

# **CURRICULUM GUIDE**



## **LANDMARK ELEMENTARY • MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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## ACADEMIC OVERVIEW

Landmark's Elementary / Middle School program is ungraded and serves students ages seven to fourteen. A self-contained Elementary program offers a language-intensive, small classroom experience with a daily one-to-one tutorial to youngsters seven to ten years old. Students who are eleven to fourteen are enrolled in the Middle School program, which also offers a daily individual tutorial with small group classes, physical education, and electives. Department offerings are structured to ensure that each student receives a core program of language remediation, content classes, and physical education. Students are grouped homogeneously in classes by ability level, rather than according to standard criteria of age and grade.

All students receive seven periods of instruction (330 minutes) daily. Classes do not necessarily follow a uniform sequence; i.e., Language Arts may take place during any period of the day; but once the schedule is set, a student's classes follow the same sequence each day. Electives and Physical Education alternate every other day. There is a midmorning "milk break" between second and third periods, providing students with a short recess and faculty with a daily, twenty-five minute meeting. Lunch periods are thirty minutes long, either fifth or sixth period, and classes end at 2:58.

A typical student's daily schedule by period follows:

1	8:00-8:47	One-to-One Language Arts Tutorial
2	8:52-9:39	Language Arts Class
3	10:14-11:01	Mathematics
4	11:06-11:53	Oral Expression Study Skills/Literature
5	11:57-12:45	Social Studies
6	Lunch	
7	1:19-2:06	Science
8	2:11-2:58	Elective: PE/Art, Computers, Small Engine Repair, Woodworking

Other program components include group counseling, speech and language consultation, and case management. Counseling services are provided by one full-time and two part-time therapists. Individual and group sessions provide students with a needs assessment, school adjustment support, and a curriculum based around pragmatics/social skills, transition issues, and substance awareness. Our speech and language therapist screens students and consults with all faculty members. Case managers are assigned to all students to provide focused communication for parents, teachers, and other professionals involved with each child's program. These senior staff members oversee program goals, visit tutorials, consult with professional colleagues, and provide support for students and staff.

## **ONE TO ONE LANGUAGE ARTS TUTORIAL**

Each student receives a one-to-one Language Arts Tutorial as the primary component of the remedial program. This tutorial addresses instructional goals in the following areas:

### **READING**

Literacy profiles of Landmark students lie along a wide spectrum of development, and no single approach to reading instruction meets the needs of all students. Following formal and informal evaluation of pre-literate, literacy and comprehension skills, an individualized reading program is constructed for each student. Students who demonstrate a severe phonologically-based reading disability are provided intensive training in development of phonological and phonemic awareness, direct instruction in decoding skills emphasizing the alphabetic code, and direct instruction in the structure of the English writing system. As students acquire basic decoding skills, emphasis is placed on fluency and enhancing visual memory for sight words. The study of root words, addition of morphological endings (prefixes and suffixes), and syllabication are emphasized. For students decoding at or above grade level, improvement of rate and fluency is stressed, as well as advanced syllabication and word attack skills (unaccented syllable, minor phonetic patterns). Reading instruction is direct, sequential, and hierarchical; tutors employ a multisensory approach involving auditory, visual, and tactile-kinesthetic techniques.

### **COMPREHENSION**

Comprehension is developed concurrently with oral reading from fundamental reading levels through the most advanced. An appreciation for literature of quality is emphasized throughout all tutorials, incorporating literal, figurative and interpretive levels of language as appropriate. All students have a reading selection and use literature as a basis for developing vocabulary and comprehension. Students are taught to recognize and retain specific details, draw conclusions, detect and relate sequence, locate information, and determine the main idea of selections. Related skills such as critical analysis are presented as students progress to more advanced reading levels.

## **STUDY SKILLS**

The initial focus of study skills instruction is on organization of assignments and materials, recognition of main ideas, notetaking, paraphrasing, and summarizing. The use of an assignment notebook is required and reinforced throughout all classes. Once basic skills are presented, students are taught to apply them to tasks such as text analysis, test-taking, and oral presentations. Research and report-writing skills may also be incorporated into tutorial. Students are encouraged to develop an understanding of their individual learning styles in order to acquire new information efficiently and promote self-advocacy.

## **SPELLING**

Spelling instruction follows an ordered progression of patterns closely paralleling oral reading. Basic skills such as application of sound-symbol relationships and awareness of common syllable types are taught until automatized. More advanced patterns, multisyllabic words, and suffix addition rules are introduced, with an emphasis on linguistic principles rather than rote knowledge. Sight words and common sequences (days, months, numbers) in frequent use are practiced throughout the program.

## **COMPOSITION**

Instruction in oral and written composition serves the dual purpose of reinforcing language structure while fostering meaningful, creative expression. The level of tutorial instruction in this area varies with the needs of the individual student. Oral composition is used to develop and maintain correct usage as a first step for students with minimal writing ability. Written composition emphasizes the mechanics of grammar and syntax using common paragraph or multiparagraph subtypes such as narrative, sequential, descriptive, comparison-contrast or persuasive. A daily journal is also maintained to monitor mastery of language skills in a relatively unstructured context and provide an outlet for creative writing assignments.

## **HANDWRITING**

All students are strongly encouraged to utilize cursive handwriting in all work. Instruction is provided in basic writing strokes and correct formation of upper and lower case cursive alphabets. Fluid, legible handwriting is emphasized as a component of correct spelling and written expression, as well as a vocational skill. In addition to handwriting skills, students are instructed in a school-wide keyboarding program. Once students achieve proficiency in their keyboarding skills, certain assignments may be completed using word processing.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

Language Arts Class encompasses guidelines from the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks, concentrating heavily on the areas of Language and Composition, in keeping with our mission of remediating significant deficits in specific literacy skills.

Within the Language Strand, there is an emphasis on the development of oral to written expression (talking, listening, discussing, analyzing, and brainstorming for ideas prior to writing.) In addition, language instruction incorporates theme-centered and structured linguistic approaches to teaching language skills. Learning is a collaborative effort that provides opportunities to learn pragmatic skills and engage in oral rehearsal. As students participate in formal and informal discussions, they listen to the ideas of others and contribute information to acquire new knowledge. They also are guided to apply their increasing knowledge of English language structure in all contexts. Thematic units (e.g., “The Wild West”; “The FBI”) provide the basis for all instruction and include reading materials that meet students’ comprehension levels. These units extend to other subject areas such as science, social studies, math, art, and music. Theme-related pictures are used to tap into students’ visual abilities, stimulate word retrieval, and foster contextual associations. Electronic media such as videos and films are viewed when they appropriately supplement a thematic unit.

Language Arts incorporates elements of the Composition Strand through extensive practice generating examples of complete sentences (e.g., expanded kernel sentences, compound and complex sentences, paragraphs, themes.) There is a heavy emphasis on clarity of expression, idea development, and the use of rich vocabulary. Lessons in basic capitalization and punctuation are presented within the context of written expression. Outlining skills are taught in highly-structured sentence and paragraph frames which improve students’ abilities to organize material visually, structure the patterns of newly-introduced sentences into appropriate, effective sequences, and produce a variety of paragraph formats. Special attention is given to proofreading all written work and editing writing using standard English conventions. Culminating activities and short reports provide purpose to the daily lessons as well as a synthesis of what has been learned.

Awareness of the sound and syllable structure of words is emphasized, and students are encouraged to apply phonemic-based spelling principles to represent new or unfamiliar words. The effective organization of work on paper, which relies on legible handwriting as well as following directions, is stressed. Accurate copying from both near and far points is an area of ongoing concern and is an important part of most class assignments. Using the **UltraKey** software program, students routinely practice keyboarding skills. Vocabulary expansion focuses on generating theme-specific vocabulary and providing appropriate synonyms and antonyms. Emphasis is placed on identifying and generating specific nouns, action verbs, prepositional phrases, and

adjectives. The accurate use of these words in context is a focus as well. Adverbs are taught once adjectival description is mastered. Both language and composition activities also provide introduction and practice in the use of electronic media such as computers and the internet as language arts tools.

It is important to note that the Literature strand at Landmark is more heavily emphasized in our Literature classes, individualized Tutorials, and content areas due to the language-based thematic nature of instruction across the curriculum. We understand and endorse the need for students to be familiar with certain core authors and their works, but the priority in Language Arts class at Landmark is to address our students' need to access (decode) and respond (with written expression) to text. The assessed reading and written expression levels of Landmark students generally reflect a need for increased skills and considerable growth before they can succeed at grade-level expectations. Accordingly, and in close conjunction with our Literature department, works chosen for students to read independently are at their level of readability and do not correspond in many cases to grade expectations for specific authors or books.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The Landmark EMS Mathematics program provides a learning environment tailored to the individual needs of the student. Academic goals are created to provide necessary remediation while moving toward grade-level curriculum. Emphasis is placed on developing math skills that provide students with a depth of understanding, reflect applications in the real world, and relate to other curricular areas.

Students are grouped in small classes based on mathematical ability. These levels are determined by informal and formal placement tests, as well as past academic performance. Students' abilities and needs are continuously assessed by the classroom teachers and the department head, with specific attention given to individual learning styles and needs. Offerings in a typical year range from the development of number concepts and patterns to Algebra I.

The fall semester is typically dedicated to learning error-recognition strategies, solidifying and advancing computational skills, and ensuring that the student has developed a correct conceptual understanding of existing skills. During the second semester, the emphasis shifts toward recognizing and using learned skills in relevant situations, and learning new skills through guided discovery and inquiry techniques. Thematic units provide the vehicles to develop oral and written expression skills by describing math concepts, procedures and applications based on physical science activities. In this manner, the math curriculum connects to other Landmark curricular models, thus integrating these domains. Appropriate use of available technological resources includes computer graphing using spreadsheet programs.

Mathematics is viewed as a language, subject to the same obstacles encountered by students with language-based learning disabilities. Instruction is sensitive to these issues. Compensatory strategies which limit sequencing demands are employed; multimodal strategies to elicit verbal and written communication are also utilized. Demonstrations and diagramming activities are vehicles for student reflection and expression. To foster written communication, production is structured using sequenced, success-oriented graphic organizers similar to those used in Landmark's Middle School Language Arts classes.

## **ORAL EXPRESSION LITERATURE / STUDY SKILLS**

Children possessing metalinguistic awareness have intuitions about the structure of language and its components. Metalinguistic awareness serves as a scaffold for orderly processing and storage of information. When assessed under sufficiently demanding conditions, dyslexic students exhibit deficits in one or more of these linguistic areas: phonology (speech sounds), morphology (meaningful word parts), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (vocabulary, meaning) and pragmatics (multi-sentence level of discourse, social communication skills). Through direct instruction in each of these areas, the students are immersed in the rules and structure of the English language. Thematic units and literature serve as vehicles for instruction in the linguistic areas.

### **ORAL EXPRESSION**

All of the students at Landmark's elementary and middle schools are enrolled in daily oral expression classes designed to enhance language proficiency and communicative competence. For each one of our students, a strong emphasis is placed upon verbal production as a means for strengthening language skills. Bernice Cullinan (*Children's Voices: Talk in the Classroom*) cites research demonstrating that in addition to listening, students learn through self-expression; that is, through hearing their own voices. As they talk, their thoughts are clarified, comprehension deepens, and self-confidence increases. For the teacher, listening to students express themselves allows a window to their thinking process.

The oral expression curriculum at Landmark is two-fold, serving to improve the students' ability to share information with others, and to engage them in goal-oriented social communication / discourse. To facilitate the sharing of information in a concise and coherent manner, students are provided with scaffolding; for example, students refer to graphic organizers as they provide descriptions, express a comparison and contrast, report an event, retell a story in sequential order, explain a process, or state and support an opinion.

During oral presentations, students are evaluated by the instructor and peers in nonverbal communication skills (e.g., eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expression). They are also monitored for articulatory / prosodic features of voice (i.e., clarity, volume, pitch, quality, intonation) which enhance communicative intent.

To more effectively engage in social communication and discourse, students are expected to become responsible members of the classroom community - conveying communicative intent, listening to others in an attentive manner, demonstrating consideration of previous contributions while formulating a response, and disagreeing in a constructive manner, which reflects consideration of others' points of view. As stated above, literature and thematic units serve as frameworks for instruction.

#### AUDITORY / ORAL EXPRESSION

Central auditory processing deficits impede development of metalinguistic awareness. The auditory curriculum is based upon the principle that verbal language must be correctly processed and understood so that accurate and meaningful oral production can follow. Students are selected for this introductory-level class through pretesting, observations, and information available from their records.

To promote improved phonological skills, students are trained to discriminate speech sounds, associate speech sounds with letter symbols, and to identify syllable units within words. The students are also engaged in the study of meaningful word parts, sentence structure, vocabulary, meaning, discourse, and social communication. Through exposure to literature and poetry read aloud, the students become linked to the richness and cadence of our language.

The oral expression component of the class is described above.

#### LITERATURE

For elementary students who are not yet independent readers, a daily literature class is held in which age-appropriate literature of varied genres is read aloud and discussed. The students are exposed to literature which challenges their abilities to assimilate information and evaluate stories. They are encouraged to draw upon prior knowledge and real-life experiences as they participate in group discussions. Literary elements (plot, character, and setting) are introduced. Through brainstorming activities, main ideas and sequence of events are determined. These students are also enrolled in auditory / oral expression classes, in which poetry is presented. Memorization of poetry is an ongoing activity through all oral expression classes.

#### ORAL EXPRESSION / LITERATURE

The literature curriculum at Landmark Middle School is dynamic; selections each year are determined by the current profile of the students. The classes are organized

homogeneously, according to decoding level, chronological age, and social maturity.

Age-appropriate selections of varied forms and genres follow alternating strands: literature which the entire class can decode and read aloud together, and quality literature which is above the students' decoding level, but serves as a rich resource for higher-level discussion and analysis. Discussion of setting, plot, and character development is ongoing. Incorporating the graphic organizers from oral expression activities, students express comparisons and contrasts of characters, plots, settings, and author's point of view. Templates are also used to facilitate coherent delivery of description, opinion accompanied by supporting data, and inferences or predictions based upon logic. The students engage in discussions drawing from prior knowledge and real-life experiences relating to each selection and/or theme. Theme-related topics of study accompany the literature. Literature and theme serve as vehicles for development of oral expression skills (described above under "Oral Expression.")

## LITERATURE / STUDY SKILLS

The literature / study skills curriculum incorporates oral language skills, literature (described above), and study skills. Themes related to the literature are explored, providing a pathway for learning study skills. Organization of time and materials is emphasized. Basic facts and essential ideas are identified from written sources, and summarizing, paraphrasing, and notetaking are practiced. Alphabetization skills are honed to aid in locating entries in various reference books, and gathering different sources of information for research projects. Students assess final versions of their compositions prior to presenting them to their peers. The listeners consider others' ideas, pose questions, and contribute their own ideas. Test-taking techniques and strategies for remembering material are addressed.

## SCIENCE

The science curriculum focuses on the presentation of thematic units representing the domains of science (physical science, life science, earth and space sciences) utilizing language-based and guided inquiry approaches. Instruction highlights developing an interpretation of science as a problem-solving and discovery tool available for everyday use as well as for technical application in the real world. Controlled experiments are studied as a way to investigate predictions resulting from observations and in turn, draw conclusions. Metric measurement and proper use of scientific equipment are practiced. As the students become familiar with the inquiry process, they are guided through the challenge of designing experiments to solve specific problems, answer questions, and communicate results. The steps of the scientific method (problem, hypothesis, experiment, and conclusion) are used as a problem-solving tool for exploring specific units of study. Topics related to science, technology, human affairs, and current events are presented and integrated with the

fields of mathematics, language arts, and social studies. Class placement and topics of study are determined by reading level, comprehension skills, prior knowledge, and age.

In addition to the content information presented in Science classes, much emphasis is placed on developing study skills. The skills presented are modified for the students' levels. These include organization of subject notebooks, class materials, prereading, using a textbook, discerning main ideas and relevant details, notetaking, summarizing, paraphrasing, researching and writing reports, and test-taking. Computer skills are integrated throughout all aspects of the content courses so that students become familiar with hardware and software capabilities. Guidelines for appropriate participation in class discussion are reinforced.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Landmark elementary and middle school students engage the social studies curriculum by focusing on four major branches of the human experience: History, Geography, Economics, and Government. All classes are taught in small groups and emphasize a sequential inventory of reading, writing, critical thinking, and study skills. Students are grouped primarily according to ability level, with a secondary focus on age and grade. The discipline's content provides the background through which information processing deficits characteristic of students with language-based learning disabilities are remediated. Themes for class content are selected with strict attention to the most recent state curriculum frameworks and adapted for use with graphic organizers and templates to structure written expression.

Students at the elementary and middle school levels are encouraged to view social studies through the widest lens possible, examining the many aspects of each body of knowledge and assuming ample opportunity for specialization throughout high school and post-secondary years. In geography, for instance, students strive to understand a sense of place, including regions, physical space, geography's effects on human endeavors and vice versa. The history curriculum encourages students to grasp principles of chronology and cause, research, society and the individual, as well as interdisciplinary topics. In government, students take up essential concepts, such as authority, responsibility and power, the Founding Documents, federal, state and local branches in the United States, forms overseas, and civil rights. Landmark pupils are exposed to domestic and world economies, focusing on fundamental principles, reasoning, economic history, various theories and contemporary issues. Finally, current events represent an integral part of the social studies curriculum.

## **TECHNOLOGY / COMPUTER SCIENCE**

The Computer Science Department oversees computer skills throughout the academic departments on a team-teaching, consultative basis. The Computer Center consists of four rooms, two of them adjacent to the department office, another lab in the elementary area, and a fourth nearer to the middle school G classrooms. Several other workstations are located in key areas (library, math/science offices). Landmark students have access to the World Wide Web for classroom projects, research, and supplementary materials. The department monitors and defines the computer applications related to content classes (e.g., keyboarding, mapmaking, cell diagrams, multimedia presentations) and offers guidance on any facet of the program. As part of the schoolwide keyboarding program, students visit the computer center to learn and practice skills using UltraKey software. Emphasis on correct finger placement and maintaining eye contact on the text to be typed is reinforced.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The overall objectives of the Physical Education department encompass three main areas: physical education skills, health education, and confidence / trust building. Instruction is provided in fundamental skills, rules, strategy, and safety pertaining to individual and team sports. Using each sport as a theme, emphasis is placed on agility, balance, cardiovascular fitness, and eye-hand / eye-foot coordination. Health education includes material on fitness and health, body awareness, first aid and safety, and related vocabulary. The curriculum strives to build confidence and trust in every unit. Related skills include communication and following directions, problem-solving, spotting, teamwork, and support. Landmark's outdoor adventure trust course is utilized for units specifically aimed at building trust and group cooperation. Expectations underlying all activities in PE class include sportsmanship, attentiveness, following class routine, participation, positive peer interactions, and effort, regardless of ability level.

## **ART**

In small group Art classes, students have the opportunity to work with various two-and three-dimensional media and crafts. Through a variety of art forms, students develop organizational skills, spatial awareness, and fine motor skills. Emphasis is on following directions, decision-making, and cooperative work habits. Examples of art units include basic color theory, metal punching, painting, clay pottery, and collage. Art projects are often presented in the context of thematic units with a cross-cultural background.

## **COMPUTERS**

The intent of the Computer elective class is to give the students a greater understanding of how a personal computer functions along with a chance to create original work using various multimedia programs. The class will explore the concept of a computer as a device that performs three tasks: accepting input; processing it

according to rules; and producing output. Common peripheral devices and their uses will also be covered. Students will view the inside of a Central Processing Unit, learning about its components and discussing various ways to save information. They will discuss the concept of the internet and investigate the World Wide Web.

Class topics and activities have included:

- Using Microsoft Word to experiment with line-art drawings; creating complex forms based on simple lines.
- Using a web browser and Google Image search to find source images for projects.
- Exploring various drawing programs and internet applications related to drawing and graphics
- Using Apple's **GarageBand** to create original music; experimenting with different sound clips and sampled instruments.
- Exploring Apple's **iLife** applications; **iPhoto**, **iMovie**, and **iDVD** to create a DVD merging images, music, and movies.

## **GIRLS AROUND THE GLOBE**

Girls Around the Globe is an all-girls elective focusing on other cultures and experiences from the perspective of girls. Class activities have involved literature and art projects, as well as group discussion on a variety of historical, cross-cultural, and personal themes. Specific class projects may include:

- exploration of holidays in other countries
- collaborative reading and discussion of stories of girls past and present
- learning about ways to save the environment
- discussion of children's roles and family structures in other countries
- labeling and reading maps of the world

## **PRACTICAL ARTS**

The practical arts course is a structured program emphasizing fundamental skills related to small engines and woodworking. Each student is introduced to common tools used to perform routine service on a small engine. The theory of how an engine operates will be discussed. Woodworking projects are primarily built by hand with limited use of power tools. Students become familiar with hand tools and their proper use (e.g., saws, squares, clamps, rasp) and fundamental techniques are introduced (e.g., measurement, sanding, painting). Over the course of

the semester, students will use the skills presented in small engines and woodworking to design, build, and paint a model car powered by air, solar and CO2.

## **SMALL ENGINE REPAIR**

In Small Engine Repair classes, small groups complete mechanical projects. Common tools are introduced, and students work on small frame, single cylinder, four cycle gasoline engines. Prior to removal of engine parts, the master mechanic manual is utilized, parts are identified, and their uses discussed. Specific engine part numbers and prices are researched within the master parts manual, and the history and theory of small engine operation is explored.

## **WOODWORKING**

Woodworking is a highly structured program emphasizing fundamental skills. Projects are completed in a designated sequence to ensure that each project builds upon previously learned skills. Each project is primarily built by hand with limited use of power tools. Throughout the course, students become familiar with hand tools and their proper use (e.g., sanding, nailing, staining). Instruction is designed to foster each student's ability to work independently and follow directions while cooperating with others. Emphasis is on gross and fine motor control and eye-hand coordination.

## **Summer Program Offerings**

A variety of summer program offerings are available for students ages 7 to 13 at Landmark EMS. Programs are designed to provide intensive remediation in language skills, particularly for students who have not attended Landmark during the academic year.

Summer session lasts for six weeks. Programs available include:

- EXPLORATION (Adventure, Marine Science); PRACTICAL ARTS, and ACADEMIC programs.

Three periods of academic instruction (one-to-one tutorial, small group language arts and language structure) and a half-day in one of the following: Exploration (Adventure Ropes; Marine Science) 7:45 to 2:45

- Half-day elementary and middle school programs for children 7 to 13. Three periods of instruction, including one-to-one tutorial, small group language arts, and language structure followed by lunch.

