The French American Academy

PK & K CURRICULUM GUIDE

Interdisciplinary project on UN Goals #14 combining art, creativity, language, math sport, dance, and music.

"Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think".

Albert Einstein

PK2, PK3, PK4, and Kindergarten are essential years to develop social skills, an early understanding of the world, and most importantly a love for learning. Coming to school with joy and eagerness is the main step to success.

Through our project and play-centered learning, our young learners are exposed to an array of hands-on experiences and social interactions that set the stage for academic success and emotional well-being.

During these years, your child acquires knowledge and skills adapted to their age and needs in three main areas: language, socialization, and independence. At the French American Academy, Preschool students are immersed in French for 80% of the time, and in Kindergarten for 75% of the time. English language instruction gradually increases to reach 55%-45% by 5th grade.

Our bilingual curriculum combines the best of both worlds, with each language complementing the other and bringing efficiency and meaning to the students' learning. Bilingualism brings not only cognitive benefits thanks to the plasticity of young children's brain but also open-mindedness.

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The French American Academy strives to meet the highest educational standards with a bilingual, comprehensive curriculum in a safe and creative environment. We foster an atmosphere that promotes critical thinking, curiosity, enthusiasm, and a strong work ethic.

Four main reasons to be part of the FAA Community:

- Excellence through a Bilingual Education
- Small class size for a safe and nurturing environment
- Diversity and Multiculturalism
- Project-based learning for motivation

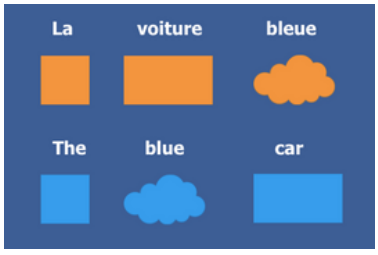
LANGUAGE

Language is at the core of the curriculum in Pre-K and K in both French and English. Language is not just a standalone skill but an integral part of various learning dimensions. It serves as a foundation for acquiring many other skills, and it is interwoven into every aspect of a child's school life.

The primary objective in Preschool and Kindergarten is to cultivate strong **oral language proficiency** among all students, enabling them to effectively comprehend and articulate thoughts with clarity and confidence.

Within the classroom setting, oral language is developed through every activity. While reading serves as a cornerstone for expanding students' vocabulary and understanding of syntax, it also comes from opportunities to actively employ language in all areas of learning. We aim to cultivate various uses of oral language, encouraging students to describe, narrate, explain, inquire, suggest solutions to problems, and discuss their points of view. Public speaking starts at 3 years old when a child presents their “cahier de vie” and what has been done over the weekend or when they bring an object starting with the letter of the week. Language also happens during gross motor skills activities when children use action verbs such as jump, climb, or throw.

At the French American Academy, we implement the unique “MAK“ method of **comparative grammar** between the two languages based on colors and visuals, as created by Marianne Verbuyt. We use our critical thinking skills to compare the language structure and understand differences and similarities.



PK & K Literacy

- Recognize and name letters of the alphabet in upper case, lower case, and cursive
- Identify letters and sounds
- Develop phonological awareness with rhyming, syllables, alliteration
- Build new vocabulary
- Build listening skills
- Strengthen visual discrimination
- Retell familiar stories
- Draw pictures and dictate sentences about stories and experiences
- Answer questions about stories
- Recognize, spell, write first name and other names
- Songs and nursery rhymes

CO-TEACHING is a key element at the FAA. In Language Arts and Science, the native French teacher and the native English teacher deliver a lesson together, building connections between the two languages and cultures. For example, Kindergarteners wrote a new bilingual story about Little Riding Hood after studying many version of the tale. They also collaborated on a bilingual alphabet book of action verbs starting with the same letter, such as arriver / arrive or jongler / juggle.

Fine Motor Skills & Cursive

Throughout Preschool and Kindergarten, children develop their fine motor skills by manipulating objects that become progressively smaller. Fine motor skills begin with the observation of graphic shapes and patterns in the immediate environment and works of art (Mondrian, Matisse, Frida Kahlo, Kusama, etc.). Then, the children experience these gestures using their bodies. Gradually, the child takes ownership of the gesture by tracing it in large format (in the air, in semolina or flour, on a board, on paper, etc.) and then by miniaturizing it.
Each of the graphic patterns practiced allows children to begin writing capital letters, which leads to cursive writing.
At the end of Kindergarten, children are able to write words and short sentences in cursive. These activities are combined with nursery rhymes and finger games to warm up, strengthen, and relax our little writers' joints.

Reading Skills

While the PK years prepare for the reading skills, it is in Kindergarten that children start reading, first in English. This knowledge in English transfers to French. First grade is the year to deepen and improve reading fluency and comprehension in both languages.

In Kindergarten, students learn to:

- **Use left-to-right and top-to-bottom motion when reading.**
- **Read sight words**
- **Read one-syllable words (i.e. cat) and recognize common sight words**
- **Use picture clues to read.**
- **Make predictions.**
- **Identify the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.**

MATH

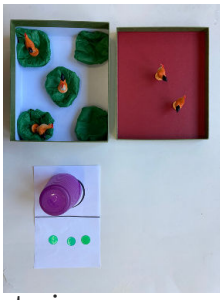
Through stories, play, manipulation of objects, and problem-solving activities, students understand and use numbers, recognize shapes, and organize collections of objects according to different criteria.

Building Number Sense

It's crucial to facilitate the understanding of numbers as representations of quantities, allowing children to grasp the relationship between numerical symbols and the actual quantities they denote. Consolidating knowledge of smaller numbers lays a sturdy foundation for further numerical comprehension.

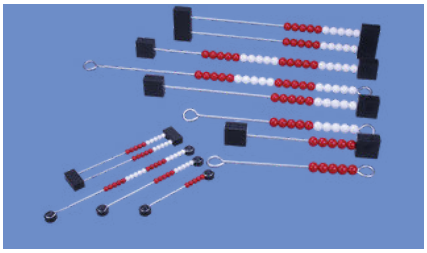
Problem-Solving

Problem-solving scenarios are rooted in real-life situations, drawing from everyday experiences that children can relate to and understand. Initially, children are prompted to engage in hands-on manipulation to explore and discover solutions. Throughout their growth, the problems gradually transition towards more abstract situations, offering opportunities for deeper conceptualization and application of learned strategies.



Which topics are covered in math?

- **Matching: objects, symbols, shapes, patterns, etc.**
- **Similar and Different**
- **Sorting by various attributes: color, shape, size**
- **Recognizing Patterns**
- **Identify numerals 1-10 or more**
- **Counting 10 or more objects**
- **One-to-one correspondence of objects when counting**
- **Complete collections of 5, 10**
- **Comparing sizes (height, weight, length)**
- **Learning and comparing shapes**
- **Less than, greater than, equal to**
- **Developing strategies**
- **Mental calculation and subitizing with math racks**



GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Teaching physical and artistic activities allows each student to experiment with motor skills, sensory and artistic development, and learn about efforts and perseverance.

There are three areas of development:
Balance and movement: the children practice rolling, jumping, running, slaloming, stepping over, crossing, crawling, and balancing. Then they learn to combine and sequence their actions with obstacle courses.

Artistic expression: dance creation and games allow students from a very young age to reproduce artistic movements with the whole body. It involves coordination with the rhythm of music and can lead to short improvisation or choreography invented by the students.

Teamwork: younger children are naturally self-centered and their concept of collective play is ready to be developed. Through games, children gradually learn to collaborate to achieve a common goal.

Which topics will be covered in PK & K?

- The scientific process with questioning, hands-on experimentation, and conclusions
- The life cycle of plants
- The life cycle of animals, their food and habitat
- Weather and seasons
- Five senses
- Beginner chemistry through color mixing and cooking activities
- States of Matter
- Identifying temporal benchmarks (morning, afternoon, day, week, month, etc.)
- Identifying spatial landmarks (front, back, right, left, above, below, etc.)

Students present their research during the science fair and participate in the yearly "Défi Techno" of the AEFE (Agency for French Education Abroad supporting a network of 600 schools around the globe).

Science and Coding

In Kindergarten, students start Coding classes. As an introduction, children begin to understand the concept of a code in which a message induces an action. First, through body position, movement, and maps, children experience, and write their first codes. Once students are familiar with these concepts, they continue their coding experiments using small robots (Beebots) and applications such as Scratch Junior, alone or in groups.

The Coding of Beebots causes them to move in programmed ways while Scratch leads the student to make coding decisions about sizes, colors and placement of objects.

MEASURING PROGRESS

To build, self-motivation and interest in learning from an early age, children should be made explicitly aware of the skills they will need to practice and achieve. Through the **app "Je Valide"**, students take ownership of their learning and validate the numerous skills they master for themselves. On the iPad, the child checks off the skills, or takes a picture to record what he/she has learned.

Four times a year, parents receive a snapshot of the skills mastered. A child has the complete cycle of PK and K to master all skills.

Examples of skills:

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Education is more than learning to write, read, and count. Learning empathy, how to make friends, or how to share your toys are among the many social skills a preschooler needs to practice.

Social-Emotional Learning helps students develop the skills they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Modeling conversation to say "What are you playing?" rather than "Can I play with you? which may invite to a negative response, is part of our social-emotional curriculum. We'll follow with "How can I help?" to create a positive relationship.

Working with others, solving conflicts, persevering to the end of a task, and waiting for your turn are some other examples of what children learn in Preschool and Kindergarten.

By teaching students how to recognize and regulate their emotions, navigate relationships, and make responsible decisions, our students learn to have a growth mindset, based on the research of Carol Dweck. Teachers and students learn to solve conflicts and promote interpersonal understanding using Marshall Rosenberg's "Non violent Communication" approach.
For example, students learn how to use the "oasis" in the class, as a special area where children can take the time to regroup and reflect upon feelings.

Lastly, through the Responsive Classroom Approach and its various practices, each class becomes a safe and nurturing community. Starting the day with our Morning Meeting serves multiple purposes, including setting a tone for respectful and engaged learning in a climate of trust, as well as meeting students' needs for fun, belonging, and significance.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PLAY-BASED PROJECTS

Examples:

- Tasting Week in October to practice curiosity about food from all over the world while discussing traditions and nutrition.
- Ma Petite Planète to practice Sustainable Development
- Albertine Prize for Literacy
- Show and Tell about your culture

And so many more to discover!

The main objective of our play-based curriculum (which evolves into project-based in the upper grades) is to make students want to learn. Our learning objectives are embedded in purposeful play-based activities like:

- Games promoting active exploration (painting, drawing, dancing, etc)
- Symbolic games (in the kitchen, at the restaurant, dress-up, etc)
- Construction games (lego, K'nex, etc.)
- Games with rules such as board games

The daily use of play ensures the physical, emotional, and cognitive development of the child. Our teachers support their students' interests and unique abilities in an engaging, fun, and structured learning environment. Parents enjoy the the results of one of the bilingual projects during a "Parent Breakfast", a unique time to visit the class and listen to your children.

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