Core Knowledge Curriculum

An integrated curriculum (the Core Knowledge Sequence - [www.coreknowledge.org](http://www.coreknowledge.org)) offers teachers a graded sequence in literature, geography, history, social studies and science. It does not specify how teachers teach, but gives a "common ground of content upon which faculty meet and collaborate to begin teaching a coherent, content-rich curriculum". Teachers can use the resources of the Core Knowledge Foundation to inspire their own classroom materials and methods to cover the target content areas for their grade level. Topics in each grade build directly on what was learned in previous grades. Early research shows that a Core Knowledge curriculum boosts standardized test scores and increases teacher enthusiasm and parent satisfaction. It has been recognized for improving students’ general knowledge, integrating an understanding of diversity into the curriculum, and bringing children of disadvantaged backgrounds into the mainstream of cultural knowledge. At the higher grade levels, teachers and parents work together to adopt and design a curriculum that includes challenging study of science, history, social science, the fine arts, and the classics.

Spalding Language Arts

The Spalding Method provides “explicit, sequential, multisensory instruction in spelling (including phonics and handwriting), writing, and listening/reading comprehension” ([www.spalding.org](http://www.spalding.org)). Spalding begins with phonics and spelling rules as students learn the “encoding” and “decoding” of English, then moves rapidly to introduce children to creative writing and the study of literature. Our investigation of Spalding suggests that it is the best and most cost-effective research-based systematic phonics instruction program. Spalding integrates instruction in spelling, writing, comprehension, and literature. At the higher grade levels, emphasis shifts to literature, writing, and advanced reading, study, and comprehension skills. The Spalding Method is also attractive because of its effective teacher training, and low classroom cost (estimated at $10/pupil/year). Spalding Language Arts is supplemented with Step Up to Writing and Six Traits Writing.

Accelerated Saxon Math

The Saxon philosophy believes that “people learn by doing”. The two most important aspects of the Saxon program ([www.saxonpublishers.com](http://www.saxonpublishers.com)) are the "incremental development of mathematics and continuous practice". Mathematical concepts are divided into small, easily understood pieces that are taught over several lessons -- hence incremental development. These concepts are then practiced continuously over time and reviewed throughout the school year. Many of the skills in mathematics take a long time to develop. With Saxon, students are given the opportunity to develop and to master these skills with the practice provided in the problem sets. Each problem set contains only a few problems illustrating the increment presented in that lesson. The remaining problems, which become increasingly difficult as the year progresses, provide practice of the concepts previously presented. At SRA we accelerate Saxon Math by one year beginning in Kindergarten.

Special Programs

At SRA, we consider these “specials” an integral part of students’ education. Spanish, Art and Music are closely integrated with the Core Knowledge curriculum. Physical Education will be integrated with the curriculum, and based on age-appropriate learning of "lifelong" skills. Because we recognize the value of second-language learning at an early age, Spanish will begin in kindergarten and continue on a regular basis through every grade.

9th Grade Curriculum

Since the Core Knowledge Sequence ends at 8th grade, SRA will offer a modified version of the International Baccalaureate’s Middle Years Programme™ (MYP) for 9th grade. The 9th grade curriculum will feature: Geometry/Algebra I/Algebra II, Biology, Physical Education and Health, Spanish IV, Civics and Contemporary World Issues, Language Arts, and a community service component. A wide variety of electives will also be offered. This curriculum dovetails nicely with the K-8 Core Knowledge Sequence, as it challenges students to evaluate information critically, enables them to take responsibility for their own learning, and encourages them to take an active role in their community thereby encouraging responsible citizenship. The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program has been aligned to Wyoming standards and benchmarks, and courses taken by SRA students are eligible for Hathaway credits toward meeting graduation requirements.