

Parent Guide to Curriculum

Reading

Reading at home:

All students are expected to read (or be read to) 20-30 minutes a day. Literacy is an integral part of your student's day throughout their elementary school career. Reading to your student and listening to them read builds vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It may seem obvious that early readers need support in this process, however, even older readers benefit from your involvement. Allow students of all ages to listen to you as you read. This can be a way to introduce and connect with various types of literature that they may not otherwise interact with.

Make the most of reading aloud: Be aware of the opportunities to make predictions and check comprehension. Ask questions such as, "what happened?", "What do you think will happen next?", "Does this remind you of anything you've experienced?", "Why did the character do that?"

5 Components of Reading:

Young readers will eventually master these 5 parts of the reading process:

Phonemic Awareness: Knowledge of and ability to manipulate individual sounds in our spoken language, (rhyming, identifying beginning or last sounds of words)

Phonics: Assigning those recognizable sounds to their corresponding letters. Learning these sounds (phonemes) allows children to "decode" unfamiliar words.

Vocabulary: The ability to define and reuse new words they encounter while listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Fluency: The ability to read text smoothly, accurately, and with some expression. This aids word recognition and comprehension.

Comprehension: Good comprehension includes being able to understand, remember, and communicate to others what a student has read.

DRA Levels:

Currently, DPS utilizes the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to determine a child's reading level. This is an individual test that is administered twice during the school year. The test measures the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. After the test is evaluated and scored, your child is assigned a numeric DRA level from A1-80. Teachers then regulate instruction and select literature based on this score.

There are several other formats to "level" readers. In addition to the DRA numeric score, there is also an alphabet level system that teachers use. It is helpful to know both your child's DRA and alphabet reading level to help you find books for them that are at their ability level. Ask your child's teacher for this information and to see examples of each.

Writing

Writing, like reading, has several components. There are grade specific writing rubrics that each grade level uses to guide and evaluate your child's writing progress. The components include:

Ideas: Details and elaboration

Conventions: correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Word Choice: interesting vocabulary and descriptors

Sentence Fluency: flow, length, and structure of sentences

Organization: Introduction (topic sentences), body, and conclusion

Voice: the way the writer brings the piece to life

Science

DPS uses the "BSCS Science Tracks: Connecting Science and Literacy" curriculum. Grade levels determine the timing of each unit during the school year.

| Grade Level | Physical Science | Earth & Space Science | Life Science |
|--------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Kindergarten | Investigating My Senses | Investigating Here, There & Everywhere | Investigating Myself and My Family |
| 1st Grade | Investigating Properties | Investigating Weather | Investigating Animals and Their Needs |
| 2nd Grade | Designing Sound Systems | Investigating Earth Materials | Investigating Plants |
| 3rd Grade | Investigating Electrical Systems | Investigating Objects in the Sky | Investigating Life Cycles |
| 4th Grade | Investigating Physical and Chemical Properties | Investigating the Changing Earth | Investigating Ecosystems |
| 5th Grade | Investigating Heat and Changes in Materials | Investigating Weather Systems | Investigating Human Systems |

Math

Southmoor staff use the University of Chicago "Everyday Math (EM)" curriculum. The philosophy of this program emphasizes an understanding of math concepts, while mastering basic math skills. To accomplish this, the curriculum "spirals" through the grade levels. Students will have multiple opportunities to practice the concepts and skills they learned previously, adding more challenging material as they "spiral upward."

Students are exposed to all the major areas of math content - number sense, algebra, measurement, geometry, data analysis, and probability - beginning in Kindergarten. Grade specific goals are established for each of these content areas. Your child may be given “home link” pages to do at home to reinforce topics. Copies of these and additional information can be found at www.everydaymath.uchicago.edu.

Library/Technology

Students come to the Library once a week for story time and check out. They check out 1 to 3 books depending on the class/kid. Some classes will come to Library for other activities with their teacher, for example reference skills.

Music

All full day students participate in music for 45 minutes every 3 days. They are given an opportunity to read, notate, and create music according to their respective grade level, using a variety of methods including Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze. The opportunity to perform is essential to a quality music experience with planned music performances in grades 3 to 5. Music education is enhanced with the following opportunities: 4th and 5th grade concert band, VH1 Save the Music, Central City Opera, Opera Colorado, Gospel Choir and Guitar Club

Art

Create! Imagine! Inspire! Fun! Students explore many art mediums & techniques while learning elements of art and principles of design in artwork and their surrounding environment. Students create both individual and team projects throughout the year while studying cultures and countries around the world. At the end of the school year, all Southmoor student artists display their artwork around the building for the annual art exhibit.

Physical Education

Franklin P. Adams, an American columnist, once said, “health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year”. Through a variety of movement experiences, the goal of physical and wellness education is to instill the skills, knowledge, and desire in your child to live well.

Highly Gifted and Talented

The Gifted and Talented Department in Denver Public Schools provides services to gifted/high potential students and their families by overseeing the Gifted and Highly Gifted identification process, approving schools’ gifted plans and programs in order to support best practice and ensure compliance, assessment, curriculum development,

professional development, advocacy, and incorporating state/national standards. Additionally, the department assesses and qualifies students for the Advanced Kindergarten program. Students who qualify for this program are not identified as gifted / talented. Students can be assessed for gifted identification starting in 1st grade.

In the Denver Public Schools, “gifted and talented children” means those students whose demonstrated abilities, talents and/or potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. These students perform, or show the potential of performing, at remarkably high levels in intellectual, specific academic or creative areas when compared with others of their age and experience. Gifted and talented children are present in all student groups, regardless of gender, disability, English language proficiency, economic status, ethnic or cultural background.

Assessments at Southmoor

| Assessment | Grade | Frequency | When | Measurements |
|------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|--|
| DRA | K-5 | 2x year | Fall and Spring | Identifies a student's reading level, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension |
| CELA | ELL students | 1 | Winter | Oral Proficiency in English |

Helpful Websites:

Southmoor Elementary: www.southmoor.dpsk12.org

Everyday Math: www.everydaymath.uchicago.edu

Core Standards: www.corestandards.org

DRA characteristics: www.socsd.org/summer_reading/leveledtextreference.pdf