



Saratoga Independent School

Inspire Today. Prepare for Tomorrow.

THEME BASED TEACHING & LEARNING

At Saratoga Independent School, all grade levels develop their curriculums around our yearly themes.

- Theme based units are a vehicle for teaching a range of skills and content by integrating curriculum areas around a topic
- This method of teaching links curriculum strands and capitalizes on children's interests, creating a sense of purpose and community in the classroom
- By building on their interests and life experiences, young people's attitudes, skills, and knowledge are developed in meaningful ways
- Inquiry and communication are activated by a desire to know more, resulting in enthusiastic participation in the learning process
- Theme based learning allows for meaningful connections to be made through the integration of big ideas across subject areas, creating learners who are inquisitive and motivated to apply knowledge obtained through multiple means of expression



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THEME BASED LEARNING ACROSS ALL SUBJECTS...

Language Arts - Students are exposed to literacy instruction that is differentiated to help the individual build reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Units are introduced through mini-lessons, cross curricular storytelling, and shared reading and writing experiences.

Math - Singapore Math is a program that lends itself to be interwoven into themes through project-based learning.

Content - Teaching teams plan content to reflect the theme. Activities are designed to allow students to gain a deep understanding of practical tools with which to approach a subject matter.



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PRE-K MONTHLY THEMES

September	Getting To Know You
October	Falling Into Autumn
November	When Nature Sleeps
December	Let's Celebrate
January	Brrr... It's Cold Outside
February	All About Love
March	Mad Science In The Kitchen
April	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle / Our Planet
May	Spring Is In The Air
June	Splish Splash Summer Fun



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PRE-K LEARNING

The Alphabet	Numbers & Number Sense
Colors	Shapes
Calendar (days, months)	Weather
The Seasons	Music
Art	Spanish
Science	Sight Word Introduction
Routines	Listening Skills
Responsibility	Self-Care

DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY LITERACY IN MATH AND LANGUAGE ARTS IS EMBEDDED IN THE PRE-K CURRICULUM.



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K-5 Year 1 Theme: Dreams, Explorations, and Discoveries

Essential questions for this theme may include:

Inventions

- Why do people create new things?
- What are the steps in the invention process?

The Earth

- Why does our school have the physical and natural environment that it does?
- What are the natural forces that affect and shape the Earth over time?

Rocks and Minerals

- How are the Earth's materials recycled over time?
- How would the world look without rocks and minerals?

Oceans

- Why are oceans important to us?
- How does ocean water move?

Social Studies Topics

- Native Americans of NY
- Native Americans of the USA
- The Age of Exploration



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K-5 Year 2 Theme: Relationships, Environment, and Change

Essential questions for this theme may include:

Communities

- How do structures of living things change or adapt when their environment changes?
- What kinds of relationships exist between plants, animal, and their environment?

Seeds, Trees, and Plants

- Why does our school have the physical and natural environment that it does?
- What are the natural forces that affect and shape the Earth over time?

Rocks and Minerals

- How can we classify seeds, trees, and plants?
- What is the life-cycle of seeds, trees, and plants?

Cycles and Interactions

- What insects/animals are found in our environment and why?
- In what ways do people influence the environment?

Matter

- How do we describe matter and how can it be changed?
- What is the purpose of the Periodic Table of Elements?

Electricity and Magnetism

- How does electricity help us in our everyday lives?
- What is the relationship between electricity and magnetism?

Social Studies Topics

- Communities
- Early Life in the U.S.
- Westward Expansion



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K-5 Year 3 Theme: Systems, Movement, and Diversity

Essential questions for this theme may include:

Weather

- How do we use weather and gather data to make decisions in our lives?
- How does weather affect people, animals, and the environment in certain places?

Solar System

- How are components of the universe related?
- How do planets differ from each other?

Small Worlds and Microscopes

- What things exist that cannot be seen with the naked eye?
- How do organisms benefit or harm us?

The Human Body

- How does the human body work?
- How does the human body communicate information?

Social Studies Topics

- Government
- Countries and Culture
- Immigration



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MATH: SINGAPORE MATH

The Singapore Math program at S.I.S. focuses on the growth of students' logical reasoning skills, spatial visualization, analysis, and abstract thought. Students master the four basic math operations, become proficient in the observation and analysis of data to solve problems, and build a strong foundation of algebraic thinking, which is introduced in first grade. Students learn to think and question like mathematicians.

Problem-solving is the foundation of Singapore Math. The program uses concrete, pictorial, and abstract approaches, in sequence, to develop students' math fluency. Students work toward mastery of skills and concepts, explore connections, and use their math skills to tackle projects, puzzles, and real-world problems that extend and enrich their learning, creativity, and excitement about the possibilities of the world of math.



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LA: TEACHERS COLLEGE READING AND WRITING PROJECT

The mission of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is to help young people become avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers. We accomplish this goal through research, curriculum development, and through working shoulder-to-shoulder with students, teachers, and school leaders. TCRWP has developed state-of-the-art tools and methods for teaching reading and writing, for using performance assessments and learning progressions to accelerate progress, and for literacy-rich content-area instruction.



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LA: Teachers College Reading & Writing Project

Kindergarten

WRITING	READING
We are Writers	Old Favorites
Small Moments	Show and Tell
Show and Tell	Building Reading Muscles
How-To Writing	Super Readers
Persuasive Writing	Avid Readers (Fiction, Poetry, and Nonfiction)
Writing Like Scientists	

Primary

WRITING	READING
Launching with Small Moments	Building Reading Habits
Narrative for Readers (Personal Narrative)	Readers Have Big Jobs To Do
Authors as Mentors (Realistic Fiction)	Learning About the World (Nonfiction)
Informational Books – How To	Native American Legends
Opinion Writing – Persuasive Letters	
Tall Tales or Legends	



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Intermediate

WRITING	READING
Personal Narrative	Building a Reading Life
Expert – Expository Structure	Reading to Learn
Opinion – Reviews	Native American Legends
Historical Fiction Picture Writing	Native American Book Clubs

5th Grade

WRITING	READING
Personal Narrative	Reading Life / Analyzing Themes
Literary Essay	Nonfiction
Realistic Fiction	Argument and Advocacy
Persuasive Essay	Native American Stories
	Fantasy



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MIDDLE SCHOOL THEMES

GRADE	THEME	UNITS INCLUDE:
Grade 6	Identity and Origins	Personal narrative, molecules to organisms, heredity, ancestry, research seminar, mistaken identity in Shakespeare's plays.
Grade 7	Communication and Silence	Immigration book clubs, reading nonfiction, position papers, writing about reading, energy, waves.
Grade 8	Local Citizen, Global Citizen	Investigative journalism, Earth and human activity, dystopian book clubs, participation in Citizen Project.



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RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

Saratoga Independent School uses the
Responsive Classroom model in all grade levels.

Responsive Classroom is an evidence-based approach to teaching and discipline that focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness. Independent research has found that the *Responsive Classroom* approach is associated with higher academic achievement in math and reading, improved school climate, and higher-quality instruction. It has been described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as one of the most “well-designed evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs”.



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RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

Key Domains	
Engaging Academics	Learner-centered lessons that are participatory, appropriately challenging, fun, and relevant and promote curiosity, wonder, and interest.
Positive Community	A safe, predictable, joyful, and inclusive environment where all students have a sense of belonging and significance.
Effective Management	A calm and orderly learning environment that promotes autonomy, responsibility, and high engagement in learning.
Developmentally Responsive Teaching	Basing all decisions for teaching and discipline upon research and knowledge of students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.