

# CARPE DIEM

## PRIMARY SCHOOL

# Curriculum Guide

2011 – 2012 School Year



## CHARACTER EDUCATION

As teachers at Carpe Diem, our mission is to educate the whole child. Our main goal is to teach and model good character. We strive to do this by focusing on defining and explaining character qualities that connect to something that is both memorable and makes a lasting impression on our students. Teachers and students engage in weekly classroom meetings to discuss virtues, give compliments, and to discuss choices and issues that may arise throughout the school year. Classroom meetings are designed to validate students' feelings, and to ensure that everyone feels safe and cared for in our school environment. We operate from the idea that the more we know about the qualities of good character, the easier it will be to apply in daily life. At Carpe Diem, we see good character as a key to being a successful person. We are intentional about modeling, nurturing, defining, and praising good character qualities.

## ACADEMICS

Beyond good character, Carpe Diem teachers strive to create an academic environment where students develop an attitude of healthy risk taking to learn new skills and concepts, and to set personal goals for achievement. Carpe Diem students are encouraged to continue challenging themselves in all that they do. Carpe Diem teachers believe there is no ceiling to learning. We set high standards for student achievement, and expect each student to work to their personal best.

## LEADERSHIP and MENTORING

Students are given many opportunities to develop leadership skills Through mentorship in the multi-age environment, leading gathering, taking the responsibility for assigned jobs and tasks, performance, reading presentations, and choral reading students gain confidence to take on leadership roles and practice good character traits.

## MATH

Carpe Diem Primary School closely follows all state and national standards for math achievement. Students work in small groups with their teacher to gain new skills. The student-teacher ratio for math class is approximately 12 students to a teacher. Because class size is small for core curriculum learning such as mathematics, students generally meet or exceed state and national standards for grade level. Carpe Diem teachers encourage students to continue to achieve new levels of learning as they are comfortably able to incorporate them into their understanding. There is no ceiling. Math curriculum is based on the scope and sequence of Origo Math (used in many international schools throughout China, Europe, and Australia, as well as in many private schools within the United States). The curriculum ranks very high in OSPI curriculum comparison studies. Students record all their written work in Origo Math workbooks and composition books that are specifically suited to their varying levels. Memorizing math facts (addition, subtraction, and multiplication and division to 12) is a key goal in learning new math concepts. Students have many opportunities to learn problem solving strategies – another key to a strong mathematics foundation.

## READING

Carpe Diem Students work in small groups for reading and comprehension activities. Emergent and beginning readers are introduced to the visual/auditory format of Letterland characters to learn letter sounds, blends, digraphs, long and short vowel sounds, and silent letter patterns. Beginning reading instruction is primarily phonics based, but begins to move into both a phonics and whole language approach which blends understanding of phonics spelling, reading, and writing patterns with memorization of sight words. Reading comprehension activities begin as soon as students are able to begin phonetically spelling words and are reading Level 2 early readers fluently.

Students in the advanced reading group are encouraged to contemplate, analyze, and write about setting, character, and tone when reading. Analyzing, and comprehension is a major focus in this group. Students discuss and analyze with their teacher and in teacher led groups about what they have read, and write about the books that they read. Students are exposed to classic, popular, humorous, and historical literature, poetry, and biographies, as well as series books written by well-known and accomplished writers. The main goal in our reading curriculum is to instill the love and appreciation of good literature for a lifetime.

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## ✿ LANGUAGE ARTS

Students at all levels are taught common spelling patterns that are appropriate to their reading and writing levels. They learn “tricks” for spelling some sight words, and are expected to begin incorporating correct spellings of common words and spelling patterns that they learn in their everyday writing and theme books. Because spelling and writing is such an integrated skill, students are taught sentence writing, parts of speech, punctuation, and grammar simultaneously with spelling words. Students in our beginning group learn to distinguish nouns and verbs and correct punctuation and capitalization of simple sentences. Beginning students use upper and lower case printed format letters. Our advanced group learns parts of speech, paragraph writing, persuasive writing, contractions, and correct punctuation. Advanced students learn cursive writing. All Carpe Diem students are given writing practice to encourage good handwriting and spelling/ writing tests weekly to encourage improved writing skills.

## ✿ NEWSPAPER WRITING and YEAR BOOK

Advanced writers are invited to be a part of our Carpe Diem school newspaper and contribute articles for our year book. In these writing projects, students learn to write descriptive and informative articles centered on the activities and curriculum in our school environment and culture.

## ✿ THEMES

Carpe Diem Primary School seeks to engage students in the wonders of our world and its many cultures and people. We believe that by exposing our students to cultures other than our own that we also teach tolerance. We teach students about the many fascinating animals of our world and how our actions and activities in the world are part of a delicate balance with the animal world. We seek to instill cautiousness, compassion, resourcefulness, and creativity as they grow and develop their ideas about how they will interact as citizens and caretakers of our world.

### **Themes for 2011 – 2012 include:**

**Characters Education** - *an on-going thread, classroom meetings, role playing, making choices*

**Westward Ho! The Story of the Pioneers** - *daily life, crafts and life skills, food, geography*

**Space** - *exploration, art, history*

**Ancient Greece** - *mythology, geography, drama, ancient culture, writing, arts and craft*

**Whales** - *art, science, writing, environmental studies*

**Oceans** - *in the field, an ongoing thread*

**Organic Gardening** - *preparing, planting, tending in the spring, harvest, grazing, and cooking in the fall*

## ✿ ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Carpe Diem Primary School students experience science primarily outdoors. With weekly hands on activities, students work in groups and with partners to learn about a variety of plants and how they grow and reproduce, animal habitats and behavior, and how the animals and plants in our environment are inter-related. Students gain an appreciation of our natural lands by hiking in our many local woodlands, estuaries, and beaches. Students observe the changing seasons and gain a vocabulary and appreciation for the rich variety of plants and animals found locally.

## ✿ ORGANIC GARDENING

In the fall and spring, students work in our organic garden planting, weeding, composting, observing, and harvesting. Students gain an understanding of sustainability not only by producing a harvest from their own school garden, but also preparing and eating what they have grown.

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## MUSIC and PERFORMANCE

Students learn music theory, play bells, and percussion instruments, as well as learn to sing a variety of songs throughout the school year. Carpe Diem students participate in three performances. The first performance occurs in the month of October, Poetry on the Green. Students gain confidence as public speakers by memorizing and reciting a poem before an audience while in costume. During this performance, students also play and sing as a whole class. Our second performance occurs in December, Winter Celebration. During this performance students have the opportunity to showcase a particular performance skill or musical talent. Students also sing and play as a group. Our last performance of the year takes place in June. Students participate in a singing production. Students learn what is involved in a production from memorizing songs, working as a team in rehearsal, and finally being a participant in this performance. Students attend two to three play performances each year that include the Seattle Children's Theater performances and may include local island performances.

## VISUAL ARTS

Students are exposed to a variety of techniques while they experiment with a variety of artist materials which include acrylic, watercolor, tempera paints, oil and chalk pastels, ink, tissue paper, using a variety of good quality art papers. Students learn about line, composition, texture, shape, contrast, and color mixing. Students will make a variety of two and three-dimensional projects throughout the year. Carpe Diem visits a local pottery studio every year to learn slab building and produce a finished and glazed project. Throughout the school year students are introduced to famous artists - their lives and their impact on the art culture. Carpe Diem students have an opportunity to visit one of the many art museums in Tacoma or Seattle each year as well to observe and gain inspiration from a renowned artist's work.

## SPANISH

Students learn the Spanish language through song, chant, rhyme, and games. Students participate in Spanish lessons weekly throughout the school year. Students gain a basic understanding of greetings, colors, familiar objects, animals, numbers, body parts, seasons, weather, and family members through fun participation and singing.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students learn cooperation, compromise, boldness, determination, humility, and the spirit of fair play as they engage in group games and individual activities. Students engage in a variety of tag games, ball games, and group games as well as climbing and make-believe play. Students learn to apply a variety of good of character qualities and learn social skills. At Carpe Diem we encourage students to be physically active. We strive to create a school culture where being physically healthy and active is part of being a happy and successful person. Carpe Diem students remain active by playing outside in our school playground and in the Jumping Mouse woodland, running on the high school track, hiking in our local woodland areas and beaches, and gardening.