



Morning Academic Program

Sundial Classical Farmstead is a four-day a week program that follows the principles of Charlotte Mason, a 19th century English education reformer, who believed children learn best when their program is focused on a few key elements: good literature, lots of time outside, and exploring the arts in order to experience beauty, goodness, and truth in tangible ways.

To meet these elements we have divided the day into two focused programs. Our academic morning program is a rigorous, classical education that includes spelling, phonics, literature, math, history, geography, memorization, and penmanship. Our afternoon enrichment program includes lessons in the fine arts, practical arts, and study of nature. Students are welcome to join us for the whole day, or for only the AM or PM portions.

Gathering (8:00-8:15)

Community Building, Supportive Learning Culture, and Promoting Independence

The human brain does not learn when it is stressed. We will begin and end our day with practices intended to form a supportive learning community. We will set daily goals each morning and reflect on how well we met our goals before dismissal each afternoon. In reviewing our successes and failures we will, a) develop a growth mindset, b) model the expectation that each student is responsible for their own learning journey, and c) learn to compassionately address issues that inevitably arise within a community. Finally, as part of our commitment to teach hospitality and responsibility, students will have daily cleaning tasks.

First Academic Block (8:15-10:00)

Math, History, Geography, Handwriting, and Memory Work

Math - We will use the RightStart math program. This K-12 math curriculum is based on an abacus and teaching children to visualize concepts with concrete materials, rather than rote memorize formulas they don't understand.

History and Geography - Together we will create a Book of Centuries. This beloved Charlotte Mason tool is added to continuously for years. Students read about historical events and then add illustrations and notations describing those events in their Book of Centuries. Over time they develop a highly meaningful and personalized timeline depicting all they have studied. We will study and draw maps that connect to our history lessons.

Handwriting - In pursuit of the beautiful, we will practice handwriting as an art form. We will practice only a very few words each day, but what we do write will be intentionally chosen and carefully practiced.

Memory Work - Memorization is a key skill that young children are naturally good at and that, if taught well, can boost their studying skills for life. We will train our memories by giving students tasks that are meaningful and important, for example, facts that should be available for instant recall: addition and multiplication facts, US states and capitals, calendar facts, poems and plays, spelling rules, etc.

Snack and Recess (10:00-10:30)

Snacks will be eaten as a communal meal to teach manners and social graces. After snack students will have free play either inside or outside, according to their preference.

Second Academic Block (10:30-12:00)

Phonics, Reading, Spelling, Grammar, Vocabulary, Literature, and Written Composition

Phonics and Reading - Direct instruction in phonemic awareness (the sounds that letters and letter groups make) will be a core of our reading program. Sundial students will learn to read later than their public school peers (age 6-7 instead of age 5-6) but they will have developed a solid foundation in phonics that prevents the development of reading problems later.

Spelling, Grammar, and Vocabulary - Students will receive direct instruction in spelling and grammar rules each week and listen to books filled with rich vocabulary to learn words in context. We will focus on slow learning and deep mastery rather than rushed, shallow learning.

Literature and Written Composition - Teachers will read aloud from a wide variety of books. We will use literature as a primary source to teach history, geography, and science. Students will learn to write by copying from literature. We do not expect young children to have the life experience or reasoning ability to write their own works. Instead, we want them to study the work of great writers and approach both reading and writing to learn through emulation.

Note: Students enrolled in the morning academic program are expected to have sufficient focus and stamina to participate in 20 minute lessons requiring listening and responding to their instructor's prompts. We are aware that some 5- and 6-year-olds may not be able to focus beyond that length of time and so we will provide alternative, but related, activities during longer lesson blocks.