

Taconic Hills Elementary School

Academic Programming

General Education

The Elementary School offers Universal Prekindergarten classes (UPK) and grades K – 5. Students are taught in the areas of English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, art, music, library skills and technology.

Through our reading program, LEAD 21, we offer a balanced literacy program that focuses on shared, independent and guided reading. Our literacy block includes both whole group and differentiated, small group instruction. Reading instruction focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, read aloud sessions, decoding strategies, fluency and comprehension. Writing instruction may include journals, reading logs, story writing, letter writing, poetry, drama and other age appropriate projects.

Early literacy is supported in grades K – 2 through our use of Foundations, an adaptation of the Wilson Reading System. Foundations focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and fluency. Foundations is intended to provide all students with a foundation in reading, spelling and writing in a manner that is highly participatory and fun for children.

Mathematics and Science classes include a full range of learning experiences including hands-on-learning such as projects (home and in-school) and experiments to field trips and assemblies.

Social Studies topics vary according to grade level, but the curriculum focuses on history, geography, economics, civics, citizenship and government. Family and communities as well as local, state, and national history are common themes.

At times, assemblies, field trips and “artists in residence” are scheduled to reinforce concepts taught in one or more of the academic areas.

Students also experience classes in physical education, music and art that often support concepts taught in the classroom. Our elementary school values physical fitness and the arts. Students are given opportunities to participate in a wide variety of activities, including school-wide incentive programs aimed at improving health and fitness. Concerts and exhibits are held at certain times during the year to allow our students to share their musical and artistic talents with the community. Students in grades K – 5 currently have physical education classes three times a week as well as art and music classes weekly. At present, beginning in 5th grade, students may choose to participate in instrumental music study and performance (band).

Our Library/Media Center is utilized by teachers to encourage reading and to expose students to diverse literature, inquiry based learning and research techniques including web searches and the use of the latest that technology offers.

Instruction in technology is left primarily in the hands of our classroom teachers supported by our Library/Media Specialist and members of our instructional technology staff. The elementary school has two computer labs as well as computer workstations available to students in nearly every classroom.

Academic Intervention Services (AIS)

The purpose of AIS is to build the skills of elementary students in reading and math who have not met, or who are at risk of not meeting, the learning standards. Beginning in Kindergarten, students are assigned additional support services based on teacher, administration and in some cases parental recommendation. State assessments also determine students who need AIS services. These exams are considered check points that measure the student's achievement and indicate which students may need additional instructional support on the road to graduation. Exiting the program is based on the student's academic performance and progress, state assessment results and teacher recommendation.

Intervention Specialists work closely with the classroom teachers to provide the best program to meet the student's individual needs. (See also the section on Response to Intervention (RTI) below.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

The State Education Department defines response to intervention (RTI) as follows: "RTI is a multi-tiered, problem solving approach that identifies general education students struggling in academic and behavioral areas early and provides them with systematically applied strategies and targeted instruction at varying levels of intervention."

Each school district is required to establish a plan and policies for implementing school-wide approaches and pre-referral interventions in order to remediate a student's poor performance prior to referral for special education. The RTI process may be included as part of a district's school wide approach to providing such pre-referral interventions.

Whereas AIS services are generally provided after a student experiences failure, RTI services are typically provided to students who are at risk of failing. Through RTI, students are taught concepts and skills using a variety of approaches (interventions) to help determine if the lack of understanding on the part of the student is due to the particular instructional approach or approaches used by the teacher, or, a potential learning disability that a student may possess.

Currently, a team of teachers are working on a draft RTI policy and implementation plan for grades K-5.

Special Education Services

There are times when AIS/RTI services and/or additional program strategies given by the classroom teachers are not sufficient for the student's academic growth. If that becomes the case, following a set protocol, students may qualify for additional services from our Special Education Department. Parents are involved with this process from the beginning.

Students that receive Special Education Services receive an individualized educational program (IEP) with specific goals that outlines the educational program that will help the student become successful in school. The special education teachers also work closely with any teachers that are involved in the student's education. Together this team plans, strategizes and monitors the student's progress.

Currently, most students with disabilities are served in general education classes through Integrated Co-Teaching. This model provides for the delivery of special education academic services by a special education teacher working collaboratively with the general education teacher in the general education teacher's classroom. Special classes and out-of-district placements are also available depending on the needs of students as determined by the Committee on Special Education (CSE).

Speech and Language services as well as Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) are also available to those students who qualify. Such services may include individual, small group and push-in sessions.

Speech and Language Services

Speech and language services offered in school include screening, evaluation and therapy. All Pre-K, Kindergarten and new entrants are screened. Should the screening indicate a potential problem or delay, the school will contact the parent to request a more thorough evaluation. Children determined to need speech/language services will be given services either individually or in a small group as determined by our speech and language pathologists.

Children slated to receive mandated services are our first priority. If all of the mandated services are covered, speech and language pathologists will provide "speech improvement" services to non-mandated students with priority given to those students with the greatest needs first.