PHILOSOPHY

In the Portledge Lower School, pre-nursery through fifth grade, we believe:

- Children are natural learners and we seek to harness their innate curiosity to explore topics deeply and relate their learning to the natural world.
- We seek to challenge each student within his/her zone of proximal development, supporting him/her to make the most progress possible in a given year.
- We strive to be active partners with you in your child’s education and bring joy to the educational experience for all!

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND REGGIO EMILIA PHILOSOPHY

The Early Childhood program at Portledge School is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to education. Inspired by this philosophy, our early childhood teachers value children as creative, capable, strong, and resilient. We celebrate the joy of learning and young learners’ curiosity and wonder as they interact with their environment. Projects emerge around the children’s interests and incorporate a variety of materials and subjects. Children are valued as communicators and are encouraged to share their thinking and wonderings; collaboration with peers through play and learning is an integral part of each day. The Portledge Early Childhood approach emphasizes hands-on discovery and learning in a safe, nurturing environment.

SINGAPORE MATH

Primary Math is the chosen curriculum for kindergarten through sixth grade. Primary Math is a math program that is used in Singapore that has been adapted for use in the United States. Primary (Singapore) Math emphasizes:

- Depth over breadth
- Mental math
- Content mastery
- Conceptual understanding before process (why before how)
- Algebraic thinking
- Problem solving

SPELLOGRAPHY

The Spellography program, used in grades four and five, is an advanced spelling program that is phonetically based and introduces advanced syllable structures.
All students engage in a daily literacy block during which they focus on all aspects of literacy acquisition: reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and spelling. Our program is based on National Reading Panel research that informs high-quality literacy education in the United States. According to the National Reading Panel research, beginning and emerging readers develop the strongest literacy skills when direct instruction in five critical areas is integrated directly into their daily literacy program:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

The Portledge Lower School uses the Really Great Reading program which provides direct, systematic, phonetic, phonemic awareness, spelling, decoding, and fluency instruction in kindergarten through third grade.

Handwriting Without Tears is used to directly teach handwriting and letter formation in grades one through three.

During the daily literacy block, students meet with teachers in small groups at their instructional reading level while the teacher provides targeted instruction in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The books selected often incorporate topics of interest for students. Teachers follow a model called The Daily Five where students take increasing ownership and responsibility for their learning while the teacher is meeting with these smaller groups.

Specials classes are an integral part of each student's education. The specialist teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to create deep, meaningful, cross-curricular units of studies whenever possible. Students in pre-nursery (2’s) through fifth grade participate in the following specials throughout the week:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art</th>
<th>French (pre-k - 5th)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Spanish (beginning in 4th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.E.</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Music Instrument (choice of band or orchestra beginning in 4th)</td>
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* Students receive French instruction starting in pre-kindergarten. From fourth grade onwards, students are given the choice between French and Spanish.