



**COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL  
COSTA RICA**  
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

### ***Early Childhood Curriculum***

The Early Childhood section at CDS is a hive of learning activity for children aged 2-6!

Our teaching and learning program is multi-dimensional: it incorporates the most effective approaches and practices, supported by recent research-based evidence, and encompasses well-defined expectations and goals for our young learners in all areas of their development. In the EC, our students and teachers have succeeded in creating a warm, safe environment and atmosphere that truly exude the joys of learning!

### ***The Learning Climate***

In order for learning to really germinate and thrive in a school, it requires conditions that, collectively and consistently, accommodate the interests and needs of our learners. The qualities of encouragement, openness and inspiration characterize the EC learning climate, and are evident in:

- the way we communicate and interact
- the scenarios we create to stimulate and sustain interest, and
- the lines of inquiry we project for our students in order that they're able to build incrementally on what they already know and understand.

### ***Play - a Vehicle for Learning***

At CDS, we champion the power of play-based learning. Play opens up myriad learning avenues to our very young students, and allows them to experience:

- enjoyment - happiness isn't just a way to travel, it's a way to learn!
- the power and wonder of their own imagination
- engagement - with people, materials, ideas or their environment
- processes/step-by-step actions
- creativity and expression
- relationship-building and conflict resolution
- curiosity and the drive to know/understand more
- agency and choice
- resilience and concentration

With this in mind, our EC teachers design and create learning scenarios for their students modeled on different forms of play. The first steps our students take in developing early math and literacy skills, for example, or finding out about the world we live in and how it works, are all grounded in play. Play is the natural, default ***modus operandi*** of young learners and, as educators, we embrace the potential this holds for our students' ability to construct and develop meaning in all areas of their learning.

### ***Inquiry***

An authentic inquiry-based approach to curriculum doesn't simply embrace the inquiry cycle as a means of exploring ideas, but rather positions the student as an **inquirer**. It does not limit inquiry to specific projects, but instead opens it up so that inquiry becomes a way of **being** in all areas of the curriculum – a stance from which our students are able to view, and wonder about, the world and how it works. True inquiry learning nurtures and encourages our students in their curiosity and wonderings, in their 'what ifs?' and 'how sos?' It not only intensifies their eagerness and motivation to know and understand more, but, with practice and experience, becomes a natural part of their approach to learning.

### **Concept-based Learning**

Key concepts are those basic universal ideas and questions that underpin our thinking within and across disciplines, for example, the idea of **function** – how something works the way it does; or **change** – why things change and how; or **connection** – how one thing relates to, or impacts on another. Examining what we're learning about, from a wide range of perspectives, really brings our learning experiences into focus. Concept-based learning and inquiry, together, are a winning combination in enabling our young learners to make sense of the world.

### **Early Childhood: Curriculum Design & Learning Expectations**

In our Pre-kindergarten years, we have adopted developmental milestones or expectations to help structure and promote our students' cognitive, physical, social-emotional and language development. In Kindergarten and Prep, our learning program is built around the US Common Core Standards for Mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA), Science and Social Studies. Our selected milestones and standards provide the underlying structure of our EC program overall, and articulate robustly with the learning ahead on the Elementary School horizon.

### **Pre-kindergarten**

#### **Cognitive Development**

Cognitive development is essentially the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding. This process comes about for young learners through their thinking and wondering, through their experiences, and through their senses. In Pre-kindergarten, we support our students' cognitive development by creating opportunities for them to explore their thoughts, ideas and imagination in a broad range of contexts. They explore through observing the world around them, creating pictures and models, role-playing, asking and answering questions, and frequently participating in hands-on sensory tasks.

#### **Physical Development**

Physical development encompasses all aspects of physical change and growth e.g. the strengthening of muscles, increasing awareness of the senses, and the development of fine and gross motor skills. At CDS we ensure that our very young learners are continually building on their physical capacities. In their homerooms and PE classes, as well as in their play, our students are encouraged to engage in a wide range of activities aimed at developing their physical strength and movement, as well as their dexterity and confidence.

#### **Social-Emotional Development**

Social-emotional development revolves around children's experiences, the expression and management of their emotions and their ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others. As they progress through the EC years, our students learn about feelings and emotions, their own as well as others', and work to build effective strategies to communicate these in positive ways. As they mature,

children's emotional lives become more complex as new and different situations present themselves. We are committed to ensuring that each of our students is as well-equipped as they can be in meeting the challenges that their new maturity brings.

### ***Language Development***

Language development centers on our young learners' ability to communicate. Effective communication hinges on being able to express and verbalize thoughts and ideas, and make sense of the thoughts and ideas expressed by others. We encourage all of our students to not just hear, but listen; to not just talk, but speak. Our young learners engage in a lot of early reading and writing tasks e.g. listening to and telling stories, drawing, painting and modeling. They identify and categorize sounds, sing songs and recite rhymes. All of these pre-reading and -writing tasks lay strong foundations for the reading and writing ahead in Kindergarten and Prep.

### ***Kindergarten & Prep***

#### ***English Language Arts (ELA)***

#### ***reading & writing, speaking & listening, viewing & presenting***

Our whole school approach to language learning embraces the premise that every teacher is a language teacher and that there are opportunities to be seized upon, and contributions to be made, in building our students' appreciation of, and facility with, language in all discipline areas.

In the EC the Readers' and Writers' Workshop model is the mainstay of our ELA program. The model encompasses the idea that our students are not just learning how to read and write but that they are readers and writers in their own right, developing their craft, honing their skills and ultimately being the best readers and writers they can be.

Workshop accommodates a range of components: extended periods of independent reading and writing time in which our young learners are able to focus their efforts on creating meaningful pieces of work; mini-lesson briefings on particular elements of reading and writing that they can use and develop in their work; paired and group tasks as well as individualized assignments; regular, ongoing feedback from teachers and peers to help each writer and reader improve on their drafts and responses; and student choice in what they read and write.

The teaching and learning of language conventions is for the most part embedded in workshop sessions, however, the flexibility of our program allows for discrete grammar/punctuation lessons as necessary. In working to develop our students' spelling skills, again we choose from a wide repertoire of strategies and resources, ranging from issuing set spelling/vocabulary lists, to having our students generate their own personal lists.

At CDS, the central aim of our handwriting program is to ensure that our students are able to write legibly, fluently, and comfortably. We mostly use the script and materials from the Handwriting Without Tears series of publications to support our students' development of clear, efficient writing.

### ***Mathematics***

#### ***number & operations in base ten, counting and cardinality, operations & algebraic thinking, measurement & data, geometry***

In the area of Mathematics our students explore concepts and develop skills derived from the US Common Core Standards.

We use a wide range of resources at CDS in order to drive math learning in the classroom: video clips; digital games/programs that students complete on laptops/iPads; task/worksheets; manipulatives; workbooks and texts; problem-solving scenarios and simulations; board games; measuring tools - rulers, tapes, scales, etc. Students take part in individual, paired, small group and whole class activities depending on the learning aims of the day; they also work independently, with each other, and with the teacher. Varied grouping strategies, with varying levels of support, ensure that our students are able to enjoy a wide range of different learning experiences.

Understanding how mathematical operations work is fundamental in helping our students grapple with more complex problems and ideas later in their math learning life. We encourage our students to adopt a can-do attitude, and to practice and/or try again repeatedly when working to master skills and concepts. Math fluency is also important: being able to recall basic number facts quickly and accurately empowers our students to follow their train of thought more fluidly from one idea or solution to the next.

### ***Interdisciplinary Learning in the EC***

Units of learning that meaningfully incorporate expectations across disciplines, foster in our students a deeper appreciation of the ways in which their learning is interconnected.

This is our current interdisciplinary learning matrix, from Pre-kindergarten through to Prep:

Grade Level	EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERDISCIPLINARY UNITS			
Pre-K 1	Unit Title: <b>Uniquely Me</b>	Unit Title: <b>Stories</b>	Unit Title: <b>Food from Field to Plate</b>	Unit Title: <b>Water, Water Everywhere</b>
	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Each of us is unique and we can express our uniqueness in many ways.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>People tell stories to inform and entertain. Stories can be told in many different ways.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Food is a basic necessity. Before reaching our tables, most foods go through production and distribution processes.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Water is a finite resource with many uses.</i>
	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>In what ways are people similar?</i></li> <li>● <i>In what ways are people different?</i></li> <li>● <i>How are we each unique?</i></li> <li>● <i>How would it be if we were all the same?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is a story?</i></li> <li>● <i>What stories do we know?</i></li> <li>● <i>What makes a story a favorite story?</i></li> <li>● <i>What are stories for?</i></li> <li>● <i>How can stories be told?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Why do we need food?</i></li> <li>● <i>Where does food come from?</i></li> <li>● <i>Who has a role to play in growing and distributing food?</i></li> <li>● <i>How do we prepare food?</i></li> <li>● <i>How is food distributed?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Where does water come from?</i></li> <li>● <i>What do we use water for?</i></li> <li>● <i>Where can we find water?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>self; identity; culture; connection</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>communication; audience; response; imagination</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>wellbeing; processes; organization; production</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>cycles; connection; responsibility; conservation; transformation</i>
Pre-K 2	Unit Title: <b>Our School Community</b>	Unit Title: <b>Pattern All Around Us</b>	Unit Title: <b>Family &amp; Friends</b>	Unit Title: <b>Lifecycles</b>
	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Everyone has a role to play in our school community.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Patterns can be observed in both natural and man-made environments. People often design and use patterns for organization and decoration.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>The relationships we have with our family and friends are an essential part of our life as social beings.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>All living things go through a process of change in the course of their lifetime.</i>
<b>Essential Questions:</b>	<b>Essential Questions:</b>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is a family?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is community?</i></li> <li>• <i>How and why is our community special?</i></li> <li>• <i>Who works in our school community? What are their roles?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can we help our community?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is a pattern?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are patterns used for?</i></li> <li>• <i>Where can we find patterns?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What different kinds of families are there?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is a friend?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why do people have friends?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is a lifecycle?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do all living things have a lifecycle?</i></li> <li>• <i>How does a living thing change during its life?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are some of the changes people, plants and animals go through in their life time?</i></li> </ul>
	<i>Related Concepts: roles; community; connection; responsibility; cooperation</i>	<i>Related Concepts: patterns; prediction; nature; organization; aesthetics</i>	<i>Related Concepts: family; friendship; belonging; identity; interactions; relationships; cooperation</i>	<i>Related Concepts: cycles; growth; change; wellbeing</i>
<b>K</b>	<b>Unit Title:</b> <i>Needs and Habitats of Living Things</i>	<b>Unit Title:</b> <i>Growth &amp; Change</i>	<b>Unit Title:</b> <i>Earth &amp; Sun</i>	<b>Unit Title:</b> <i>Maps &amp; Landforms</i>
	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>The needs of living things must be met in order that they survive and thrive.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Humans grow and change over time.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Heat and light from the sun have an impact on our planet and on us.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Maps can be used to locate and represent the different landforms that cover the surface of the Earth.</i>
	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do living things need in order to survive and thrive?</i></li> <li>• <i>Where do living things find what they need in order to survive and thrive?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How do humans grow and change? What changes do you observe?</i></li> <li>• <i>What affects growth and change?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do changes affect the way we feel?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can we help people around us to cope with changes that affect them?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does the sun affect us and the things around us? (light/dark; heat/cold; energy = LIFE)</i></li> <li>• <i>How do living things use the light and heat energy we get from the sun?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why do we have seasons?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the impact of the change of the seasons?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How is the surface of the Earth represented on maps and globes?</i></li> <li>• <i>How are maps and globes made?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can we use maps and globes to locate places and landforms?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can we describe the location of</i></li> </ul>

				<i>different places?</i>
	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>organisms; needs; habitats; connection; survival; growth</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>wellness; growth; change; causation</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>cycles, prediction; energy; causation</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>organization; representation; location; orientation; symbols</i>
<b>Prep</b>	Unit Title: <b>Culture Brings Us Together</b>	Unit Title: <b>Weather</b>	Unit Title: <b>Forces &amp; Motion/Simple Machines</b>	Unit Title: <b>Our Impact on the Environment</b>
	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Appreciating our cultural similarities and differences can help us build positive relationships with each other.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Weather can be measured and predicted.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>People cause movement with pushes and pulls.</i>	<b>Enduring Understanding:</b> <i>Our actions impact the environment.</i>
	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is culture?</i></li> <li>● <i>What are the elements of culture?</i></li> <li>● <i>How are people's cultures similar and different?</i></li> <li>● <i>How can we show that we respect and understand each other?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is weather?</i></li> <li>● <i>What kind of patterns can we see/observe in weather?</i></li> <li>● <i>How and why do we measure weather?</i></li> <li>● <i>How does weather influence our lives?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is a force?</i></li> <li>● <i>How are the forces of pushing and pulling the same? How are they different?</i></li> <li>● <i>What makes things move?</i></li> <li>● <i>How do people use pushing and pulling forces?</i></li> </ul>	<b>Essential Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is the environment?</i></li> <li>● <i>What are natural resources?</i></li> <li>● <i>How do people use natural resources?</i></li> <li>● <i>How do human actions impact on both the natural and the man-made environment?</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>connection; identity; culture; relationships</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>measurement; patterns; prediction; adaptation</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>forces, movement; interaction; application; invention</i>	<b>Related Concepts:</b> <i>interdependence; causation; resources; sustainability; responsibility</i>

### **Social & Emotional Learning**

Going on the principle that our sense of self, purpose and wellbeing is intricately connected with our learning success, we work continuously in the EC to help our students develop a solid grounding in emotional and social competencies. When students are socially and self-aware, and possess effective self-management skills, their attitudes to learning are more likely to be positive and resilient. Likewise,

their relationships with teachers and fellow-learners are more likely to be cooperative and empathic, and their understanding of the world and how it works more comprehensive and well-rounded.

### **Engagement**

When students are engaged in their learning experiences – whether playing or exploring, asking or answering questions, expressing ideas or creating solutions to problems – they are processing information, thinking through possibilities and ultimately constructing meaning.

While student engagement itself is quite a fluid entity that doesn't always look or sound the same – it can be quiet and ponderous, or animated and vocal, and just about everything and anything in between! – **activating** student engagement, is actually quite a straightforward enterprise. When designing tasks, assignments and experiences for our students to engage in, our teachers consider the following key questions:

- (i) Is this task developmentally appropriate? i.e. will it allow my students to demonstrate and use the learning they already have **and** challenge them further to add to what they know, understand and are able to do?
- (ii) Do my students clearly understand the purpose of the task? Can they explain the point of doing what they have been asked to do?
- (iii) Does the task invite my students to really focus and apply themselves? Does it inspire them to think and inquire?
- (iv) Is the task attuned to their interests and experience? Is it relevant to them and the things they care about?
- (v) Can the task be accomplished in different ways? Does it allow for choice and creativity? For trying out different methods or approaches?
- (vi) Are there sufficient, effective resources (time, peers/teachers to confer with, visuals, printed/electronic research materials, task outlines, graphic organizers etc.) provided in order to support them in their completion of the task?

When these characteristics are embedded in the tasks and experiences we prepare for our students, we can be assured that the level of student engagement we generate across our classes will be optimal.

### **The Purpose of Assessment**

Ultimately, the purpose of assessment at CDS is to consolidate and promote learning. By uncovering information about the nature and range of our students' knowledge, skills and understanding, we are able to both gauge where our students are on the learning continuum, and orient future teaching and learning to best meet their needs.

### **Assessment Design: Standards-based and Objectives-aligned**

To strengthen the cohesion of our learning cycle, direct connections are made between the learning objectives we set for our students in the planning stages of our units, and the assessment tasks we plan to assign during, and at the end of, those units.

In the EC, we use the following generic 1-4 grading scale to evaluate, and report on, student achievement:

<b>(1) Emerging</b>	<b>(2) Developing</b>	<b>(3) Proficient</b>	<b>(4) Mastered</b>
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Beginning to demonstrate aspects of the understanding, knowledge and skills aligned with this grade level learning expectation; requires substantial assistance when working on tasks/assignments.	Partially demonstrates the understanding, knowledge and skills aligned with this grade level learning expectation; requires some assistance when working on tasks/assignments.	Fully demonstrates the understanding, knowledge and skills aligned with this grade level learning expectation; requires very little assistance when working on tasks/assignments. May make minor errors.	Consistently and over time, demonstrates an in-depth command of the understanding, knowledge and skills aligned with this grade level learning expectation; requires no assistance when working on tasks/assignments. May make rare, minor errors.
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Using this scale to develop appropriate criteria across the curriculum, enables us to gauge how successful our students have been in acquiring the specific knowledge, skills and understanding we were targeting at the outset.

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