

# Mizzentop Day School



## Admissions Information

## **Admissions Information**

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Mizzentop Day School is dedicated to creating a diverse community of learners. Our admissions process is a reflection of this commitment. We welcome and celebrate students of all ethnic, racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds who can contribute to and benefit from our program. Students are selected for admission to the school on the basis of developmental readiness, individual strengths and talents, potential to thrive in our environment and the ability to contribute positively to the larger school community. We do give priority to siblings of current students.

Mizzentop Day School has rolling admissions, considering applications as they are received throughout the school year. We uphold this parameter to enhance the developmental sensitivities of the whole child. Applications are reviewed by the Admissions Committee, composed of the Director of Admissions, Head of School, Assistant Head of School, and the Grade Level Teacher.

Mizzentop Day School provides need-based financial aid on a limited basis. Please contact our Head of School, for further information and application materials.

### **Step One: Parent Visit**

Parents call the admissions office to set an appointment for a parent visit. Typically, visits are scheduled weekday mornings while school is in session. A parent visit generally includes a tour of the school and a discussion with the Director of Admissions about the program and usually lasts approximately one hour. Applicants cannot be considered until all the required materials have been submitted.

### **Step Two: Application and Fee**

Parents who decide to proceed with an application for their child must do the following:

- a. Complete the application form and return it with a \$45.00 application fee. This non-refundable fee covers the processing of the application, your child's visit and the admissions evaluation process. It does not guarantee enrollment.
- b. Applications for Kindergarten and above must include a completed Teacher Recommendation form. For grades K-6, one (1) recommendation is required, and for grades 7 and 8, two (2) recommendations (English and Mathematics) must be completed. Parents of pre-school applicants with prior pre-school experience may be asked for a narrative recommendation from the pre-school teacher.

- c. Submit the “Request for Release of Student Information” form to your child’s present school (if applicable). This form requests several pieces of information such as report cards and all testing information. It is the parent’s responsibility to stay in contact with your child’s school to be certain that the information is sent to Mizzentop Day School.

### **Step Three: Student Visit**

Upon receipt of the completed application form, the teacher’s recommendation, and the school records, the Admissions Director will contact parents to schedule a visit for your child. The visit will include joining an appropriate class and participating in the regular class schedule for the day. This includes all academic and specials classes. Applicants may also take some individualized assessment tests to determine readiness and contribute to the admissions process. We make every effort to create an experience that is enjoyable and stress-free for the visiting child.

### **Step Four: Notification of Admission Decision**

We operate on a rolling admission basis and make decisions based on all available information. The Admissions Committee considers applications and notifies families of its decision in a timely manner. In order for the committee to meet, applicants must have completed all steps in the application process, and all paperwork must have been received by Mizzentop Day School

## **Mission**

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Mizzentop Day School is a small coeducational day school for students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Our goal is to provide a rigorous educational program that allows every student an opportunity to achieve high academic standards in all subjects. The educational philosophy of Mizzentop Day School is based on the following principles:

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### **Small Class Size**

Small groups allow students to ask questions and receive the individualized attention and immediate feedback that reinforce learning. The student-to-teacher ratio of all academic subjects is targeted to be 12:1; tutoring sessions have an even lower ratio. Nonacademic subjects and extracurricular activities have a higher student-to-teacher ratio to allow greater social interaction.

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### **Flexible, Individualized Programs**

Each grade level has a core curriculum that is modified to meet the needs of individual students as necessary. For some students this means enrichment of the program beyond the grade level, while other students may require reinforcement to close a gap between intellectual potential and academic performance. Student progress is frequently and objectively measured to ensure maximum growth for each student.

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### **Emphasis on Reading and Writing**

Mizzentop Day School emphasizes the following fundamental elements of traditional language instruction: phonetic analysis, reading comprehension, written expressive language, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, study skills, handwriting, oral language development, and listening skills. Our staff is highly trained in teaching these important language competencies, which are the bridges to all academic areas and are necessary to understanding directions, organizing information, building a fund of general knowledge, and expressing oneself with clarity and conviction.

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## **Motivational and Research-based Teaching Techniques and Curriculum**

At Mizzentop, we want education to be exciting and to spark a lifelong love of learning. Teachers are encouraged to explore a variety of ways to make the school experience memorable and meaningful while adhering to teaching techniques and curriculum, which are proven to be most effective.

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### **Building Self-Esteem and Caring for Others**

The positive environment at Mizzentop encourages children to set personal goals and achieve them, which reinforces each child's self-esteem. In the process of working for their own success, students gain respect for themselves as well as for the goals and efforts of others. By participating in the school community, they learn how to be compassionate and productive citizens of the larger world. The Responsive Classroom encourages all students to work as a community of learners.

Through unswerving dedication to rigorous academic standards, respect for oneself, and compassion for others, Mizzentop aims to prepare students to face the future with confidence and to succeed in a changing world. Our greatest successes will occur when parents fully support the same principles and share the challenge and excitement of education.

## Academic Curriculum Overview

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### **Reading (K-4)**

At Mizzentop Day School, reading is taught in a structured sequence with a strong foundation of phonetic skills. Beginning with single letters and sounds, student's progress to words, phrases and sentences. Phonetic skills are reinforced by a variety of motivating and challenging multi-sensory activities and games. Students learn necessary spelling rules and sight words as they progress at their own pace. Reading comprehension techniques are an integral part of the instruction, and a variety of multi-modality strategies, including kinesthetic, auditory, and visual, are taught to insure that students understand what they are reading. Students progress beyond literal comprehension to inferential and evaluative comprehension, which enables them to draw conclusions and make judgments about what they read.

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### **Literature (5-8)**

Literature acquaints readers with the ideas of great thinkers, the beauty of language, and the richness of the human condition. We encourage a love of books and reading in all students by introducing them to a wide variety of literature appropriate for their age through a combination of assigned reading and the opportunity to read books of their own choosing. Reading aloud by teachers exposes students to ideas and language that may be beyond their current reading level, but not beyond their ability to enjoy and comprehend. New vocabulary, character development, plot, theme, and other literary concepts are discussed and written about by students.

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### **Writer's Workshop (K-8)**

The objective of writing instruction at Mizzentop Day School is to teach students to express themselves with clarity and conviction. Students practice both narrative and expository writing and learn that all writing is a process. They begin by learning to map ideas graphically and to organize and develop each paragraph. Students revise drafts with tighter organization, more accurate word choice, and varied sentence structure. Student/teacher conferencing and peer conferencing are encouraged as students begin the editing process. They also edit their own work to check spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization and handwriting. Students' regular use of computers to compose, revise and edit their work facilitates experimentation and manipulation of language. Finally, students are encouraged to share their finished work with classmates and family. This process of sharing will heighten awareness of the importance of the writer's audience. Use of the book, First Hand Writing Series by Lucy Calkin in the lower school and Nancy Atwell's, Lessons that Change Writers, guide teachers as they cover skills and facilitate the writing process.

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### **Speaking and Listening Skills (K-8)**

Effective speaking skills enable students to express themselves accurately and convincingly. Teachers use all subject areas to develop student speaking skills, and the ability to exchange ideas with peers, clarify misunderstandings, offer support, and make constructive

suggestions. There are frequent opportunities to make presentations before small and large groups. Good listeners are able to gather information, follow directions, and understand others. Sharing time is a daily activity in the writing curriculum as students gain confidence in this ability to speak in front of a group. Reading aloud by teachers also fosters listening skills, as does emphasis on following oral instructions correctly. Students in grades 6, 7 and 8 take a Public Speaking and Debating course, as part of their core curriculum which further develops our commitment to having students express themselves.

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### **Study Skills (K-8)**

Good study skills help students tackle new situations and new information, enabling children to learn how they learn best. In addition to mastering organizational skills related to reading and writing, students learn to organize assignments and manage time. Teachers provide modeling and practice; with the goal of having students handle an increasing variety of assignments independently in the classroom and as homework. As students develop, they use assignment/planning books (required) and learn note taking, outlining, test-taking, and research skills.

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### **Mathematics (K-8)**

Mathematics helps us describe and explain the world we live in, and Mizzentop Day School emphasizes the practical applications of math in order to motivate students to learn. Our program is designed to develop each student's computational ability, enhance logical thinking by discovering patterns, and unite those skills to increase the ability to apply mathematics in problem solving. New concepts are made concrete by the use of objects that students can see, feel, and manipulate. Students deepen their understanding of concepts by using math journals to record verbal explanations of computational procedures they are learning. Each concept builds sequentially on the previous one. The memorization of necessary facts and formulas is facilitated by a variety of multi-modality approaches. MDS uses the Everyday Mathematics series through sixth grade. This program, now in use by many Independent Schools, is known for its "spiraling" curriculum. Students are regularly brought back to and asked to "retrieve" what was learned in the past to solidify concepts and keep them in long-term memory. As mathematics begins to move from the concrete to the conceptual realm (upper school), students are developmentally grouped based on their readiness for abstract mathematical thinking. Teaching groups are very small, typically ranging from 7-10 students. Depending on their readiness for abstract thinking, students will either complete a full pre-algebra course or a typical 9<sup>th</sup> year algebra course by the time they graduate from Mizzentop in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

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### **Science (K-8)**

The fundamentals of scientific inquiry and observation, analysis, and the drawing of conclusions are skills with applicability to all aspects of life. The science program at Mizzentop Day School in grades K through 5 blends Life Science, Physical Science and Earth Science. The program is designed to stimulate natural curiosity and interest in scientific investigation. In an informal yet carefully planned setting, students have direct experiences that encourage them to observe, experiment (individually and in groups), and

use their reading, writing, and math skills to practice making rational and informed decisions about the natural world. Utilizing our greenhouse, students will be engaged in growing and maintaining plants. Beginning in grade 6 through grade 8, the sequence is Life Science, Physical Science and Earth Science.

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### **History (5-8)**

The history curriculum is based upon a highly enriched and motivating hands-on program. History is divided into instruction in World Civilization and American Civilization. The World Civilization curriculum fosters curiosity and understanding about the world beyond students' immediate locality, introducing varied civilizations and ways of life. The content spans early civilization in Africa, Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, China and Europe during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation. Students in grades 7 are fully engaged in a study of American History and in grade 8 students study European and Russian History past to present day.

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### **Social Studies (K-4)**

The lower School curriculum is based upon an integrated thematic and hands-on approach. Students are taught the beginnings of American Civilization from Kindergarten with a brief introduction to major events and figures. Students study the history of the Ice Age through the Early American explorers and Westward Expansion of America. The focus then turns toward the Journey of the Mayflower and Early Settlements. Each grade level curriculum is a continuum as it builds upon the previous year. Geography encompasses aspects of history and science: the physical processes that shape life, interactions between humans and their environment, and relationships between people, places, and culture. In addition, history and geography are taught in relation to current events to help students understand their relevance to life today. Field trips to museums and historical sites enrich the curriculum.

## Special Areas Curriculum

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### Art

The art program at Mizzentop Day School gives students a variety of opportunities to express themselves, build self-esteem, and develop an appreciation for art in its many forms. Drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, woodworking, are just some of the media in which students may work. Hands-on art projects help students develop eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills, as well as the cognitive skills necessary for organizing thoughts and materials to follow a project through to completion. Art projects and examples from art history are frequently used to clarify and amplify concepts presented in other subjects, such as social studies, science, and literature.

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### Drama

The drama program is designed to build a variety of theatre skills including stage presence, expression, improvisation, playwriting and set design, while coordinating with grade level curricular goals. These skills are taught through a variety of theatre games, projects and “mini performances” which are themed to relate to current classroom studies. Our goal is to give the students a wide variety of performance opportunities so that their dramatic experience will not be limited to a single Spring Play with one lead actor.

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### Music

The music program combines active musical expression with listening enjoyment and appreciation. Students sing, compose, play several musical instruments, and take part in movement and dance activities. Grade-level and small group performances give every child a chance to experience success and develop self-confidence. Students study the lives of the great composers and are introduced to a wide variety of music including folk, classical, world and jazz.

The focus will be:

#### Develop

1. Listening and awareness skills and
2. Music creation and performance skills.

#### Integrate

1. Material they have learned in previous music classes and lessons and
2. Curriculum from other classes at MDS to enhance the relevancy of their multi-faceted education.

#### Discover

1. How music is and can further become a part of their lives and
2. The values that shape their choices and daily lives.

Offerings of the MDS Music Program:

*Music Experience* (General Music Class) – All Grades

*Chorus* – K-4<sup>th</sup> Grade; Concerts in Winter and Spring, as well as other performances scheduled throughout the year

*Select Chorus* – Optional, 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades; Concerts in Winter and Spring, as well as other performances scheduled throughout the year

*Concert Band* – Optional, 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades; Performances in Winter and Spring

*String Band* – Optional, 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades; Performances in Winter and Spring

*Private/Small-group Instrument Study* (Guitar, Piano, Violin) – Optional, Accepted age and performance opportunities vary by instructor

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## **Physical Education**

The students are exposed to a variety of team sports and physical fitness activities. Being exposed to as many different activities as possible, will help students learn what they like along with finding something new that they are good at. All classes begin the year participating in cooperative games. This gives them a chance to feel comfortable within the group and work successfully together throughout the year. The program emphasizes good sportsmanship and three core values – respect, responsibility and safety. A main objective of this program is the development of sound skills and overall athletic ability. We do stress, however, that ability alone does not create a well-rounded athlete. The Physical Education Program will help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence.

Activities offered during the school year:

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Climbing Wall
- Cooperative and Group Games
- Dance
- Floor Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Soccer
- Track and Field
- Tumbling
- Volleyball

### Interscholastic Teams: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Soccer – boys/girls – Varsity and Junior Varsity
  - Basketball – boys/girls – Varsity and Junior Varsity
  - Lacrosse – boys—Varsity and Junior Varsity
  - Field Hockey – girls
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### **Health**

The health curriculum at MizzenTop covers a broad spectrum of information. Each class will learn age-appropriate material from the following nine themes:

- Physical Activity
- Tobacco
- Personal and Consumer Health
- Nutrition
- Mental and Emotional Health
- Safety
- Family Health and Sexuality
- Community and Environmental Health
- Alcohol and Drugs

The main objective of the Health program is to address the three characteristics of overall health, which are physical and mental health, and relationship awareness. Each class, kindergarten through eighth grade, will learn information through a variety of formats including role-playing, skits, storybooks, projects and community resources.

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### **Computer**

Computers do not replace teachers, but enhance learning in every subject. In math, for example, students will use computers for drill, practice, problem solving, and to master new concepts. Children will be using computers as a regular part of their day. There is Internet access as well as PC's in each classroom. We offer keyboarding and prescribe specific enrichment and reinforcement for each child.

In writing, after learning keyboarding and word processing, students use computers to draft, revise, and edit writing assignments. Skill in word processing prepares the students to handle the increasing number of written assignments they will face in high school and college. Students are also introduced to using the Internet for research.

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### **Foreign Language**

Studying a foreign language completes and improves a student's education while providing the foundation for further personal and scholastic achievement, and economic opportunities. Furthermore, our students must be ready to enter secondary school prepared to compete with the most accomplished of students.

The ability to communicate in a language other than one's own enables students to grow academically and personally. Competence in communicating in languages other than

English enriches learning and creates a new foundation for intellectual growth, opening new doors and expanding the opportunities to learn.

Beginning with Pre-School, our students study French, which continues through third grade. Beginning in the Fourth grade, students have a choice of Spanish or French.

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### **Community Service**

At Mizzentop Day School we believe strongly in the importance of contributing to our community. Through community service, students understand first hand that they can make a difference in the world. Students and teachers are involved in several community-minded projects during the year and contribute to local organizations such as *Guiding Eyes for the Blind*, *The Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation*, *Dutchess Community Action Outreach*. At Thanksgiving, each class fills a box with all the essential foodstuffs needed for a Thanksgiving dinner; this is donated to the Pawling Community Resource Center. During the holidays the students decorate a Christmas tree in the lobby with mittens, hats and scarves, which are then donated to a local charity. A toy and coat drive is yet another expression of reaching out to the needy during the Holidays.

## **Learning to Read and Write**

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The Mizzentop Day School faculty recognizes and builds upon the rich language experiences that all children bring to school. These prior experiences lay the foundations for formal reading and writing instruction. We strive to provide children with extensive language opportunities that will develop lifelong reading and writing behaviors. Our beliefs about reading and writing instruction stem from current research and from our experiences with and knowledge of how children learn to read and write. Instruction utilizes a variety of literature to create a balanced language arts program.

Activities that encourage the use of critical thinking skills are an integral part of instruction. Teachers organize literacy instruction using multiple approaches depending on the purpose and the objective of a particular lesson.

### **How do good readers read?**

Parents play a critical role in developing children's language/life experiences. Successful readers read for both meaning and enjoyment by using:

- knowledge cues (knowledge and past experiences)
- semantic cues (text and illustrations)
- syntactic cues (sentence structure and grammar)
- phonetic cues (letter-sound relationships)

### **How will my child be taught to read and write at Mizzentop Day School?**

Your child will be immersed in a rich literature and language environment as he or she listens, talks, writes, and reads using whole meaningful texts throughout the school day. Through the use of teacher demonstrations, your child will be taught how to use all cueing systems effectively: peer modeling, discussion, small group instruction and daily reading and writing opportunities. As a result of this multi-modality approach, children will be immersed in a "print-rich" classroom where reading and writing are integrated throughout the day.

The Pre-K and Kindergarten programs focus on early literacy activities that promote language development, vocabulary growth, listening comprehension and a beginning understanding of how print works (e.g. directionality of print, letter sound relationships, space between words, etc.). Pre-K and Kindergarten children become writers and authors as they express their ideas through drawing, dictating stories and experimenting with their own writing and spelling.

It is expected that Mizzentop Day School students read and/or are read to each day at school and at home. Students are also expected to write on a daily basis.

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### **What can I expect to find each day in a Mizzentop Day School Classroom?**

#### **Guided reading/writing:**

This is the core of our instructional program. The teacher develops lessons based on the needs and interest of children. These lessons are used to teach reading/writing strategies and skills that will enable the children to read and write independently.

**Reading aloud:**

A competent reader, usually the teacher and perhaps an upper school student, reads aloud to the children, promoting story enjoyment and literature appreciation.

**Shared reading/shared writing:**

In an enjoyable reading situation, the students follow the text and are invited to read along while observing the teacher reading. Similarly, the whole class generates a writing piece as the teacher records and contributes to their words/thoughts.

**Independent reading/writing:**

Students select a book or topic to read, and then write about what they have learned in their writing journal. For young students, the writing journal may entail drawing pictures with phonetic writing in order to relay their thoughts. Reading and writing are skills that are best developed through continual practice.

Students take responsibility for daily reading, writing and record keeping. In every classroom, a well-organized collection of quality literature, a wide variety of picture and chapter books, fiction and non-fiction, poetry and other resources can be found. The literature collection is located in an attractive and inviting reading area that is accessible to all students.

## **Pre-School and Transition Overview**

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Our Pre-School and Transition programs are dedicated to providing a developmentally appropriate experience for three and four-year-old students, and transitional students (who are generally 4 and 5 years old). The primary goal of the program is to develop a love of learning. This is accomplished through play, multi-sensory activities and emergent reading and writing activities, all of which utilize a hands-on approach. The programs include:

- Accelerated learning made possible by using research-proven programs. Each class provides enrichment and reinforcement in all areas to meet the individual needs of a child.
- An optimal student-teacher ratio, which facilitates an individualized program that meets each child's emotional, social and academic needs. This creates an environment where the teacher is able to quickly answer a child's question, and also encourages the shy child to speak easily.
- Carefully selected, caring teachers and assistants who believe in the goodness and ability in every child. Teachers help nurture each child's belief in himself or herself, and always motivate learning in a positive way. Teachers have both early childhood education training and experience in the classroom. Frequent communication between teachers and parents is encouraged by the school to ensure each child's success.
- A focus on heightened student self-esteem. This is fostered as a result of the individualization possible in a small class. It is achieved through teacher encouragement, achievement in learning, and the building of social skills to encourage friendships. Behavior management techniques are integrated throughout the day to bridge the gap between the social, emotional, and academic areas of each child's day.

Mizzentop Day School believes strongly in allowing children time to grow and learn. In order to best meet the needs of today's child, we have created a new program entitled "Transitional Pre-Kindergarten." This program was designed to meet the needs of pre-school children who may benefit socially, emotionally, academically, and physically from another year of growth before entering Kindergarten.

### **Reading, Writing and Literature**

The primary goal in language arts is to instill a love of reading and writing. Our children, who are read to daily, are provided with an introduction to letters, sounds, and when appropriate, sight words. Great care is taken to choose award-winning, well-respected literature, which relates to the interests and themes of the class. When the instructional theme is "Spring," for example, children are exposed to books about seeds, plants, and baby animals, which reinforce the concepts of "growth". To build on their experience, children are also encouraged

to dictate words and draw pictures in their own seasonal journals. This enables them to see their ideas as words and helps facilitate self-expression. Children are able to choose books from the school library as well as their own, smaller classroom library.

### **Centers**

The children will also rotate through theme-based centers during “center time,” a choice period during which time they pick their own constructive activities. These may include housekeeping, math and science, blocks, drawing, reading, card games, Legos, painting, and/or puzzles. Choice time is an exciting and valuable time within our week, in which children have opportunities both collectively and independently to choose a sustained activity. The Housekeeping Center changes in a variety of ways as it evolves into a Post Office, Veterinarian’s Office, bakery, bank or even a hospital to encourage development of their imagination through role-playing.

### **Mathematics**

Children at this age are curious about all aspects of math. The use of a daily calendar will reinforce patterning, days of the week, months of the year, numbers and counting. Children will use a variety of manipulative and math-related literature to investigate math concepts and skills such as:

- Counting to Ten
- Recognizing numbers to five
- Sorting and classifying objects by color, size and shape
- Recognizing shapes and primary colors
- Patterning objects

### **Social Studies and Science**

An integrated approach using literature and hands-on activities make units such as trees, insects, dinosaurs, family, community, and space an exciting educational adventure. Hands-on projects and experiments will accompany basic concepts, which will be taught in each unit of study. Children will experience their community and the people who live and work there by going on field trips. The use of the outdoors as a backdrop for demonstrating scientific concepts allows student to make a real connection to the world around them.

### **Special Areas**

The students in the three-year-old, four-year-old, and Transitional Programs are exposed to French, Computer, Physical Education, Music, Library and/or Drama; depending on the day of the week they attend school.

Your child’s exposure to special areas will depend on his or her total time in our program. It is important to realize that if your child attends only 2 half-days, for example, he or she will have limited exposure.

## Living Values

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The experience of feeling safe, respected, appreciated, loved, and understood is an experience every child in the world deserves. At Mizzentop Day School we accept the responsibility to be certain that our students grow up in such a warm environment. Further, it is also our mission to support our local and global communities through raising children who will provide this nurturing environment for others. We seek to reach these goals through our personal commitments as educators, as well as through implementing a world-wide program developed through the United Nations: the Living Values Educational Program.

Values are integrated into a student's experience in many ways. More than "teaching" values, the Living Values Program leads our school to "live" the values. Universal values such as **LOVE, PEACE, TOLERANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, HUMILITY, RESPECT, SIMPLICITY, and UNITY** are integrated into a student's over-all education at MDS. Whether in class, in the hallway, at lunch, at a game, or anywhere we gather as a school, our faculty and staff are continually developing traditional and innovative ways to create this reality. In the classroom, teachers may lead activities that are focused specifically on a value, but more so, values are uncovered in the curriculum in ways that are germane to the curricular theme. For example, in Math students may discover the value of simplicity while studying division; in Music students may explore cooperation through ensemble performance; in Drama students may experience freedom through improvisation.

Other ways the Living Values are woven through our school:

- Upper-school small-group advisory program
- Student-run announcements with weekly reminders and visualizations
- Value themes for concerts and plays
- Ever-increasing community service programming
- Special Areas "Media and Me" units to raise student awareness of media messages
- Maintaining a respectful community through the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting/Teaching (STEP/STET) program
- School-wide calendar to focus our school community together on one value each month

## Effective Discipline

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### How does Mizzentop build a positive school community through discipline?

At Mizzentop Day School, we utilize several different means to help create the kind of environment in which children feel valued and loved, where children are able to learn at their greatest potential. To this end, we understand that good discipline is both a result *and* a cause of high self-esteem. The healthy growth of self-esteem allows each child to learn how to become a contributing member of the classroom and achieve the goal of effective discipline: *self-discipline*. Faculty and staff at Mizzentop Day School encourage self-discipline, guiding children to be responsible and cooperative of their own accord, by using an approach known as STET.

### What is STET?

Systematic Training for Effective Teaching (STET) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) are programs that help teachers and parents create effective discipline by leading children and teens to develop good communication skills and form positive relationships. Consistent with our Living Values Program, STET is based on the following values and beliefs:

- The principle of *equality*: that teachers and students are equal in terms of worth and dignity.
- The concept of *mutual respect*: both teachers and students deserve to be treated respectfully.
- Good decision making skills are developed by being given the *opportunity to make choices*.
- Children can take *responsibility* for their decisions - both good and bad, thereby owning their own problems.
- *Children are capable* of growing into self-disciplined individuals.
- Children grow with *encouragement*.
- Everyone needs to have the *courage to be imperfect!*

Decision making is an important element in the program and is developed in two distinct ways:

1. Everyday behavior choices are made by students and they are held responsible for their choices. Teachers may respond to certain student choices with communication skills such as *reflective listening*, *I-messages*, and *class meetings*. It is not unusual to hear “When I see running in the classroom, I worry that someone will get hurt. What can you do to help us all feel safe?” or “Are you using good body space? What do you need to do?” Teachers use special language to help the children focus on their choices and learn to make adjustments.

Are consequences given for choices that interfere with the rights of others? Yes. When children repeatedly make inappropriate choices, they need to take responsibility for those choices and experience the consequences of their actions.

2. Everyday decisions that indicate children are trying to cooperate or be contributing members of our class are strongly encouraged. You will hear, “You are working hard to show your friends you care about them” and “Listen to how quietly we are working. Everyone is respecting our need for quiet when we work!” *Encouragement* sends the message to the students that we have confidence in them, accept them, recognize their efforts, and recognize and appreciate their contributions and assets.

Every teacher, aide, and administrator in the Mizzentop Day School community receives formal STET training to ensure a consistent environment in which children can develop to their full potential as community members – both in and out of school.

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