



PHILOSOPHY OF CURRICULUM

THE WINSOR SCHOOL OFFERS A RICH AND CHALLENGING CURRICULUM to academically motivated girls in grades 5-12. The Winsor program exposes students to a broad range of intellectual experiences and helps students build a foundation of skills and knowledge that serve as a lifelong base for independent thinking, problem solving, creativity, and wise decision making. Winsor defines curriculum as the total classroom learning experience for all students. Our curricular philosophy is based on our understandings about student learning, the pedagogies we practice in response to these understandings, the ways we assess learning, and the qualities of character we encourage our students to develop—as well as the skills and content more commonly associated with “curriculum.” Our curriculum is a designed continuum of developmentally appropriate learning experiences across departments. Winsor faculty know and understand the curriculum and take responsibility for teaching it. The following four principles establish a basis for the design of the Winsor School’s curriculum for the early 21st century.

CONNECTED CURRICULUM

The Winsor School believes that students learn best when their ideas, skills, and experiences are reinforced across the disciplines and through the grade levels in a connected curriculum. Teachers plan courses that establish connections for students between subjects and to their own experience; these courses build on students’ prior learning and set the groundwork for their future learning. Teachers at each grade level know one another’s curriculum and incorporate content and skill connections between disciplines when possible. Connected teaching and learning are integrated into a student’s entire Winsor experience.

A connected curriculum may include grade-level work around themes, teaching that addresses shared essential questions, or interdisciplinary teaching, which we define as a designed connection between themes and topics in more than one subject in the same year.

SKILLS

The Winsor School believes that skills—the learned processes and strategies needed to accomplish a task—are an essential part of our connected curriculum and should be taught explicitly. Skills are integrated into the curriculum in a spiraling model, where they advance sequentially in a coordinated fashion across departments from year to year. Students demonstrate their skill competencies at developmentally appropriate points throughout the eight-year program.

Our understandings of how students learn, including research on learning styles, mandate that teachers in every course offer students several ways to understand, acquire, and organize new knowledge. Using skills in multiple disciplines reinforces students’ prior learning and allows them to access and express their own understanding. Teachers demonstrate, teach and assess skills. The skills that students acquire at Winsor serve as tools for lifelong learning.

PREPARATION FOR RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The Winsor School believes that a critical aspect of academic excellence is preparation for responsible participation in the global community. The PRINCIPLES OF DIVERSITY articulate the school's commitment to *“foster a global consciousness”* and to maintain *“an academic and social environment where all students develop confidence, values, knowledge, and life skills they need to thrive within Winsor and the global community.”*

As a diverse community of teachers and learners, we believe it is important for each student to see herself as rooted in her individual culture. We also believe that it is vital for Winsor students to understand the rich, dynamic cross-cultural forces that shape our country and the contemporary world. Therefore, we teach the western experience within the broad context of global interactions and encounters. Course offerings in various disciplines enable students to become familiar with a multiplicity of political, social and economic systems, religious and ethical beliefs, and modes of artistic expression. Our curriculum also informs students about the natural environment and the use and distribution of our planet's finite resources. It actively challenges stereotypical thinking and fosters empathic understanding—the ability to see and feel what others see and feel.

The Winsor curriculum encourages students to develop a sense of responsibility for the local, national, and international community in which they live. It instills a habit of thinking beyond one's immediate self-interest and of evaluating a course of action in the light of its impact on the well-being of other people and the natural environment. It leads students to a recognition of the fundamental interdependence of all people.

INDEPENDENT THINKING AND LEARNING

The Winsor School believes that students should be taught to think and learn independently in order to gain the competence and confidence necessary to be lifelong learners and strong, courageous women. The Winsor curriculum guides students toward independence through age-appropriate experiences that lead them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

Winsor faculty are committed to teaching students the skills that are essential to identifying problems and to discovering creative, informed solutions to them. They teach students the skills needed to structure their learning throughout their lives. Students learn to develop a process for discovery, knowing that the path isn't always direct. Our curriculum teaches students to question existing norms and to think from another's perspective; it provides them with opportunities to apply existing knowledge and tools to unfamiliar problems and to react effectively in novel situations.

Students learn when to seek guidance, the value of collaboration, and how to be open to constructive criticism. We believe that a student who takes responsibility for structuring and assessing her own learning is likely to have a deeper understanding of what she has learned and a foundation of skills and knowledge to serve as a lifelong base for independent thinking.