



Welcome to
our classroom.

Primary

Kindergarten - Second Grade

Academic Rigor

AGES 5 TO 8

In kindergarten, first and second grade, academic rigor means emphasizing the building blocks of independent learning. Students grow from emergent to fully independent readers by the end of second grade through a blended literacy program that combines a phonics based decoding program with literature circles. In second grade, as students progress from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" they are introduced to structured vocabulary study.

The primary math program at Giffthill School emphasizes the importance of conceptual understanding and students' ability to speak confidently about what they are doing to solve a problem and why. The school uses Singapore Math methodology and materials. With this approach our teachers introduce new mathematical concepts using concrete representations (manipulatives), then as students' conceptual confidence grows they transition to using pictorial representations, and ultimately they help students apply abstract operational algorithms (formulas).



History and Social Studies standards prioritize questioning, analyzing, and comparing information over the rote memorization of facts. The island is our classroom, and instruction makes the most of the unique geographic location, political status, and living history of St. John to introduce and reinforce instructional objectives.

Similarly, STEAM projects incorporate science and engineering standards focused on providing opportunities to question, analyze, and compare observations about the world. Even at the primary level, students begin talking about the experimental design process using developmentally appropriate vocabulary and procedures.





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In our classrooms rigor looks like:

Classroom learning centers allow students to engage in a variety of self-paced exploration stations including read to self, read to someone, read to teacher, audiobook listening stations, phonics games using classroom technology; as well as teacher-directed small group and whole class instruction.

Daily whole group math lessons include "anchor" problems in which students use manipulatives to model and problem solve story problems, and then share their process and answer statements with the class using correct mathematical vocabulary. Math centers provide further practice opportunities so students can build fluency with math facts once they have demonstrated conceptual mastery.

Weekly STEAM projects encourage students to apply math and science concepts and skills to engineering problems, often using art to represent their findings. Students work with the National Park Service, the St. John Historical Society, and local businesses to extend learning into the living laboratory of our island and our community.

Enrichment programs include weekly classes in EARTH (Education and Resilience Through Horticulture), art, PE, music, and Spanish. These classes are designed to provide cross-curricular connections and creative outlets for all children.