



SWITZERLAND

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 5



Core Knowledge®



TRADITION AND EXCELLENCE SINCE 1956

Founded in 1956 by international education pioneer M. Crist Fleming, TASIS The American School in Switzerland is the oldest American college-preparatory boarding school in Europe and is world-renowned for its ability to develop global citizens through education, travel, and service.

The TASIS Elementary School, which now serves students in grades Pre-Kindergarten (starting at age 3) through 5, opened its doors as the first English-language elementary school in Ticino in the fall of 2005 and has remained the region's premier independent school ever since. Since its inception, the Elementary School has grown from 43 students to a vibrant international community of 180 children representing 30 nationalities and speaking more than 20 languages as a mother tongue.

Nestled on the Collina d'Oro ("Hill of Gold") in Montagnola, a small village overlooking Lugano, TASIS's beautiful campus is surrounded by the Swiss mountains above and Lake Lugano below. The Elementary School comprises five classroom buildings, two science laboratories, two dining halls,

and two playgrounds, and students enjoy access to all that the main TASIS campus has to offer, including two gymnasiums and a large theater.

Students in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and first grade spend most of their time at the Early Childhood Center known as Al Focolare, which has its own kitchen facilities, playground space, art room, and library.

Who We Are

"In the TASIS Elementary School, we believe in taking the best parts of the **American pedagogy**—strong relationships between teachers and students, the need to differentiate instruction in order to engage each and every student, an unwavering belief in student potential, and an emphasis on critical thinking—and combining them with a **cumulative, content-rich curriculum** designed to ensure that all students establish a deep foundation of knowledge that sets them up for success in future years. We invite you to learn more about our curriculum and our approach."

— Mr. Timothy Fitzgerald, Lower School Head

OUR CURRICULUM

To thrive in the 21st century, one cannot be a critical thinker without first developing a strong foundation of knowledge. In the TASIS Elementary School, we build this foundation by following the outstanding Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™, a coherent, cumulative, and content-specific core curriculum grounded in shared knowledge of language arts, history, geography, visual arts, music, mathematics, and science.

The academic program as a whole, which is discussed in greater detail later in the catalog, has been thoughtfully developed to ensure that all students emerge with an excellent grounding and preparation for the academically rigorous upper-school curricula TASIS employs—most notably the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program and the Advanced Placement (AP) program.

CORE KNOWLEDGE: AN OVERVIEW

The Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™—an excellent sequential, content-rich curriculum that also serves as the backbone of academic programs at TASIS Elementary Schools in England, Portugal, and Puerto Rico—provides all children an equal opportunity to learn essential academic knowledge and skills. It is based on a conception presented by Prof. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. in his well-known books *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, *The New First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, *The Schools*

We Need and Why We Don't Have Them, and *The Knowledge Deficit*. The curriculum was practically developed by Prof. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Foundation—an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan educational foundation founded in 1986—and is now used with great success by hundreds of schools in the United States and abroad. Its positive learning outcomes are well-established by research and have been widely praised and documented in numerous studies.



The curriculum helps children become familiar with the traditions and knowledge commonly shared by educated citizens in a society, enabling them to develop cultural literacy in a way that is systematic while still leaving room for creativity. Teachers are free to teach the subject matter as creatively as they like, but the content is specified and builds from year to year. This approach prevents the gaps and repetition that frequently occur in curricula that are not coordinated across grade levels or within different classrooms at the same grade level.

Because teachers are guided by a detailed outline of content knowledge and skills to be taught at each grade level, they are free to focus on teaching—providing appropriate support and guidance while ensuring that all students are challenged and actively engaged. The high expectations they set for their students are reflected in the challenging content they use as the backbone for their lessons.

Each teacher also works closely with a dedicated Literacy Coordinator to develop a classroom library that supports the content taught. The ever-expanding

classroom libraries are filled with supplemental teaching materials, read-aloud books, and books students can select for independent reading.

Parent Comments

TASIS parents are pleased to see how enthusiastic their children are about learning as the curriculum unfolds. No matter what level of ability students start with, they experience a sense of achievement as knowledge and skills are mastered.

“What I appreciate most about TASIS is the excitement my children have for coming to school each day.”

“Our children grew more confident, more assertive, and more aware of the world surrounding them. They came out of the Elementary School with a unique ownership of what they studied and the ability to apply it in their everyday lives, be it applying math to real life problems or walking into a church and recognizing architectural features.”

| Kindergarten | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Geography | Geography | Geography | Geography | Geography | Geography |
| Five Senses | Body Systems | Early Asian Civilizations | Classification of Animals | Circulatory & Respiratory Systems | Classification of Living Things |
| Plants | Early World Civilizations | Modern Japan | Muscular, Skeletal, & Nervous Systems | The Middle Ages | Early American Civilizations |
| Animals & Needs | Early American Civilizations | Ancient Greece | Ancient Rome | Chemistry | European Exploration |
| Native Americans | Modern Mexico | The Constitution | Light & Optics | Electricity | Cells |
| Season & Weather | Astronomy | War of 1812 | Sound | Spread of Islam | Plant Structures |
| Early Exploration | The Earth | Cycles in Nature | The Vikings | Early/Medieval African Kingdoms | The Renaissance & Reformation |
| Taking Care of Earth | Living Things & Environments | Westward Expansion | Astronomy | China Dynasties | England Golden Age |
| Presidents | Early Exploration | The Civil War | The Earliest Americans | Geology | Life Cycles |
| Magnetism | Colonies to Independence | Digestive & Excretory Systems | Early Exploration | The American Revolution | Endocrine & Reproductive Systems |
| | Early Exploration of West | Immigration & Citizenship | The Thirteen Colonies | Early Presidents & Politics | Early Russia |
| | Electricity | Fighting for Cause | Ecology | Constitutional Government | Feudal Japan |
| | Matter | Magnetism | | Metereology | Chemistry |
| | | Simple Machines | | Reformers | Westward Expansion |
| | | | | | The Civil War |
| | | | | | Native Americans |

An overview of the major topics covered each year



Core Knowledge is a guide to content from grade to grade, designed to encourage steady academic growth and progress as children build their knowledge base, improve their English-language fluency, and develop the skills essential for responsible citizenship from year to year. This cumulative building of knowledge helps ensure that children enter each new grade ready to learn.

The curriculum is organized to build and deepen students' knowledge grade by grade, and to make cross-curricular connections across subjects. For example, fifth graders studying the Renaissance can confidently build on their prior learning about ancient Greece and Rome (grades 2 and 3) and the Middle Ages (grade 4) while also connecting their historical studies to topics in visual arts, where they study masterworks by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and others.

Studying topics together in the same grade can build a sense of community in much the same way that common knowledge can bind the larger society together. A distinguished scholar of international renown, Prof. Hirsch believes that a diverse society has a special need for commonly shared background knowledge and, further, that everybody has a right to share this civilized *res publica*—not just a select few. Students come to understand the shared dimensions of knowledge, how subjects relate to one another and build cumulatively over time, and how history influences contemporary events. They can command the necessary vocabulary to comprehend the complex subjects that lie ahead and the increasingly complex world around them. Though initially oriented to Anglophone culture, students come to share a larger civilizing culture exploring the best that has been thought, said, invented, and discovered in the world—the classic “liberal arts” ideal.

WHY USE (AND CHOOSE) THE CORE KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

*An essay by distinguished author and educator Michael D. Aeschliman, Ph.D.**

The esteemed Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™ (www.coreknowledge.org) is the most outstanding academic elementary-school curriculum in the English-speaking world and is having increasing use and influence beyond the USA and the UK. (For example, a Portuguese version of it has been widely credited with substantial improvements over the last ten years in the Portuguese national education system.)

Drawing on the decades of scholarship and writing of the eminent American scholar of language, literature, and education Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., its originator, the Core Knowledge curriculum is a sequential, cumulative, content-specific, phonics-based literacy scope-and-sequence academic program whose positive learning outcomes are well-established by research and have been widely praised, and which are documented in numerous studies and in books and articles by Hirsch himself and numerous external observers—educational experts, scholars, educational administrators, and

teachers (including two past presidents of the American Federation of Teachers).¹

Core Knowledge (not to be confused with the Common Core in the USA) is a systematic response to the decline in specific knowledge and skill of more experimental, so-called “progressive” curricular and pedagogical approaches at the elementary-school level that have proved to be appealing in rhetoric but extremely **ineffective** in practice (actual learning outcomes) throughout the English-speaking world, a fact documented in many studies and surveys over the last 50 years, including the outstanding history by the eminent scholar and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for educational research Dr. Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*.² Ravitch writes: “The most prominent advocate of liberal traditionalism in education [in the last 30 years has been] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., who argues for a culturally rich and explicit curriculum in the elementary grades.”³





In the interest of this academic and “cultural literacy,” Core Knowledge provides an excellent grounding and preparation for academically rigorous upper-school curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs. Many schools that offer the upper-level IB program **do not use the IB’s elementary-school Primary Years Program (PYP)**. The PYP is a recent version of Anglo-American experimentalism, idealistically intended and phrased, but which has essentially eliminated any explicit curriculum and coordinated, specifiable, grade-by-grade accumulation of knowledge and skill. Increasingly, for 75 years, such experimental approaches have had poor or impossible-to-substantiate academic outcomes, as the Harvard researcher Jeanne S. Chall has documented in *The Academic Achievement Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom*.⁴ What one such proponent of experimentalism praises as “the perpetual quest for innovation” has usually meant the ignoring or elimination of basic knowledge, skills, and competencies such as phonics-based literacy, arithmetic, history, geography, and fundamental

scientific facts taught in a coherent, coordinated, cumulative, grade-by-grade teaching-and-learning program. The Core Knowledge curriculum **provides** this indispensable basis for all subsequent academic progress, specifying explicit content in each subject and at each grade level.

The Core Knowledge curriculum is a forthright, transparent contract between the TASIS schools—their administrators and teachers—and parents and students. Caveat emptor: It is **indispensable** for parents to be intelligent critics and knowledgeable consumers of purported educational goods: their children’s future, and the future of our civilization, are in their hands.

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¹ See on Hirsch, M.D. Aeschliman, “Restoring Our K-12 Schools: Education, history, and E.D. Hirsch,” *National Review Online* (NY), 18 October 2013; “The Heroism of E.D. Hirsch,” *National Review Online*, 18 February 2017; Daisy Christodoulou, *Seven Myths about Education* (London and NY: Routledge/The Curriculum Centre, 2014).

² NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000. On her advocacy of Hirsch, see pp. 419-420, 459, 463-4.

³ Op.cit., p.464.

⁴ NY and London: Guilford Press, 2002. See also Chester E. Finn, Jr., *Troublemaker: A Personal History of School Reform since Sputnik* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), and review of it by M.D. Aeschliman, *Modern Age* (USA), 50, 4 (Fall 2008). For the British scene, see Christodoulou (note 1) and Chris Woodhead, *A Desolation of Learning: Is This the Education Our Children Deserve?* (UK: Pencil-Sharp Publishing, 2009). Woodhead was Chief Inspector of British Schools under both Labour and Tory governments.

A DEEPER LOOK

While the Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™ serves as the backbone and philosophical underpinning of our Elementary School's academic program, it is enriched by the world-renowned Singapore Math program, English as an Additional Language support for those who need it, and a robust co-curricular program that includes Visual Arts, Music, and Physical Education. We also offer families the option of enrolling their children in either an American Section or an Italian Section. Specific aspects of our academic program are explored in greater detail in the ensuing pages.

MATHEMATICS

The **Singapore Math program**, which correlates with the math objectives outlined in the Core Knowledge Sequence, focuses on building fundamental math skills so that students have a strong foundational base to draw upon when they undertake more advanced studies in the future. It is based on the philosophy that students need to build solid numeracy skills and an understanding of number concepts. Students learn the “why” and “how” behind mathematical concepts through exploration, instruction, hands-on activities, and problem solving. There is an emphasis on continual practice with an effective mix of word problems, drills, and mental calculation.

In particular, we use *Math in Focus*, an American edition of the Singapore Math curriculum that places problem solving at the center of math learning and introduces concepts in a three-step learning progression: concrete, pictorial, and abstract. The intentional progression of concepts in *Math in Focus* instills a deep understanding of mathematics, as students learn to think mathematically instead of relying solely upon rote memorization of algorithms. Students are able to master a specific set of skills each year that prepares them for the next grade level.

Adaptations and support are provided as needed to ensure all students are successful and appropriately challenged.

This very successful model was first developed in the 1980s by Singapore, a country that consistently ranks among the world's highest-achieving primary and secondary pupils in both math and science—as measured by the two most recognized international assessments, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

TASIS has seen its own tangible results with the program, as students in grades 3–5 take the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test several times each year and consistently produce scores on the Math section that significantly outpace the worldwide averages for international schools.

Parent Comment

“Singapore Math was a very new thing for us, but after we had a look at it with our son, all I can say is that it's amazing!”



SCIENCE

A high-quality science education means that students will gain an in-depth understanding of content and develop key skills—communication, collaboration, inquiry, problem-solving, and flexibility—that will serve them throughout their educational and professional lives.

Students in grades K–5 primarily focus on topics in Physical Science, Life Science, and Earth Science with a hands-on approach that includes labs and experiments. In grades 2–5, students visit our Elementary School Science Laboratory twice a week to perform experiments that align with the challenging Core Knowledge science rubrics,

employing cutting-edge tools to engineer solutions to challenging problems. The Science curriculum also supports the Elementary School’s Service Learning Program by helping students understand how they can serve as good stewards of the planet.

Parent Comment

“My son loves science, and he has managed to find a teacher who is pushing him. We have experiments all over our house now. His love for the subject is clearly fueled by his teacher.”



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Our English Language Arts program is inspired by the Core Knowledge Curriculum Sequence™ and is composed of genre-based units of study designed to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills—with reading and writing units integrated so that students write about the same genres they read about. Students study language and grammatical concepts while learning how to write informational, persuasive, and narrative texts in both standard and cursive handwriting and on word processing applications.

Our comprehensive program is designed to provide instruction to a variety of reading levels and skills, offering students the challenges needed to mold them into stronger readers. All areas of reading development are covered extensively, including phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. A robust read-aloud program ensures that students hear and discuss high-interest, high-quality fiction and nonfiction texts on a regular basis.

The Elementary School has two ever-growing libraries (housing more than 8000 titles), and each classroom has its own collection of books that matches the reading level and interests of each student and augments each unit of study. Students read both fictional and factual materials that reinforce cross-curricular topics and themes and help them understand the common humanity of the members of the world community, past and present. All students have specific, ongoing assessments to ensure that they are placed in the appropriate reading group and properly challenged.

Our program is bolstered by a full-time librarian, a literacy coordinator, an instructional book room with more than a thousand level readers, small-group and individualized reading instruction provided in the classroom on a daily basis, two Usborne Book Fairs hosted on campus each year, annual visits from acclaimed children’s authors, and other special events on campus designed to celebrate reading.

It is abundantly clear that our students love to read and that our English Language Arts Program helps them improve their levels at a rapid rate. The empirical data confirms that our methods are working, as TISIS students in grades 3–5 consistently perform well above the worldwide average on the Reading section of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test while demonstrating steady improvement from year to year.

A Community of Readers

“What I’ve seen is an overall increase in the desire to read. In particular, the kids in the higher grades are reading much more interesting and difficult books than they were when I first started.”

– Ms. Alyssa Uecker, Elementary School Librarian

“It’s been heartening to see the Elementary School evolve into a true community of readers.”

– Ms. Erin Fitzgerald, Literacy Coordinator





HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

In grades Pre-K through 2, we use the Core Knowledge Curriculum Sequence™ as the basis for the History and Geography modules, which provide rich content in both American and World History at each grade level.

We follow the Core Knowledge History series—a program specifically developed to support the Core Knowledge Curriculum Sequence™—for the American Section (explained on the next page) in grades 3–5. The texts are classical in approach with historical epochs serving as the framework for discussions of art, science, literature, philosophy, and politics. Key vocabulary is reinforced, and students are encouraged to make connections across disciplines using history as a starting point. Students finish Elementary School with a solid base of knowledge in both American and World History that enables them to understand and discuss the causes and effects of historical events and demonstrate an understanding of how historical events have influenced the world.

Students in the Italian Section (explained in the ensuing pages) follow the esteemed Italian national curriculum in grades 3–5.

Core Knowledge in Action

“In third grade, our students begin to learn about the Roman Empire and the Roman government. When they come to me in fourth grade, we pick it up at the fall of Rome and the collapse of the government and move into Europe during the Middle Ages. Each year my students will say, ‘Oh, I remember this from last year. I remember studying Julius Caesar and learning about how the government collapsed because they were all fighting.’ Our discussions are so much richer because they have that background knowledge, and the lead-up to the next subject is so much smoother and more engaging. They have the specific content knowledge from the previous years, so we don’t need to rebuild a foundation after each unit is completed because it’s already there.”

– Ms. Sarah Maas Bearden, Grade 4 Teacher



AMERICAN AND ITALIAN SECTIONS

In 2005, TASIS received an exemption from the Canton of Ticino in order to found the Canton's first English-language primary school. This exemption states that children at TASIS who are 4–15 and have resided in Ticino for no more than six years may be educated primarily in another language, provided that 20 percent of the educational program is in Italian. Those who have resided in Ticino for six or more years must have additional instruction in Italian in order to meet Cantonal requirements.

The solution that the School and the Canton agreed upon was for TASIS to provide two separate offerings—an American Section and an Italian Section—that formally begin in grade 1 and continue through grade 9. All Elementary School students, regardless of which section they are in, have a native English speaker as a homeroom teacher and work together during English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Visual Arts, Music, and Physical Education. This structure deepens each student's exposure to English and ensures that each grade's homeroom and Italian Section teachers are able to work together closely to provide an optimum program.

American Section Details

In the American Section, which is primarily designed for students whose families have resided in Ticino for fewer than six years, core academic subjects follow the rigorous Core Knowledge curriculum and are presented in English. Students also take an Italian language course each day, with instruction based on current proficiency level, and receive bilingual instruction in certain specialized courses, such as Visual Arts and Physical Education.

Italian language instruction for American Section students is taught at different levels. Beginner students learn basic Italian that is useful for living in an Italian-speaking environment. At this level the teachers focus on oral communication, and the teaching approach is learning through games. Students in their second year of studying Italian begin learning grammar and start to write small paragraphs and read short stories. The next level is for students who are ready for more advanced studies, including literature, conversation, and writing. Students who are approaching fluency study every aspect of the language—speaking, listening, writing, and reading—as if they were in an Italian-speaking school.

Italian Section Details

Students whose families have resided in Ticino for six or more years must join the Italian Section at the start of their seventh year in the Canton, but many families choose to have their children enter the Italian Section earlier, particularly if they would like to accelerate the pace at which they learn Italian.

In the Italian Section, two of the core academic subjects—Italian Language Arts & Literature and History & Geography—are taught strictly in Italian, based on the best of the traditional Italian curriculum that mirrors much of the rich Core Knowledge curriculum, while the other core courses are taught in English, enabling students to achieve academic proficiency in both languages. Students also receive bilingual instruction in several of their co-curricular classes, including Visual Arts and Physical Education.

In Italian Language Arts & Literature, students are exposed to the morphology, syntax, spelling rules, and grammatical structures of the Italian language beginning in Pre-Kindergarten. In grades 1–2, students begin to learn the basics of the Italian language by working on the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In grades 3–5, these skills are consolidated and deepened.

The Italian Section reading curriculum emphasizes phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency, with a focus on reading comprehension that helps students reflect on their ability to use the Italian language, anticipate the written text, and recognize the complexity and richness of the language. Italian texts are available in each classroom library, and the Elementary School's two main libraries have a wide collection of Italian books targeted to all age groups.

The Italian Section's rigorous writing curriculum teaches students to express their thoughts in a structured way, enabling them to write clear and coherent texts related to various genres by the time they finish Elementary School. Classes focus on all steps of the writing process as students learn to communicate their ideas cogently, and these skills are reinforced with cross-curriculum work, particularly in History & Geography.

In History & Geography, students build a foundation of world history and geographic knowledge, with a particular focus on European culture and ancient civilizations. Historical periods are covered sequentially and studied in great detail, creating a close link between different disciplines.





ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Many students in both the American and Italian Sections do not speak English as their mother tongue. Our goal is to increase these students' English abilities and confidence as quickly as possible by immersing them into content-area classes that are taught entirely in English while also providing English as an Additional Language classes and support. Highly qualified teachers provide assistance with reading, writing, grammar, and spelling as we help non-native speakers reach grade-level proficiency as quickly as possible so that they can participate fully and independently in their homerooms.

Parent Comments

"My son must have a strong command of English, and that is why we're here."

"My kids started here with absolutely zero English, and in two months they began to speak fluidly, read, and write. I couldn't believe my eyes and ears because it was so fantastic."

Many students have come to TASIS speaking no English at all and have ultimately graduated from TASIS and gone on to study successfully at prestigious Anglophone universities.

Student Spotlight

2017 Valedictorian Adam Novak, who attended TASIS from grades 1–12 and posted an average score of 4.40 on 10 AP exams (scored on a scale of 1–5), had this to say about his time at TASIS:

"When I came to TASIS in 2005, I was five years old and didn't speak a word of English or Italian. When I graduated 12 years later, I spoke four languages, I'd traveled all over Europe, and I was on my way to study Economics at Bocconi University in Milan...I credit TASIS for giving me the ability to think. Armed with the tool of thought, I am able to understand complex topics and cultivate my own ideas with ease at university."



“My daughter has become friends with so many kids from all over the world... it’s really given her a better understanding of the world and how she can become a global citizen.”

– **TASIS parent**

“It is unusual to have the opportunity, as a child, to gain a truly global perspective by simply attending class. Coming home with considerations of different perspectives, snippets of words and phrases from lots of friends’ languages, and a general sense of being part of a world (versus a country) provide a foundation for finding empathy and consonance: traits that are of necessity and have great value, especially in today’s world.”

– **TASIS parent**

THE WHOLE CHILD



Core academic instruction is complemented by a strong co-curricular program that includes instruction in Visual Arts, Music, and Physical Education. Students meet regularly with highly trained specialist teachers, who collaborate with core-subject teachers to provide an integrated curriculum that supports the Core Knowledge sequence.

Visual Arts

Our Visual Arts program follows the Core Knowledge Curriculum Sequence™, which emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to Art History, introducing

students to the key movements of each period. Students gain an appreciation for art while learning about the styles, influences, and themes in various artworks and the historical and cultural contexts in which these works were generated.

Students also develop increased understanding and skills in the visual elements of art making. Our program aims to give each student a strong, applicable knowledge in the visual fundamentals—line, shape, and color—while they study and apply concepts such as abstraction, balance, form, pattern, space, and texture. Beyond that, art is seen as a true discipline through which an artistically developed person can view the world and understand the different visions and expressions of his or her fellow human beings.

All of our young artists display their work at various events throughout the year, culminating with a sweeping, school-wide Spring Arts Festival each May.

Parent Comment

“TASIS does an exceptional job with music and art. It’s one of the best I’ve ever seen, and it’s because it’s not just a class—it’s woven into everything they do.”





Music

TASIS music classes combine the framework of the Core Knowledge curriculum with additional approaches, including Orff, Kodaly, and Dalcroze. Students learn about music and movement, playing and composing on instruments, singing, and reading and writing traditional notation. They are also introduced to classical composers and their works.

All students have the opportunity to perform at the school-wide Christmas Service, at the Elementary School Christmas Concert, and at various events during the Spring Arts Festival—including conducting a professional orchestra!

Teacher Spotlight

“I believe all children are capable of music learning. The whole child should be engaged in this process. We do this by using instruments, movement, dance, theory, singing, listening and analyzing, and working individually and as a team to create music. I want to spur on a lifelong love of music and base the learning we do in the classroom on that because I think all the skills we learn in music go far beyond the walls of the music classroom.”

– Ms. Melody Tibbits Zaneccchia, Music Teacher

Physical Education

Our Physical Education program helps each child progressively develop coordination, body management, and physical stamina, with all activities based on the principles of movement education. In the early grades, students develop an understanding of body control and movement through space. Upper-elementary students apply the basic skills they’ve learned in challenging games and activities that also incorporate lessons in sportsmanship, team play, and strategy.

Health concepts and fitness activities are included in several units throughout the year, and in all grade levels the focus is placed on the development of physical competence and the meeting of personal challenges to build self-esteem—all with the ultimate goal of fostering a life-long enjoyment of physical activity.

Teacher Spotlight

“As a coach and teacher, I believe in the American system because there is great discipline, and in sports that’s a very important value.”

– Mr. Giorgio Volpi, Physical Education Teacher



AL FOCOLARE: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

The TASIS Early Childhood Program (ages 3–7, grades Pre-Kindergarten through 1) approaches learning through hands-on exploration and play. Aiming to create lifelong learners, we encourage our young students to use their natural curiosity to investigate and discover the world with advancing independence in high-quality learning environments. Children work individually and collaboratively on foundational skills in mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, music, movement, and dramatic play. All interrelated aspects of a child’s growth—development of coordination, social and emotional skills, and visual and performing arts—are considered in order to establish a solid and well-rounded basis for learning.

Al Focolare, our Early Childhood Center, comprises six classrooms with dedicated spaces for art, science, library, and physical education. Our playground is a well-cared-for environment filled with nature’s beauty and variety—a place that supports imaginative, social, and gross motor play. Students are served

multiple-course, family-style meals for lunch each day and are encouraged to learn to make their own healthy choices and use proper table manners.

Pre-Kindergarten Program

Our Pre-Kindergarten program begins at age three (children must turn three before September 1 and be toilet-trained) and consists of two levels: Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4. These full-day programs are designed to help young children improve their language skills and integrate socially before moving on to Kindergarten. The curriculum for Pre-K 4 classes directly follows the Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence™ in all subject areas and includes weekly visits to our Early Childhood Science Laboratory, whereas the Pre-K 3 program is thematic-based, addressing topics such as colors, shapes, seasons, friendship, the five senses, the alphabet, transportation, holidays, nutrition, habitats, and weather. Children in both levels cover music, art, physical education, and library units with specialist teachers.

Students in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten are not formally divided into American and Italian Sections until they start grade 1. Kindergarten students do, however, receive their primary instruction in English, have an Italian Language class with a native Italian speaker, and have bilingual instruction woven into various aspects of the program.

Teacher Spotlight

“We want to make sure that when all students start Kindergarten, they are ready to succeed. We can better ensure success by working on fine and gross motor skills, social and emotional development, and independence and responsibility in Pre-Kindergarten starting at age three. In addition, young children are naturally drawn to manipulating and examining objects around them, and our mathematically rich environment builds upon their curiosity and desire to explore.”

– Ms. Carol Hinchliff, Early Childhood Coordinator



OUR APPROACH



GREAT TEACHERS MAKE GREAT SCHOOLS

With a diverse student body representing roughly 30 nationalities each year, we are a true global community and consider it paramount to hire outstanding teachers who are well-versed in international schools, multilingual education, and early-childhood education.

More than 75 percent of the Elementary School Faculty holds advanced degrees. Faculty members

speaking more than a dozen languages, with native English speakers leading both the American and Italian Sections.

Our teachers work hard to form a personal connection with each student, strive to create a nurturing atmosphere in the classroom, and believe deeply in student potential.

Teacher Spotlight

“I enjoy teaching at the Elementary School level because the students give you unconditional love, and it is exciting for me, as a teacher, to see the excitement surrounding that moment when they understand a new concept. They get very emotional, and it is like a light bulb went on.”

– Ms. Natasha Koltypin, Grade 1 Teacher

“I want my students to know that they can try anything, be anything, and do anything. When we come to those bumps in the road, we can figure out what works best for them. Continuing to encourage them, creating that belief in themselves, and stretching them to reach their best abilities sets a good foundation to keep them intrinsically motivated to learn.”

– Ms. Sarah Maas Bearden, Grade 4 Teacher

Student Spotlight

Filippo Cipolini '19, who scored 38 points on his Bilingual IB Diploma assessment and is now studying at Boston University, started at TASIS in Kindergarten and had this to say about his 13 years at the School:

“I have been fortunate to come across so many talented and passionate teachers who truly care about the intellectual and character development of their students. The opportunities for personal and intellectual growth that TASIS has given me are beyond what I could have ever imagined a school could offer...Elementary School at TASIS was a magical place because we would have so much fun in class that we wouldn't even realize how much we were learning. Then all of a sudden the year would end and we'd realize we had learned so much!”

Parent Comment

“The great thing about TASIS is it has great teachers. It has people who care. I appreciate that when my child comes to school, he's cared for, he's nurtured, he's taught well. He's

happy, he's looked after, and he's disciplined in the right way. These are important steps to make a child grow into the person they're going to be.”



DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION



Children at the TASIS Elementary School come from all over the globe, with vastly differing abilities in math and reading in English. Our teachers therefore differentiate instruction in both reading and math within each grade level. Each student's progress is constantly monitored, and adjustments are made as needed.

Small-group and individualized reading instruction is provided on a daily basis, and students have specific, ongoing assessments to determine placement in the appropriate reading group as our instructors focus

on the five pillars of reading development: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

Students in need of greater challenge are accommodated in a number of ways. Teachers stretch advanced readers by assigning them more difficult titles for independent reading, for example, while in Math a teacher may choose to provide instruction to the full class for 10–15 minutes before breaking the group into different stations designed to serve each student appropriately. Pull-in teachers join the classroom to help the homeroom teacher meet the needs of each learner, and students who continue to demonstrate the need for greater challenge are provided with more demanding assignments.

SMALL CLASSES

The average Elementary School homeroom currently has just 14 students. Small class sizes allow our teachers to more effectively track their students' development and gain a better understanding of their strengths and passions.





RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

Our faculty has adopted the Responsive Classroom approach, a teaching method that helps students strengthen both academic and social-emotional skills, builds a collaborative community of learners, and delivers content in a manner that is interesting to students. Professional development in the Responsive Classroom approach has helped teachers improve their discipline practices, train students to be responsible for their own behavior, and prepare teaching spaces and lesson plans that help the class achieve its goals.

Some in the teaching profession view discipline as something separate from instruction—something that a teacher must impose on her class so that she can teach in peace. At TASIS Elementary School, we have a different approach: here, discipline is an important learning activity. We believe that some of the most important lessons children learn at school take place on the playground as well as in the classroom. Our approach to discipline is instructive rather than punitive.

Whether a child is struggling with his multiplication tables or trying to learn how to behave well, the teacher’s job remains unchanged. It is not to punish, but rather to instruct and to increase virtue.

Teacher Spotlight

“There are two parts to my job: education and instruction. Instruction consists of teaching academics while education is, in my opinion, the most interesting part and certainly what I love the most. I like to describe educating as working on the soil. You need to work on the soil a lot and take good care of it until it is ready for you to put the seed in. If you put in enough effort and have patience, then as soon as you spread the seed, it quickly starts growing and will grow beautifully; more importantly, it will have strong roots. The children need to be taken good care of, and the learning comes when and if they are emotionally ready.”

– Ms. Cecilia Origoni, Grade 3 Italian Section



TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

We use technology to enhance traditional teaching methods, not replace them. Our technology-rich environment, which is designed to support our youngest learners in their classrooms and meet diverse learning and language needs, provides ample opportunities for students to use modern tools to learn, create, and collaborate. All students in grades K–5 have access to iPads as they learn a multitude of content and skills that help prepare them for success in the Middle School, including the following:

- responsibly using apps and the internet to find information and images
- writing with word processor and graphic organizer applications
- practicing arithmetic, spelling, and grammar
- creating and delivering informational presentations
- creating and editing videos and other forms of multimedia
- developing digital citizenship skills
- using translators and dictionaries
- sending email communication (in grades 4–5)

All Elementary School teachers are provided a Mac laptop and an iPad. Teachers work together to share ideas and design lessons that integrate technology in age-appropriate ways. They also collaborate with our Learning Technologies Coordinator in one-on-one sessions, team meetings, and in-class lessons.

Teacher Spotlight

“In order to thrive in this world, learners of all ages must be able to create, communicate, and learn with computers. The iPad’s ability to transform into a book, camera, translator, recording studio, dictionary, word processor, sketchpad, encyclopedia, and communicator—along with its portability, familiarity, and ease of use—make it a great computing tool for our Elementary School students.”

– Mr. Tim Venchus, Learning Technologies Coordinator

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

We believe that the education of a child should not stop at 15:30 and therefore offer an expansive After-School Program that promotes an active, wholesome lifestyle and encourages students to discover new interests. The program builds upon the fine work done during regular school hours by offering students activities in athletics, performing and visual arts, modern languages, and more. All activities take place in a pleasant and supportive environment and allow children to cultivate their talents while creating new friendships and building self-confidence.

Recent offerings include Robotics, Cooking Club, Bug Club, Creative Writing and Drama Club, German, Homework Club, Art and Emotions, Horseback Riding, Yoga and Games, Rock Climbing, AC Milan Soccer, Mini-Basketball, Mini-Volleyball, Baseball, Choir, Dance and Choreography, Dance for Joy (Ballet), Tip Tap, Speech and Drama, and ES Musical.

The two drama options—Speech and Drama and ES Musical—in many ways serve as an extension of the Elementary School’s exemplary arts program. Speech

and Drama concentrates on skill-building, creativity, collaboration, and confidence in performance and is offered each fall while ES Musical is offered each spring and culminates with multiple performances of a musical theater production in the state-of-the-art Palmer Cultural Center.

Teacher Spotlight

“My philosophy is to embrace the diversity of the classroom in order to allow for differing ideas to collide and new knowledge to be cultivated. I also believe we need to allow students to make mistakes. I aim to set up a classroom that is more of a laboratory as opposed to a place where people feel they need to be perfect. I think you have to foster an environment of creativity, and this starts with ensuring the students are open to taking risks.”

– Mr. Matthew Frazier-Smith, Elementary School Theater Director



SERVICE LEARNING

Our dynamic Service Learning program instills compassion in students and builds awareness for important local and global issues. Students work on different service projects at each grade level. Their level of involvement grows each year, with the ultimate goal of building a foundation for success in the High School's pioneering Global Service Program.

Recent projects have included running a donation drive for a local toy hospital, learning about microloans and putting them into action, tracking food waste on campus and learning how to compost, working with a local association for the blind, and teaming up with a charity that brightens the lives of terminally ill children by sending cards and letters.



Through the pioneering Opsahl Global Service Program, our High School students serve the local community and have the opportunity to go on life-changing trips to destinations across the world, including Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, and Zambia.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As parents, you are strongly encouraged to be involved in your child's education and to be in regular dialogue with your child's teachers. Weekly bulletins help keep you informed about your child's classes and upcoming school events, and you will have the opportunity to attend regular Parent Coffees hosted by the Lower School Head.

You are also invited to join the excellent TASIS Parent Association, which is committed to building a strong community by fostering a spirit of inclusion and cooperation; promoting open communication between parents, teachers, and administrators; connecting the community through social events to make all families feel welcome; and enhancing the school environment through fundraising activities.

Your interest in what your child is learning and your support in developing good study habits at home are

crucial for the successful education of your child. Our curriculum is a contract—and an invitation.

Parent Comments

“The Elementary School Faculty has often impressed me with its ability to understand each child and support him or her in a positive collaboration with the family. The faculty has always been engaged and proactive.”

“The strength in the program comes from the strength of the staff. The teachers are experienced, dedicated, and kind, and provide an environment for intellectual exploration and emotional safety. Everyone is approachable and responsive, which makes the journey of educating your child feel more like a partnership, or consortium.”





JOIN THE TASIS FAMILY

TASIS has decades of experience in the education of young people aged 3 to 19 in Switzerland, England, Puerto Rico, and Portugal.

Defined by tradition and excellence since 1956, TASIS Switzerland offers academic programs for day students in grades Pre-Kindergarten (beginning at age three) to Postgraduate (13th year) and for boarding students in grades six to Postgraduate, serving approximately 715 students from 60 nations each year. High School students can choose from individual Advanced Placement (AP) courses or pursue the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, providing access to outstanding universities around the world.

TASIS England covers Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 in Surrey, England; TASIS Dorado is a thriving Pre-Kindergarten to grade 12 school

in Dorado, Puerto Rico; and TASIS Portugal, the newest member of the TASIS family, is a Pre-Kindergarten to grade 6 school in Sintra, Portugal, that plans to add more grades in the coming years. All but TASIS Portugal also offer robust summer programs.

For more information about programs offered during both the academic year and the summer at all TASIS locations, please visit www.tasis.com.

To learn more about TASIS
or to schedule a visit, contact
the Admissions Office:

admissions@tasis.ch
+41 91 960 5151



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