

Renaissance Academy Charter School Curriculum Overview



Click on any heading to find out more:

CURRICULUM	2
Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculums	2
Language Arts	2
Mathematics	2
History, Geography, and Science Curriculums	3
History and Geography	3
Science	4
Other Curricular Areas	4
Sensorial	4
Physical Education	4
Art	5
Practical Life	5
Music	5
Library	5

Curriculum

Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculums

While whole and small group presentations are included, students progress individually in mathematics, reading, and language arts. Renaissance Charter School classroom teachers design individualized work plans for each student making sure every student is continuously challenged to reach higher levels. Lessons are generally presented in small groups arranged by learning level or one-on-one teacher and student. Students will work with partners, in small or large groups, and, primarily, independently. In Attachment Eight are charts showing the Renaissance Charter School curricular expectations correlated with Indiana State standards. As demonstrated, Renaissance Charter School language and mathematics expectations meet or exceed Indiana Standards. Each child is unique so variation is anticipated but these are the skills and experience that will typically be expected of Renaissance Charter School students proceeding through the school's educational program.

Language Arts

The Language Arts curriculum is designed to enhance the students' skills in reading, comprehension, writing, speaking, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and related studies. These areas are studied independently as well as in integration with history, geography, science, math, and foreign language. Fluent communication skills, both written and spoken, are a central focus of Renaissance Charter School education. Students learn the fundamentals of grammar and the writing process, completing numerous writing assignments each year and frequently work together to revise, edit, and publish work. A phonics-based approach to reading develops strong fundamental skills and a rich literature program builds from there. Using Spotlight on Literacy in the early grades and quality literature at all levels, students will build comprehension and higher-level skills while reading and responding in writing and in discussion groups.



Mathematics

The Renaissance Charter School mathematics curriculum is based on building strong conceptual understanding through the use of concrete materials. Renaissance Charter School students gain an excellent foundation for high-level mathematics during the early years. Developed thoroughly in kindergarten and beyond, children interact with carefully designed manipulatives to develop a deep understanding of 'number', of value, of dimension, of shape, and of the relationships that mathematics is built upon. The curriculum is generally sequential, though areas such as geometry are parallel and are introduced throughout the sequence. Students move through each area at the best pace possible, working for mastery of fundamentals while exploring new areas.

As students develop a strong foundation and clear understanding through the use of hands-on materials, they move into abstraction with mental math, written work, and problem solving. Students use many resources for problems including but not limited to teacher created materials and SRA math labs. In the upper elementary grades *Saxon Math* becomes the primary curricular tool, with its spiral structure continuously reinforcing learned skills and concepts while developing higher levels of mathematical ability.

See Renaissance–Indiana Standards for expectations for a typical student progressing through a full Renaissance Charter School education which includes completion of Algebra One by the end of eighth grade.

History, Geography, and Science Curriculums

Just as Renaissance Charter School classes are organized in three-year groupings, Renaissance Charter School History, Geography, and Science Curriculums follow a three-year cycle. This allows for great depth of learning as each area of the curriculum is given sufficient time to be explored thoroughly. While all students in the class study most major areas together, the expectations for each student vary depending on the age and ability of each child.

Throughout the years, learning materials from other phases are available to students to allow further study, to inspire interest, and to reinforce, as well as accentuate, all learning. Children are able to begin the cycle in any year and follow it through.

During the Junior High years, seventh and eighth graders will be able to again approach topics studied in fourth or fifth grades with far greater depth. Having studied the themes or periods before, students have the framework and base knowledge needed to enable clear, concrete understanding and knowledge.



History and Geography

Renaissance Charter School students study history throughout the world with the primary focus on history of Western Civilization and special emphasis on United States History. History is approached from the outside in, giving students a good overview of periods and movements first and thereby building a solid framework for students to fill in with greater and greater detail as they grow, providing a foundation for high school, college, and a lifetime of learning. World timelines and overviews are reviewed each year with certain large periods focused on, allowing students to explore major events and themes in the progression of humanity.

Geography is studied concurrently and correlated with the time period studied in order to give students deeper insight into the development of mankind and how geography has affected, and been effected by, people throughout history.

In every year, students work with / learn parts of the globe, map skills, and political, historical, and geographical terms and themes. Current events and cultures are discussed and tied to historical studies. Every year students will use textbooks and research books for study, they will use hands-on materials, timelines, graphs, charts, and maps; and their literature work will include historical fiction and nonfiction books correlated with their studies.

Science

The Renaissance Charter School Science Curriculum highlights the child's relationship to matter: biology and zoology, to space: here and around us, to energy: movement, and to time: history.

Biology studies include the plant kingdom overview and study of trees, leaves, and flowers. Zoology studies include classification of the animal kingdom: vertebrae/invertebrates with an emphasis on vertebrates, such as fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal. The student will further these units to include a study of the Body Systems-skeletal, circulatory, respiratory and digestive. In addition, students will study geology, meteorology, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and scientific method. Seasonal science lessons and experiments are interwoven throughout the classroom environment. Examples include leaves, nutrition, and weather.



In all aspects of the Science Curriculum scientific experimentation, exploration, lab work, discovery and mastery of specific concepts is emphasized. Students will use Montessori materials, three part cards, textbooks, prepared experiments, kit-based lab materials, and demonstrations, to learn principles directly and deduce them from data. Scientific thinking is stressed as students work as scientists and receive a strong background in the history and concepts of science.

Other Curricular Areas

Sensorial

The sensorial materials are a unique and important part of the kindergarten and early elementary Montessori classroom. Sensorial exercises add in the development of the child's visual, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, and auditory senses. They will not only use the child's senses to teach important concepts such as measurement, fine motor control, classifying, and problem solving; but, they will prepare the child for other advanced concepts. Sensorial activities will continue in the upper elementary and junior high programs as advanced math, geometry, algebra, and science activities.



Physical Education

Movement is a fundamental part of the day-to-day classroom activities, both indoors and out. Large and small motor development is integrated into each planned sequence of materials. Controlled movement sets the stage for the mental disciplines to come. Emphasis on health of the body, as well as the mind, is an important feature of the physical education program. In the

early years, activities that stimulate muscle coordination, rhythm and balance is a regular experience. Later, students will learn not only the basics of games but also the important concepts of fair play, team spirit, and good sportsmanship.

Upper Elementary and Junior High students enjoy a variety of physical education experiences. Conditioning, strengthening, rules, cooperation, and sportsmanship are

taught, along with basic skills in a variety of activities. These include sessions of activities such as tennis, basketball, track, volleyball, exercise, gymnastics, golf, and other activities that become available due to local talents and opportunities. These activities will be selected on a year-to-year basis.

Art

Art is an integral part of the Montessori curriculum, allowing for self-expression and fine motor development. The young child is interested in doing, and art materials will always be available in the classroom. Once children are introduced to a particular medium, they are free to create within the limits of that medium. As children mature, they become more product-oriented as they experiment with different media and understand and appreciate various forms of art. Various styles of art and different artists are introduced. Art history is integrated with the social studies curriculum to provide a different approach to world history studies and a concrete connection to people's past.

Practical Life

Practical Life includes large and small motor development through daily living activities. These activities foster order, concentration, coordination, and independence. Through responsible Practical Life activities, children learn care of self, pets, plants, and the environment. They develop grace and courtesy in socially related experiences. These exercises are the foundation of the child's work habits. For the older Montessori student, Practical Life activities confirm order and independence, orient to academic work, and teach a continued awareness and responsibility to the environment. Older students are taught social etiquette for every day and special activities. 4th - 8th graders learn interview and presentation skills, public speaking and interaction skills. They also enjoy a yearly tradition of Formal Day where older students dress up and practice the high social skills.



Music

The music program encourages students to understand and enjoy music. Initially, in the kindergarten and early elementary classes, emphasis is on rhythm and song, using the body as an instrument. Later, rhythm instruments are introduced. The music program will provide opportunities for students to expand musical skills by learning notation. They will gain knowledge about composers through music appreciation and song. Different styles of music are studied. Older students learn to read music and all will have the opportunity to learn an instrument. Music history is coordinated with the social studies curriculum to enrich student understanding of music and human development.

Library

The library teaches children to research independently. Academic skills of library use are taught as an essential part of the Montessori curriculum and offer the child learning opportunities needed for future success in life.

