmentally appropriate framework. Printed material, art, music, scientific exploration, literature, mathematics, poetry, and small and large motor activities are incorporated into the day to foster the development of a solid foundation for more advanced academics. Free play also plays an important role in helping the children develop creativity, the ability to understand alternate points of view, and the leadership and cooperative skills that will be valuable throughout their lives.

Language arts and math concepts are revisited and expanded as the children progress through a carefully designed set of skills. They are challenged at their different readiness levels through multi-sensory activities that emphasize learning through meaningful experiences. Expressive and receptive language, phonics, read alouds, and book groups reinforce phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships, high frequency and sight words, visual and auditory discrimination, and comprehension. In conjunction with the best children's literature and other reading materials, correct letter formation and spacing of letters is learned and practiced through our phonics program, *Foundations*. Writing works hand-in-hand with reading to foster the development of students who view printed material as an integral and joyful part of their lives. Students learn how to write and draw persuasively, to teach readers about topics they know well, and thoughtfully tell stories from their lives. Handwriting and fine motor activities accompany these writing opportunities and develop their confidence in written expression. Short performances, "show and share", and imaginative play reinforce age-appropriate public-speaking skills that develop self-assurance and comfort in effective oral communication.

Our approach to math begins by providing an environment where our students see themselves as capable mathematicians, constructing meaning as they explore and attempt to make sense of the world around them—mathematically. We work with our students to search for patterns, develop relationships, construct models, and solve problems using context-based experiences. Students develop a strong number sense by constantly working with numbers, deepening their understanding of how numbers relate. With *Primary Mathematics 2022*, students use the Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract approach to describe, compare and represent their thinking about numbers, shapes, measurement and data. The curriculum uses the three phases of learning (readiness, engagement, and mastery) approach to develop strong foundational skills while students think critically as they work toward mastery of understanding. Kindergarten students use number sense to count, order, and compare numbers to 100. They develop understanding of the relationships between numbers as they compose and decompose parts and wholes and model joining and separating sets. Students confidently use models to explain and justify their thinking.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LOWER SCHOOL

Over three-fourths of the lead teachers have advanced degrees in the field of education.

An extensive professional development program encourages faculty to stay abreast of advances in education, child development, and technology.

Access to three age-appropriate playgrounds and 110 acres of paths, woods, and fields allows for free play and supervised walks including visits to horses in the barn or to the fields.

Numerous extra-curricular activities after school include Robotics, Lacrosse, Spirit Club, Newspaper, Soccer, Field Hockey, Instrumental Music, and Riding.

Reading Buddies and all-school activities pair younger students with older role models.

Fifth Graders enjoy additional responsibilities, leadership opportunities, and privileges including running for Light Blue and Dark Blue Captains and being elected by Lower School students.

An Academic Resource Coordinator works with students, ensuring that the reading and math groups are small enough for each student to succeed.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

In keeping with our mission and core values the focus is on developing a caring and respectful community. We understand that a child's social-emotional development is just as important as her academic growth and development. With this in mind, we purposefully teach cooperation and collaboration and maintain the routines and consistency children need. Every homeroom uses the Responsive Classroom approach to create a caring and supportive environment where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes. The first six weeks of school is spent building the classroom environment. Students gather together every morning for their classroom Morning Meeting, where they greet and learn about each other, play games, and get excited about what the day will bring. Each student takes time in the beginning to the year to thoughtfully generate a Hope and Dream (goal) for the year. The class then creates their own Class Contract, which is a set of rules to help their classmates achieve their Hopes and Dreams. These class contracts are referred to throughout the year in homeroom and specials' classes. With their extensive experience in education, child development, and social emotional development, our teachers and school counselor have a level of expertise that allows them to collaborate closely to meet the needs of the "whole" child.

All adults in the community model our goals, and we use literature, group and individual discussions, and group activities to address situations that arise. Expectations are clearly outlined and discussed with the children regularly. Our school counselor regularly visits classrooms to engage in age-appropriate social skills lessons, including group discussions and activities, that promote pro-social behaviors. The safety and overall well-being of each child is our highest priority. If teachers sense conflict developing between young children, it can often be deterred with redirection and reminders. If transgressions occur, teachers intervene as necessary by using logical consequences. An uncooperative child can often be moved to action with the gentle encouragement of an adult who has established a relationship of trust and respect. Students are encouraged to reflect on their behavior and resolve to make better choices. Sometimes privileges are withdrawn so they learn to connect their actions with logical consequences. Aggressive behavior, however, is stopped immediately and calmly discussed privately with the child.

At the heart of the program is communication with families. The Lower School administrators, teachers, and school counselor work closely with parents to develop a plan of action to assist when remediation is needed. We employ a team approach, as we understand the efforts of faculty, parents, and administrators are all important in the creation of an optimal learning environment.

GLOBAL STUDIES

By the time a student leaves the Lower School, she will be able to say that she has gone around the world! For our students, solutions to problems around health, the environment, natural resources, the economy, and even the cultivation of creative arts will be among some of the challenges they will face. The world is present in their daily lives through technology, mass media, economic interdependency and global mobility. We know that effective approaches to these complex and interconnected issues are centered on a set of skills such as global collaboration, empathy, creativity, and effective communication. Within our Global Studies curriculum, each grade studies a different continent. The continent that each grade studies compliments their social studies curriculum by exploring common regions and themes. By the time a student has reached Fifth Grade she will have studied all six continents and will leave the Lower School with an informed understanding cultures across the globe as well as within the School. As students complete their study they come to recognize the similarities they share with children across the globe as well as value and respect the unique differences each culture adds to the richness of our world.

First Grade

The language arts curriculum is designed to develop reading competency, fluency, and understanding as well as foster a love for reading. Through our novel studies, students build confidence and competence in reading. They cultivate an interest in, and appreciation for the written word. Phonics instruction (*Foundations*) and word study provide the necessary foundation to achieve successful decoding, fluency, and spelling skills. Teachers also encourage daily independent reading at school and at home.

During writing, students write informatively, narratively, and persuasively as they learn specific writing techniques through personalized instruction. Specifically, students learn how to write compelling reviews, interesting nonfiction chapter books, and vivid narratives about stories from their lives. Grammar and sentence mechanics are critical components of the writing curriculum; our competent, cogent writers learn the importance of logic, clarity, and thoughtfulness as they develop their writing voices.

First Grade students continue to develop their number sense and deep conceptual understanding using *Primary Mathematics 2022* as they represent, count, and compare numbers and flexibly use various strategies to problem solve independently and collaboratively. The students competently explain their mathematical thinking verbally and in written form to justify their answers using appropriate vocabulary in a meaningful and logical sequence. They are exposed to various strategies and methods to write number sentences and add and subtract fluently. Students gain understanding of the relationships between numbers by identifying parts and whole of a number bond. As students explore shapes they learn how to identify, classify, and describe flat and solid shapes. They also learn how to divide flat shapes into two or four equal parts, which is an important foundation for fractions. Students understand how numbers are used in different ways as they gain knowledge about money, collecting data, graphing, telling time, and calendar concepts. Our teachers engage the girls at all levels of conceptual understanding, appropriately supporting and challenging them to ensure confidence as they progress in our program.

First Grade supports the Baltimore Humane Society in their community service project. They collect supplies from the whole Lower School and donate the supplies to the animal shelter. To culminate the project, the students take a field trip to the shelter to donate the supplies. The service project aligns with their last writing unit, where each student writes an informative essay about a certain breed of dog. This is a wonderful opportunity for the students to learn about giving and helping our community.

STEM CURRICULUM

The Lower School STEM program is an integrated approach to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math that provides Kindergarten through Fifth Grade students with opportunities for hands-on experiences and real-world applications of these disciplines.

SCIENCE

STEM class is designed to immerse students in inquiry-driven activities and projects that will allow them to feel like scientists. As students progress through the curriculum they are introduced to and practice using increasingly advanced scientific skills. The utilization of these skills support the investigation and exploration of scientific disciplines such as astronomy, biology, chemistry and physics.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology: As part of the STEM curriculum, students in K-5 attend Digital Discoveries classes where they begin building the foundational skills necessary for lifelong digital literacy. Students learn to leverage digital tools to create, collaborate, communicate, and problem-solve. Projects include opportunities to explore applied productivity tools, engineering, coding, and digital design. In addition to working on digital devices, K-5 students will also engage in a robotics curriculum where they can interact hands-on with programmable robots to increase their computational thinking skills.

ENGINEERING

Throughout the STEM curriculum, students tackle content-based engineering and design challenges. This integrated approach to engineering provides learners with authentic opportunities to practice Design Thinking, an iterative approach to problem-solving that combines observation, research, ideation, prototyping, and testing.

MATHEMATICS

Math is pervasive in the STEM classroom. Students solve equations, measure angles, estimate, and use spatial relations in varying degrees and at appropriate levels throughout the STEM curriculum.

ART CLASSES

Beginning in Kindergarten, students have Art classes in our large, bright studio where there is ample space for a variety of projects and a kiln for pottery and sculpture. Using 2D and 3D formats and a variety of media, students develop an appreciation for the art of other cultures alongside an awareness of the beauty around us. Hands-on, open-ended projects include collage, sculpture, paint, textiles, watercolor, printmaking, ceramics, mosaics, woodworking, and mixed media. The year culminates in an Art Show where work from each student is exhibited.

MUSIC CLASSES

Music classes give children the tools to express themselves musically in meaningful and joyful ways. Songs and activities are chosen to develop skills, supplement classroom themes, promote musical understanding and appreciation, develop the ability to hear and generate the patterns and sounds of language, and enhance the appreciation of different cultures. The children sing, play Orff instruments, experiment with music and patterns, and participate in several performances including all-school Winter and Spring Concerts. Lessons include classical music as well as contemporary and multicultural selections that represent various styles, eras, genres, and traditions. The children sing, move, and play instruments as they enjoy the beats and rhythms that are closely aligned with reading and counting.

Second Grade

Working in small groups, the Second Grade students develop fluency, expression, and comprehension skills as they become more proficient and thoughtful readers. The phonics (*Foundations*) and word study programs continue to develop an understanding of word structure and vocabulary through daily lessons and practice of Greek and Latin roots and affixes. The teachers also deepen comprehension skills through factual, analytical, and inferential questioning and lively book group discussions. Our comprehensive literacy program ensures our students construct their own individualized literacy processing system—getting to know themselves as readers. They read leveled books, poetry, and biographies in order to build reading competencies by continually making meaning and developing a confident voice to reflect their thinking. Reading is often integrated with social studies and science, emphasizing the importance of making meaningful connections using fictional and non-fictional texts. Our reading program strives to stimulate an inspired interest in books and foster a life-long love of reading.

Second Grade students focus on fluency and accuracy in their writing. Students learn about opinion, narrative, and informative writing as they explore mentor texts and progress through the writing process. Students use examples from the text to write letters about their opinions about books, write science-based nonfiction books, and study various authors to help them write their own narrative texts. Research skills and nonfiction writing are further developed with individual animal reports. Cursive handwriting begins in the late fall; our approach emphasizes simplicity of form ensuring legibility and confidence. Students learn how essential grammar conventions make meaning as they develop their understanding of grammar and writing mechanics.

In Second Grade, students continue to develop a strong number sense through consistently working with numbers and flexibly trying different strategies to solve challenging problems using *Primary Mathematics 2022*. Students learn how to read, write and count numbers to 1,000 and represent the numbers in expanded form, standard form, and word form. They analyze numbers by ordering, comparing, and finding patterns to 1,000. Students review strategies such as adding on and taking away sets and learn to represent these situations using bar models. They also learn how to draw comparison models to solve more complex addition and subtraction problems. Students learn the concepts of multiplication and division and apply these concepts to solve real-world problems. Students analyze picture graphs, bar graphs, and line plots to create and interpret different graphs. They also learn how to tell time based on the position of the minute hand on the clock and how to use coins and bills to count and exchange money up to \$20. Finally, students begin their fraction study as they explore how to partition shapes.

Second Grade's community service focus is nutrition. Students take the lead in educating the community about its importance both for Baltimore and for children across the globe. They spearhead a project in which the First to Fifth Grade students, parents, and Upper School helpers make hundreds of lunches for a local soup kitchen, Our Daily Bread.

Third Grade

Third grade literacy continues to foster a love of reading and encourage independent, reflective thought. As they develop a sense of agency in terms of their reading choices, they are thoughtfully guided and encouraged to deeply read in a particular genre they find appealing. They learn the importance of building a rich reading life and explore a wide variety of texts across genres with the careful and personalized guidance of their teachers. In flexible reading groups the girls develop deeper critical thinking skills and acquire experience in participating in robust and respectful classroom discussions. Students learn that insightful contributions as well as attentive listening make for healthy and balanced conversations and dialogues.

The writing process comes to life throughout the year in writing as the girls practice writing descriptive narratives and expository essays. They have the opportunity to practice writing expository essays through the Third Grade State Project and the Global Studies curriculum. They use reference materials with increased regularity and work closely with the librarian and digital learning specialist to conduct research for these projects. Many of the writing pieces in Third Grade are directly related to the larger projects that they undertake. The students also do a tremendous amount of writing through their novel studies. Grammar, word study, and phonics instruction are woven throughout the reading and writing programs. By now, Garrison girls are becoming more confident, complex writers who take pride in showcasing their best work at the culmination of each project.

Using *Primary Mathematics 2022*, students in Third Grade build on their foundational understanding of numbers as they use concrete materials to build numbers to 10,000 and read, write, and represent numbers in expanded, word, and standard forms. They use base-ten blocks to add and subtract to 10,000 with and without regrouping. Students learn how to multiply fluently with 100 using a variety of methods. They also learn how to multiply by ten and how to multiply 1-digit and 2-digit numbers. To further develop their understanding of fractions, students use concrete materials to understand the meaning of a fraction as part of a whole. As they solve one and two step real-world problems involving money, students use bar models to represent the information. They also use concrete materials, models, and number lines to find equivalent fractions. Students learn weight and volume concepts, explore area and perimeter, describe angles and shapes, calculate elapsed time, and explore data using graphs. The girls regularly work in collaborative groups and engage in small group discussions to foster logical, mathematical thinking and communication skills. A wide variety of resources including manipulatives and online services provide support, enrichment and mathematical exploration. Teachers empower confident math students through consistently fostering a growth mindset and celebrating struggles and challenges.

Third Grade enjoys two signature learning experiences: The Third Grade State Report and Famous Women Project. Each third grader researches and becomes an expert on a state within the United States for the Third Grade State Report. Later in the year, each student chooses a famous woman to research. They write speeches which they perform as they come to life as their famous woman during their wax museum. Both of these learning experiences integrate reading, writing, history, music, PE, science, Spanish, and art. Upon completion, families are invited to enjoy the wonderful work which the girls accomplished across multiple disciplines.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The goal of our Physical Education program is to instill in our students the joy of movement which they will carry with them throughout their lifetimes. The teachers also help each student achieve and maintain her personal best level of wellness, including healthy choices and practices. The emphasis is on fun, build-able activities that promote locomotor and non-locomotor skills, spatial awareness, personal space, strength, balance, and eye-hand coordination. Cooperative and competitive games are introduced, and developed according to grade level, allowing for the development of physical skills as well as self-confidence, initiative, and responsibility. As the teachers introduce the prerequisite skills for soccer, lacrosse, basketball, field hockey, tennis, and other cooperative games, they reinforce the rules necessary for fair play. There are a variety of special units that are offered thanks to our unique campus and signature opportunities. Once per week all grades in the Lower School participate in Power Walks. The girls hike through the woods, walk to the pond, go down to the barns, and get to know our entire campus. This allows for a non-competitive, social, emotional, and physical experience for the girls to be outside, appreciating our seasons, animals, land, and each other. Another special unit involves our Riding/Polo/Dance program for every 4th and 5th grader. The girls learn safe equestrian practices, how to maintain balance on a horse, and how to safely swing a polo mallet. In Dance, they learn class etiquette, memorize steps for a routine, and perform a dance in Grizzly Gathering, as well as in costume for the Winter Concert. The science and awareness of health, in mind, body, and spirit, are integral to our daily activities in Physical Education at Garrison Forest.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Although many Lower School classes spend time learning outside, reaping the many benefits such as gaining confidence, decision-making and problem-solving skills, motor skills, self-discipline and initiative, a dedicated section of our Science class focuses on outdoor education, which fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the natural world. Whether through planned curriculum themes, such as habitats or natural resources, or unplanned investigations upon discovering and observing something in the natural environment, the goal of Outdoor Education is for students in grades K through 5, to develop a relationship with nature, and receive with intentionality, environmental education. Students will learn the importance of conserving local resources, develop a practical sense of their role in the environment, and begin to understand the value of thinking and acting in favor of environmental sustainability. Participating in activities such as gardening, water testing, habitat mapping, and resource graphing, students will be better equipped to understand how the needs and impacts of our local ecosystem connect to needs and impacts on a global scale. Learning experiences such as these can build the foundation for raising the next generation of involved citizens who will better understand, and take care of their natural and human communities.

Fourth Grade

Fourth Grade homeroom teachers maintain flexible heterogeneous groups for reading and/or math and work closely to provide an enriched program of social studies including geography and economics.

The literacy program in Fourth Grade follows a flexible book group model for reading and writing, which offers a balanced combination of whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one instruction, and independent practice. The reading program aims to develop advanced reading, comprehension, and critical thinking skills through the use of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Research and oral presentations accompany formal written responses to reading—connecting reading and writing in an authentic and meaningful way. During writing, students spend time studying mentor texts, which serve as guides to help the students take risks and explore various forms of narrative writing as well as persuasive, and informative essays. Students construct arguments about familiar or researched topics, write evidence-based literature reviews, and create fictional stories featuring characters with unique motivations and struggles. Students use Chromebooks to create, edit, and publish their work. Grammar, vocabulary study, and word study complement the reading and writing programs.

Using *Primary Mathematics 2022*, students continue to make connections and justify their thinking by explaining the methods they use to solve problems during math. Students read and write numbers to 1,000,000 in standard form, word form, and expanded form and they learn how to state the place and value of each digit. They add and subtract multi-digit numbers and they learn how to multiply a 4-digit number by a 1-digit, 2-digit, or 3-digit number. They find the quotient and remainder in a division problem and divide up to 4-digit numbers by 1-digit numbers. They solve real-world problems involving the four operations and learn to find factors and multiples of whole numbers. Students learn how to add and subtract fractions and mixed numbers with common denominators. They then learn how to express fractions as decimal numbers and recognize, compare, and round decimals in tenths and hundredths. During the geometry unit, they learn how to calculate area and perimeter and learn about points, rays, angles, and line segments.

In Global Studies, students in Fourth Grade study Africa. Garrison Forest's long-standing relationship with Kenya Connect, allows Garrison Forest students to form bonds with students in Kenya through our pen pal program. In the spring, the Fourth Grade students lead the entire Lower School in a walk around campus called Walk for Wamunyu, as they raise money to buy specific items to support the schools in Kenya.

An authentic and robust financial literacy curriculum is introduced to the Fourth Grade students through a partnership with M&T Bank. Garrison Forest School manages a branch of M&T Bank within the walls of the Lower School. M&T Bank managers provide lessons where the girls learn about investing and saving money. The students join a year-long stock market game through Towson University where the students are given virtual dollars to learn how to buy and sell stocks and how to track their portfolios. At the end of the year, the students get to visit the T. Rowe Price Finance Lab at Towson University, which replicates the functionality of Wall Street's top trading firms!

Fifth Grade

Entering their capstone year of Garrison Forest School, the Fifth Grade girls are the leaders of the Lower School. Students confidently take on more responsibility around the school and serve as role models for the rest of the Lower School students. In this culminating year, students enjoy strengthening their friendships and continuing to challenge themselves academically as they collaborate and grow independently.

In Fifth Grade, each student purchases a Chromebook that is fully integrated with classroom and home assignments. Building on their experience and skills, the students and teachers incorporate the technology across all disciplines, maintaining the best balance of digital and traditional learning. The students take responsibility for more of their own learning, actively participating in innovative activities and projects made possible by technology.

In reading, the girls develop advanced skills with fiction, non-fiction, drama and poetry. While the focus is on deep understanding and critical thinking, vocabulary building, grammar, and word study are also assimilated into their explorations. Using novels, nonfiction texts, e-books, and trade books, the students engage in Socratic seminars helping one another understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text. Through this discussion students practice active listening and finding common ground while participating in conversation. Fifth Grade students spend time during writing learning specific, complex writing skills to write thoughtful essays. They will write personal narratives, memoirs, research-based argument essays, and use primary sources to create research reports through a historical lens. A comprehensive, culminating Fifth Grade project involves extensive research on a chosen topic, a formal written report, and an oral and digital presentation. The girls present their work to parents, teachers, and students; the “Capstone Project” is a testament to the confidence and competence the girls have gained in their time in the Lower School.

By Fifth Grade, the girls have advanced into confident and flexible mathematical thinkers. Their experience taking risks, analyzing numbers, and developing a deep understanding of the relationships between numbers in a supportive and inspiring learning environment enables them to dive deeply into challenging and relevant math experiences. With *Primary Mathematics 2022*, students learn the place value of numbers to 10,000,000 in standard, word, and expanded forms, multiply and divide using patterns and conventional algorithms, simplify numeric expressions using order of operations, and solve real-world problems involving multiplication and division. They add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions and use models to help them solve problems involving fractions. They read and write thousandths in decimal and fractional form and add, subtract, multiply and divide decimals including multiplying and dividing by powers of ten. Students learn the concept of volume of a solid and apply it to three step real-world problems. They identify right, isosceles, equilateral, and scalene triangles as well as classify them by their side lengths and angle measures. Students learn to graph in the first quadrant of the coordinate plane and to use data from graphs to interpret real-world situations. Fifth Grade students use their strong foundational skills and deeper understanding of mathematical concepts to confidently transition to Sixth Grade math.

The social studies curriculum is a fully integrated Global Studies program, which focuses on the continent of Europe. Classroom novels, both fictional and expository, focus on countries and settings within Europe. Throughout the year, the students study individual countries, as well as historical events and changes throughout the wider continent. Hands-on, project-based learning is the basis of the social studies program.

SPANISH PROGRAM

The Lower School Spanish program is designed to improve oral proficiency and second language skill development. Students begin taking Spanish in our preschool at age 3 and continue through fifth grade. Through engaging and interactive activities, students will develop essential language skills while fostering a love for Spanish. The curriculum focuses on the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We prioritize communication, encouraging students to actively participate in conversations, roleplays, and games. Themes are reinforced each year by building on familiar words and introducing additional vocabulary; by the end of fifth grade, our students will develop the skills to read and comprehend novels written entirely in Spanish. Our curriculum goes beyond language acquisition and delves into the rich tradition and customs of Spanish-speaking countries through engaging projects, songs, stories, and celebrations.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Beginning in Kindergarten, the girls lead different community service and outreach projects based on the five United Nations Rights of Children – shelter, nutrition, education, the environment, and health. Each grade takes on a project related to one of these themes and engages the rest of the community in supporting its cause. Whether preparing lunches for a local food pantry or supporting the Baltimore Humane Society, the girls experience the power of working collaboratively and advocating for others in need.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Social Studies curriculum promotes an understanding of self and a respect for and appreciation of others from those in our community to other people and cultures around the world. This goal is accomplished both inside and outside the classroom through themes and activities, literature, assemblies, field trips, Morning Meeting topics, and community service projects. In our youngest classes, the focus moves from self, to peers, to family, and to the immediate community. The curriculum then grows to include the larger community (Baltimore and Maryland) and the United States. In the older grades, students gain a deeper understanding of US History and people as they learn about Indigenous people, enslavement, the American Revolution, famous women, climate change, and the development of civilizations.

Extracurricular Programs and Activities

Afterschool Care: This program is for students from five-years-old through Fifth Grade. Pick-up is either at 5:00 or at 6:00 p.m.

Woodlands at Garrison Forest School:

Our *Woodlands* Program is an array of extracurricular offerings which allow for girls to make broader social interactions, explore new learning opportunities, express themselves, and have fun in a variety of activities and clubs rooted in the mission, vision, and warmth of the Lower School.

Offerings have included: Art Club, Robotics, Newspaper Club, Engineering Club, Spirit Club, Coding Club, Music Club, Nature Club and more. Our menu of options changes periodically to give our students exposure to quality programming that will advance learning and ignite new passions and interests!

Instrumental Music: Private after-school instrumental lessons are offered in piano and violin beginning in Kindergarten. Guitar and flute are offered beginning in Fourth and Fifth Grades.

Riding: From Kindergarten to Fifth Grades, students may opt for lessons in lieu of one Physical Education class once a week. Additional programs are available to experienced riders after school and on weekends.

Robotics: The Robotics Club is for students in Fourth and Fifth Grades. It meets one to two days a week after school.

Sports: During various seasons, sports opportunities are available for our girls depending on the season and availability of resources. Field Hockey, Soccer, and Lacrosse clinics are available for grades K-2 and 3-5, where girls learn foundational skills and enjoy spending time with members and coaches of the varsity teams.

There may be additional charges for these extra-curricular activities.

“I love GFS. It is the best school ever because everyone is nice, and the teachers are *amazing!* Everyone takes care of one another.”

Hannah, Grade 3

Sample Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:15		Morning Meeting			Late Start
8:15-8:55	Grizzly Gathering (8:15-8:40)	Math	Math	Math	
9:00-9:40	Science	Math (20 mins) Snack/Recess	Math (20 mins) Snack/Recess	Math (20 mins) Snack/Recess	Phonics
9:45-10:25	Snack/Recess Phonics	Phonics	Phonics	Phonics	Reading Snack/Recess
10:30-11:10	Digital Discoveries A Writing B	Reading	Digital Discoveries	Reading	Science
11:15-11:55	Math	Spanish A Music B	Reading/ Writing	Art	Math
12:00-12:25	K-2 Lunch/3-5 Recess				
12:30-12:55	3-5 Lunch/K-2 Recess				
1:00-1:40	PE	PE	PE	PE	Math
1:45-2:25	Math	Writing	Social Studies/Global Studies	Writing	Spanish
2:30-3:10	Reading	Art	Library	Music	Social Studies/Global Studies
3:10-3:25	Homerooms (GIT)				

GRIZZLY GATHERING AND SOCIAL SKILLS

Once a week our entire Lower School community gathers together to sing, learn, share presentations, and celebrate birthdays and other special events. During this time, the girls are given opportunities to practice their public speaking skills as they share their learning in a supportive and encouraging environment.

The Lower School counselor meets with grade level groups, small groups, and individuals to discuss changes and challenges in their lives. She emphasizes the skills necessary to make wise decisions in difficult and risky situations. Group lessons can include respect, feelings, self-esteem, kindness, friendship, empathy, teamwork, and body image. Beginning in Fourth Grade, the counselor and Science teacher address important topics such as drugs, alcohol, and human development in an age-appropriate manner.

HOMEWORK POLICIES

Homework is assigned beginning in the fall of First Grade. It is designed to provide reinforcement and practice of basic academic skills and to encourage good study habits and time management. Parents are not expected to help with the completion of homework assignments except as needed for special projects. As a general guideline, homework is designed to take 20 to 30 minutes in First Grade, 30 to 40 minutes in Second and Third Grades, 40 to 50 minutes in Fourth Grade, and 50 minutes to an hour in Fifth Grade.

LIBRARY

The Lower School Library has a collection of more than 10,000 fiction and nonfiction books. Students in Prekindergarten through 5th grade have a formal library lesson each week, where students listen to stories, browse and check out books, and receive instruction in information-seeking skills. Library instruction often takes an interdisciplinary approach to enhance learning that is happening in the homeroom classes. The librarian teaches students to identify and evaluate information to develop their critical awareness and life-ready, problem-solving skills.

Lower School Faculty

2024-2025

Gail E. Hutton
Head of Lower School

Ashby Litz Thoeni '02
*Director of Lower School Curriculum
and Instruction*

Shondra Cowling
Preschool and Lower School Counselor

Jenni Glose
Division Assistant

Jennifer Stapleton
Academic Resource Coordinator

Suzanne Rossi
Lower School, Admissions

Emma Ridgeway
Kindergarten

Sue Gaeger
Associate Kindergarten Teacher

Amanda Stone
First Grade Homeroom

Rachel Kelly
Second Grade Homeroom

Kaila Carter
Second Grade Homeroom

Avrielle Jones
Third Grade Homeroom

Tracey Stout
Fourth Grade Homeroom

Cameron Spangenberg
Fifth Grade Homeroom

Maheen Nasir
Fifth Grade Homeroom

Tracey Brocato
Science

Amber Budosh
Digital Discoveries

Laura Cline
Physical Education

Leigh McDonald Hall '81
Physical Education

Sienna Grinwald-Alves
Music

Korey Rosenbaum
Art

Elizabeth (Liz) Stroud
Spanish

Missy Wells
Library