



A parent's guide to student learning

Make learning a family affair Students learn best when someone at home takes an active interest in their education, recognizes their successes and helps them overcome difficulties. This pamphlet combines a snapshot of what your child is learning with ideas for supporting education at home.

Connect with the teacher Next to you, the teacher is your child's most important educator. Of course, you may ask your child's teacher for a meeting any time, but below are simple ways to connect:

- **Elementary Meet & Greet:** This occurs the day before school starts in the fall. An informal chance to visit the teacher in the classroom, it sets the stage for a good year and helps ease any nerves your child may feel about school.
- **Curriculum Night:** This occurs within the first few weeks of school and is your chance to hear from the teacher about plans for the year, classroom expectations and school-home communication.
- **Parent-teacher conferences:** These are in early November and are a time to discuss your child's progress. Generally, parents have a chance to sign up for a conference at Curriculum Night.
- **Pinnacle:** Our secure online parent portal is where you can see your child's progress any time, and where report cards are posted.
- **Email and voicemail:** Teachers have individual phone extensions and email, and respond promptly to parent messages.
- **Teacher Web sites:** Many teachers maintain Web sites to help students and parents connect with learning at home.

Get involved with school These are *your* schools, and you and your family are always welcome! To become involved with school, ask your child's teacher for ideas of how you can be involved, and join the PTA. At Hadley, take advantage of Third Thursday parent visit days. Don't miss out on opportunities—read what comes home from school and mark important dates on your calendar.

Teaching and Learning in D41 Teaching starts with understanding each child. How does the child learn best? What does the child already know? What motivates the child? The curriculum is based on state and national learning standards for what children should know and be able to do, and our Curriculum Review Cycle helps us make sure our curriculum is up to date. Our goal? Students who value deep understanding (rather than memorization), are independent learners, and who work productively with their classmates.

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Make sure your child arrives at school on time and ready to learn. Attendance matters—keep your child in school every day!

Learning overview

D41 Learner Characteristics

... essential to academic and lifelong success.

Habits and attitudes include being someone who is:

- Curious
- Creative
- Resilient in the face of challenges
- Able to embrace change
- Adaptable
- Collaborative
- Open to diverse viewpoints and experiences
- Respectful of others
- Respectful of the environment
- Compassionate
- Optimistic
- Nurturing
- Challenge seeking
- Engaged and enthusiastic
- Future oriented with a global perspective
- Intrinsically motivated

The skills include being someone who can:

- Solve complex problems
- Make connections between present and future opportunities
- Think critically and reflectively
- Communicate effectively using a variety of media and technology
- Communicate effectively to a variety of audiences
- Utilize multiple literacy skills in learning
- Utilize organizational skills to enhance learning
- Mediate conflict peacefully
- Pursue a healthy lifestyle
- Appreciate beauty and the arts
- Advocate for oneself and others
- Apply current learning to new situations
- Synthesize multiple pieces of information to create new information
- Assume responsibility for learning

The New Common Core In June, 2010, Illinois adopted the New Common Core Standards in reading and math. Fewer, clearer and higher, these standards bring more rigor to instruction. The literacy curriculum has been aligned to the New Common Core; math is in progress and will be aligned for the 2012-2013 school year.

Literacy Reading, writing, listening, speaking and researching are the keys to learning, and students spend more time on literacy than on any other subject. The teacher combines whole-class instruction with small-group and independent work to meet the needs of all learners. In the early grades, students are mainly learning to read; as they progress in school, their focus shifts to literature, comprehension, writing, and using literacy skills to learn content in other subjects. They become more self-directed as they learn to identify appropriate reading choices and bring a variety of comprehension strategies to more difficult material. By the time they leave eighth grade, students should be able to use more exacting academic vocabulary; write effectively using correct grammar, punctuation and structure; and know how to use the editing/revision process to do their best work.

Learning tip

Know the school and classroom rules, routines and expectations so that you can reinforce them at home.

Information Literacy The ability to find and use information effectively, information literacy helps students become lifelong learners who succeed in a changing world. Students learn these skills in

the classroom as well as in the Library Learning Center and Computer Lab. Our youngest students begin with learning what information is and how to find it. As they progress through school, they become more skillful “searchers” and learn how to identify reliable information, whether it is a book, on a Web site or blog, or on TV. By the time they leave eighth grade, they have mastered a number of strategies to identify, locate and use multiple sources that are appropriate to a variety of purposes, and know how to cite their references accurately.

Mathematics Math instruction is based on research about how kids learn math and emphasizes real-life problem solving. The goal? Confident math students who know a number of ways to solve problems. Teachers use multiple methods for basic skills practice, and over the course of the year, students work repeatedly with essential math concepts such as: measurement; operations such as addition, multiplication and division; number sense, such as place value and percentages; algebra and geometry; data and probability; and problem solving. In contrast to the one unit per concept approach, cyclical instruction builds lasting understanding and retention.

Science Students are taught to think scientifically in everything they study. This means learning how to make meaningful observations, establish and test an hypothesis, and collect and analyze data for patterns and meaning. Students learn through doing experiments and activities guided by the teacher. Among the subjects studied in the early grades are the five senses, animals and weather. By eighth grade, students are studying challenging material such as energy, light, and simple machines.

Social Science Social Science is the study of human society and how human behavior and activities affect the world. Elementary social science instruction may be incorporated into literacy and can include history and current events. In junior high, social science covers the ancient world and U.S. history from discovery through modern times.

Learning tip

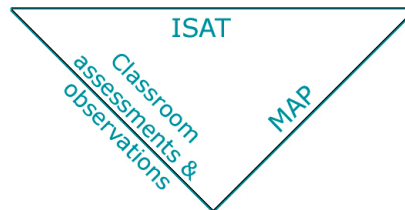
Turn off the TV! Consistently less TV leaves more time for more interesting activities, like visiting the public library.

Fine Arts Elementary students have art and music weekly. In addition, fine arts may be integrated with the academic units, for example, students may study the art and music of a region they are learning about in their academic studies. In music, students learn about rhythm patterns, melody and beat. In art, students learn different elements of art such as line, shape and color. They learn to compose skillfully using observation, research and imagination. Students learn to understand and respond to art from other cultures and times.

Physical Education Daily Physical Education emphasizes skills that support lifelong fitness and address coordination, endurance and strength. Among the major units are: basketball skills; bowling and rolling; dance; fitness activities; football skills; jump rope; pillow polo, pillow hockey; racquet skills; soccer skills; cooperative activities; team handball; track and field; volleyball; and offensive and defensive strategies. Hadley units include using the fitness lab with its up-to-date machines.

Hadley Exploratory In addition to the core curriculum, Hadley students are scheduled for a variety of Exploratory courses: French or Spanish overviews, Band, Orchestra, cooking, art technology, household chemistry, technology, performing arts and more.

Assessment triangle



Role of assessment Data about student learning helps teachers tailor instruction to each child's strengths, challenges and learning style. Teacher observation is a key source of this data, verified and supported by assessments. Three types of assessments are used together to round out the picture of each student's progress. The Illinois Student Achievement Test (ISAT) measures how well students have learned the Illinois Learning Standards. Students take it in March and the results come after school is out for the year. One measure of student, school and district performance, the schools use the ISAT results to set goals, and help teachers identify individual learning needs. The online Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) is given twice yearly in reading and math. It provides fast, reliable, and specific feedback on student progress that teachers can start using almost immediately to target instruction. Classroom tests may be

Learning tip

Household jobs make great learning opportunities. For example, next time you bake, let your child measure the ingredients.

used to identify learning needs at the start of a unit and to assess progress along the way. Some classroom assessments are common across the district, others are developed by individual teachers. Combined, this assessment data is used by grade-level teams to determine what's working, what's not, and plan a coordinated approach to learning improvement for each child. In the elementary schools, time is available each day (called targeted learning time) for teachers, specialists and others to work with small groups of students with similar instructional needs.

Learning tip

Keep inviting reading material in easy reach at home and in the car. Comic books are fine!

Report cards & grades Parents can see their child's performance any time on the Pinnacle Parent Portal. D41 uses standards-based reporting; this enables students to better understand what is expected of them in each subject area, provides teachers with a more specific tool to communicate what each child should know and be able to do during each grading period, and gives parents a more detailed understanding of the academic expectations in each content area. Work habits and personal characteristics are also assessed and reported.

Literacy and math specialists These professionals collaborate with classroom teachers and others to provide the best instruction and plan for differentiating classroom instruction to meet a range of learning needs.

Programs & Services

Gifted Services Students are identified for gifted services in literacy and math through tests, teacher recommendations and other factors. About 5% of our students receive these services. In grades 3-5, students receive services in small groups; math is in place of regular instruction; literacy is in addition to it. In junior high, gifted reading and math is in place of the general classroom in those subjects.

Learning English About 11% of D41 students speak limited or no English. More than 30 languages are spoken by our students; among the most common are Spanish, Vietnamese, Urdu and a variety of African languages and dialects. Research shows that these children do better in English when they have literacy skills in their home language. A variety of supports are provided to help them learn English, and eventually transition into regular programs. Depending on the language spoken and the learning needs of the

individual, a child could be in a self-contained class taught primarily in a language other than English, or in a general education classroom receiving extra help in English. Many students quickly pick up social English, but it can take years to acquire the academic language required for success in high school and beyond.

Special Education About 12-14% of our students receive Special Education services, from speech therapy to self-contained classes for severely disabled students. The law says students must be placed in the least restrictive environment, and with assistance, many special education students do well in general education classrooms. Some students who have severe low-incidence conditions attend school in another district through the Cooperative for Special Education (CASE).

Preschool Preschool is offered to eligible students ages 3-6: Pre-Kinder-

garten at Risk is for children with risk factors such as limited English; Early Childhood Special Education is for children with disabilities. Eligibility is determined through preschool screenings throughout the year. We also offer a blended program that includes at risk, special education and typically-developing students.

Social work and other assistance Our social workers help children in crisis, having adjustment issues or who need help in other ways. Family situations have an impact on learning, and social workers can help link families to appropriate services such as free lunch, fee waivers, translation, and homeless services. If your family is experiencing health, financial or adjustment difficulties, let the school social worker know. Your information is always confidential.

