Hunter College Elementary School (HCES) is a publicly funded (tuition free) school that serves a diverse population of children who have been identified as intellectually gifted. The Hunter curriculum is characterized by high expectations and designed to facilitate the development of students’ creative and critical thinking skills. Curriculum development and implementation are grounded in the best practices of gifted education and informed by students’ individual interests. The program at HCES enables students to examine topics in great depth, to accelerate their learning when appropriate, and to strive for a high standard of processing and articulating ideas.

In addition to developing the capabilities of talented learners, the mission of Hunter College Elementary School is to nurture social and emotional development by encouraging students to be caring, compassionate, and responsible citizens. HCES seeks to prepare its students to be life-long learners, leaders, and thinkers. The positive relationships established between children and teachers are fundamental. This is accomplished in an environment that celebrates the cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of its unique educational community.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

■ Kindergarten
Children learn to organize information and generate new perspectives. Teaching strategies highlight the skills of classification and identification of relationships. Teachers introduce the notion that problem solving can serve as a source of new ideas, excitement, and the development of higher order thinking.

■ Grades One Through Three
Students learn to apply concepts to the specific content areas. Emphasis is placed on identifying students’ skills and individualizing instruction. All subjects are linked to the children’s advanced vocabulary, verbal fluency, strong memory, and to their ability to expand and apply learning strategies to new information and tasks.

■ Grades Four Through Six
The teachers’ role as mentors helps the students to develop and refine strategies used in investigation and experimentation. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to explore topics in-depth and to become independent researchers. Art activities encourage critical and divergent thinking. The National Dance Institute (NDI) is part of the program in 4th grade. Fifth graders broaden their science studies in their trip to Nature’s Classroom. The 6th grade curriculum incorporates learning strategies that ease transition to the expectations and challenges of future studies. The excitement in the final year of elementary school is heightened by their research projects, theatrical production, and capturing memories in their yearbook.

SPECIALS

In addition to the courses taught by homeroom teachers, children study subjects, known as “specials,” each of which is taught by a different expert in the field.

■ Integrated Technology
Classrooms are equipped with computers and Smart Boards to provide internet access and to expand teaching and learning strategies. Each child saves his/her computer work in a personal folder on the server. Grades K-3 meet in the computer lab for projects and assignments to develop technological skills, grade 3 is introduced to the iPad while grades 4-6 use wireless Macbook laptop carts.

■ Visual Arts
During the kindergarten level, focus is on materials and the mastery of skills. In the upper grades, students solve 3-D construction problems and engage in activities such as painting, collage, drawing, and puppet-making.

■ Studio Arts
The differentiated studio arts curricula (specializing in clay and wood-working) accentuate skill development with cumulative skill building from year to year. In studio, students enhance tactile and fine-motor skills, as well as artistic problem-solving.
■ World Languages
Students take French in kindergarten, Spanish in grade 1, and continue in French or Spanish in grades 2 through 6. The goal is for students to have exposure to the cultures and people who live in French/Spanish regions of the world. Grades K-3 learn through story telling, puppetry, games, songs, and rhymes. The program in grades 4-6 uses reading, writing activities, projects and performances.

■ Music
The goals of the music program are to develop musicality and an appreciation of music through listening, singing, performance, creative experiences, and playing rhythm and melody instruments. In the early grades students have keyboard instruction, while in the later grades they experience a variety of wind and stringed instruments.

■ Health/Wellness Education
The curriculum includes movement education, skill development, cardiovascular exercise, gymnastics and team sports. The school’s outdoor space and the Ron Brown Playground allow a variety of games and free play in a safe, supervised environment.

■ Science
Science emphasizes experimentation, inquiry, active investigation, and analytical thinking. Activities enable students to make concrete connections between science concepts and their own lives. They learn to plan projects and to formulate and test their hypotheses. Students practice collection and analysis of data as they progress through the grades.

■ Chess
For over thirty years, HCES has offered a substantial chess program conducted during the school day. The emphasis is on improving skills and strategies rather than competitive play. Children may pursue their interests by joining the chess team.

■ Library
The Elementary School Library is designed to support the curriculum, encourage independent study and offer recreational reading. The collection includes comprehensive reference materials as well as fiction, non-fiction and biographical titles and an extensive multi-cultural collection. Students use current technology for their research and other library activities. Students and parents have 24/7 access through our eBooks and audio books collection.

■ SCHOOL SERVICES
■ Guidance
HCES has one full time school counselor and a psychology fellow. These experts collaborate with teachers regarding the students’ social and emotional well-being. Issues such as problem solving, decision-making, empathy and self-awareness are addressed through individual and group work in the class room.

■ Learning Intervention Program
This program provides multisensory, intensive instruction to students who would benefit from individualized help in such areas as reading, language usage, learning strategies, vocabulary, organization, concept development, memory and recall, auditory and visual processing, and fine motor coordination. After-school tutoring is also offered on an “as needed” basis, funded by the PTA.

■ The After-School Program- “Hawk’s Nest”
The after-school program “Hawk’s Nest” offers a selection of special interest classes. There are art, cooking, music, chess, dance, robotics, and physical fitness classes offered. The program runs from 2:45 to 5:15 pm. Class selection and fee information is available online.

■ Transportation
From Kindergarten through grade six, free transportation is provided for eligible families within a five-mile radius of the school by the Bureau of Public Transportation. Eligible students are provided either a school bus or MTA card.