

# Curriculum & Educational Philosophies

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*Early Education • Elementary School • Middle School*

## **Mission**

Our mission is to cultivate an inclusive community founded on relationships that nurtures the whole child and inspires creativity, problem solving, and independent thinking through challenging and collaborative learning experiences—empowering every student to grow as an engaged citizen and critical thinker.



## I. Educational Philosophies and Program Foundations Overview

### Mission Alignment

At Greenbrier Community School (GCS), curriculum and instruction reflect our mission in daily practice: an inclusive, relationship-centered community that nurtures the whole child while challenging students to think critically, solve problems creatively, collaborate, and contribute meaningfully.

### Whole-Child, Relationship-Based Learning

GCS integrates social-emotional, cognitive, and academic development. Teachers build strong relationships with students and families so children feel safe, recognized, and ready to engage in rigorous learning.

### Reggio Emilia Inspired Practice

We are Reggio Emilia inspired: children are capable and competent, and curiosity drives learning. Teachers observe and listen closely, then design experiences that deepen children's questions, invite collaboration, and support reflection and documentation.

### Play as Essential Learning

In Early Education, play is central. Self-directed play, supported by teachers and open-ended materials, builds language, social skills, self-regulation, perseverance, creativity, and problem solving. Early literacy and numeracy are introduced through developmentally appropriate games, songs, stories, and hands-on exploration.

### Responsive Classroom and Social-Emotional Learning

Responsive Classroom practices provide a consistent framework for community, engagement, and behavior support. We explicitly teach and reinforce skills students need to learn and thrive together—cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

- Morning Meeting and class meetings
- Community rule creation and shared expectations
- Positive teacher language, interactive modeling, and guided discovery
- Logical consequences and collaborative problem solving
- Cool-down spaces, reflection, and re-entry routines



## Multi-Age Grouping and Continuity of Care

GCS uses developmentally appropriate multi-age groupings that reduce unhelpful labeling, strengthen peer culture, and create natural mentoring opportunities. Students often remain with a teacher for more than one year, supporting smoother transitions and more personalized instruction.

## Inquiry, Experiential Learning, and Community Engagement

Across divisions, students investigate compelling questions, work collaboratively, use rich texts and sources, and apply learning through hands-on projects and meaningful community connections.

## Literacy Instruction: Science of Reading and Multisensory Foundations

GCS builds strong readers and writers through explicit, systematic instruction paired with joyful reading and authentic writing.

- Heggerty for daily phonemic awareness (Pre-K–4)
- Orton-Gillingham (OG) in small groups (K–2), informed by ongoing assessment
- Ready Reading as the core ELA program (Grades 1–8)
- Novel Studies (Grades 1-8)
- Weekly spelling/grammar/vocabulary (Grades 3–8), including Greek/Latin roots
- Writing across the day in ELA, science, and social studies (including digital composition)
- i-Ready diagnostics beginning in Grade 1 to inform instruction and individualized practice

## Mathematics: Conceptual Understanding, Fluency, and Problem Solving

Math instruction emphasizes conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and real-world problem solving through discourse, models, and hands-on tasks.

- i-Ready Classroom Mathematics (K–8) with games and hands-on tasks
- Number Corner daily routines (K–4)
- Short daily fact-fluency practice
- i-Ready diagnostics beginning in Grade 1 to inform instruction and individualized practice



### **Differentiation and Responsive Teaching**

Teachers plan varied approaches to content, process, and product. Small-group instruction and flexible grouping provide targeted support and appropriate challenge.

### **Assessment, Portfolios, and Family Partnership**

Assessment supports growth and student ownership. Students set goals, reflect, and compile portfolios of work. Families participate in conferences at least twice per year, and teachers provide standards-based indicators and narrative feedback. Students are assessed informally, such as through journals, unit assessments, quizzes, discussions, labs, and formally, through i-Ready diagnostics (beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year) and standardized tests (end of year).



## II. Curriculum by Division

### A. Early Education (18 months–Pre-K)

Early Education classrooms are nurturing communities where play, relationships, and developmentally appropriate experiences support growth across social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language domains.

#### Program Structures

- Small class sizes and close attention to individual developmental needs
- Multi-age groupings that encourage peer modeling, mentoring, and belonging
- Daily outdoor play and nature-based exploration
- Ongoing interaction with older students, including buddy/mentor experiences
- Beautiful, open-ended materials that invite creativity and inquiry

#### Learning Priorities

- Social-emotional: relationships, self-regulation, empathy, and problem solving
- Language/literacy: oral language, storytelling, rhyming, and early sound awareness
- Numeracy: counting, one-to-one correspondence, number recognition, patterns, early measurement
- STEM/STEAM: building, experimenting, observing, and making sense of the natural world
- Creative expression: art, music, movement, dramatic play, and design
- Physical development: large- and fine-motor growth through play and purposeful materials



## **B. Elementary School (Kindergarten–Grade 4)**

Elementary students build strong academic foundations within an inclusive, collaborative community. Instruction is aligned to West Virginia College and Career Readiness Standards while maintaining space for inquiry, creativity, and experiential learning.

### **Program Structures**

- Multi-age groupings and consistent routines that promote independence and teamwork
- Flexible small-group instruction and differentiated learning centers
- Hands-on, project-oriented learning connected to real-world contexts
- Buddy experiences that build leadership and connection across ages
- Enrichment (foreign language, art, music, theater, and PE) that supports whole-child development

### **English Language Arts (K–4)**

- Heggerty (Pre-K–4) and Orton-Gillingham (K–2) for foundational literacy skills
- Ready Reading (Grades 1–4) for comprehension, analysis, vocabulary, and discussion routines
- Writing daily in ELA and across science and social studies
- Spelling/grammar/vocabulary through weekly mini-lessons and centers
- Novel studies and daily read-aloud/“Chill Zone” time

### **Mathematics (K–4)**

- i-Ready Classroom Mathematics for core instruction and problem solving
- Number Corner integrated into Morning Meeting for daily review
- Short daily fluency practice and math games
- i-Ready diagnostics beginning in Grade 1 to monitor growth and personalize practice

### **Science (K–4)**

- Generation Genius resources paired with discussion, vocabulary, and hands-on investigations
- Extensions through student questions, experiments, and outdoor/nature connections

### **Social Studies (K–4)**

- inquirED inquiry units integrating literacy with history, civics, geography, and economics
- Units that begin with compelling questions and culminate in informed action



## C. Middle School (Grades 5–8)

Middle School challenges students to become increasingly independent, reflective, and engaged learners, supported by strong relationships and consistent community structures.

### Program Structures

- Discussion-based classrooms emphasizing reasoning, communication, critical thinking, and respectful collaboration
- Project-based and inquiry-driven learning in science and social studies
- Leadership, mentoring, and community engagement opportunities
- Ongoing SEL support through Responsive Classroom structures and collaborative problem solving

### English Language Arts (5–8)

- Ready Reading routines and complex texts to build comprehension and analysis
- Weekly grammar/vocabulary (Grades 5–8), including Greek/Latin roots
- Writing across genres (argument, explanatory, narrative, research, reflection)
- Novel studies supported by discussion, projects, and presentations
- Practice communicating through technology (word processing, presentations, design tools)

### Mathematics (5–8)

- i-Ready Classroom Mathematics for conceptual understanding, fluency, and problem solving
- Collaborative task work and mathematical modeling
- i-Ready diagnostics and targeted practice for intervention and extension

### Science (5–8)

- Standards-aligned, hands-on science supported by Generation Genius resources
- Investigations, lab-style experiences, and project work emphasizing scientific thinking and communication

### Social Studies (5–8)

- inquirED and related inquiry units across history, geography, civics, and economics
- Source analysis and multiple perspectives to support civil discourse
- Culminating projects connecting learning to community and contemporary issues



### III. Curriculum Descriptions

#### Heggerty

Evidence-based, daily phonemic awareness instruction. Each class has a specific Heggerty curriculum with 35 weeks of daily decoding and encoding lessons. Heggerty is incorporated during morning meetings for students to identify and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words, which is the foundation for literacy and reading success.

#### Orton-Gillingham

Orton-Gillingham (OG) is a research-based, scientific approach to reading and writing instruction that has been used for more than 50 years. At GCS, all Elementary and Pre-K Lead Teachers and Co-Teachers have completed a comprehensive thirty-hour multi-sensory Orton-Gillingham certification, strengthening our capacity to provide explicit, structured literacy instruction for a wide range of learners.

OG is multi-sensory, systematic, sequential, and cumulative, explicitly teaching the connections between letters and sounds through direct instruction, guided practice, and application. Students receive instruction in small groups during the daily ELA block, grouped by similar skill levels and supported through a structured progression based on how children develop language. Students demonstrate mastery before moving forward, and concepts are re-taught as needed.

Teachers use ongoing assessments to monitor growth and develop weekly spelling lists based on individual progress. OG also emphasizes understanding language patterns—the “how” and “why”—so students can decode and spell words independently and confidently.

#### Ready Reading

Research based English Language Arts curriculum aligned with, based on, and informed by the Science of Reading that uses a consistent Read, Think, Talk, Write model with Teacher-led discussions and small group collaboration. Lessons scaffold to build students’ confidence as they develop important critical thinking and analytical skills, using real-world source texts, from literature and poetry to blogs and news articles. The proven-effective program offers a balance of informational and literary texts from across a wide range of genres to promote strong reading comprehension and critical thinking.



## Spelling/Grammar/Vocabulary

Taught and assessed weekly through mini-lessons and hands-on and engaging ELA centers. Students focus on one spelling, grammar, and vocabulary rule per week, practicing that skill in a variety of ways to build a solid foundation that can be applied throughout their other areas of learning. In addition to learning Greek and Latin vocabulary roots, vocabulary words from each subject are studied.

## Writing

Writing is integrated into every part of the day through our ELA, Social Studies, and Science curriculums to teach students how to defend, explain, and reflect on their learning. While writing mechanics are taught during ELA, students continue to build on and practice their skills through various methods, including projects, research, journaling, creative writing, poetry, and essays. Additionally, students learn to write with technology, utilizing apps such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Canva.

## Novel Studies

Reading a novel together as a class, guided by the teacher, allows students to learn how to analyze and walk through an entire book. Novel Studies builds stamina and improves fluency, comprehension, and communication.

## Chill Zone

Elementary classes have a 20 minute Chill Zone each day. During this time, teachers read an age appropriate novel to the students while they relax and listen. Novel read alouds enhance student knowledge by exercising the brain to think critically. Being read to improves vocabulary and communication skills, which are crucial for academic success.

## Inquired

InquirED inspires inquiry based learning with engaging, hands-on investigations building knowledge in History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. The Literacy-rich units and research-based practices integrate literacy and social studies instruction. Units launch with a compelling question, move through a sustained investigation of content, and culminate when students take informed action. Throughout a unit, students grow as readers and writers, they explore diverse sources and perspectives while participating in immersive experiences. They discuss and collaborate, play interactive learning games, and then create and share projects with their communities inside and outside of school.



## Generation Genius

We love this teaching resource that brings hands-on science standards to life. Generation Genius provides our teachers with a comprehensive set of science lessons made in partnership with the National Science Teachers Association. Each lesson and live-action video is followed by teacher-led instruction and group discussions, weekly science vocabulary, hands-on science investigations, and room to let the teachers and students delve deeper into their specific areas of interest.

## i-Ready Mathematics

i-Ready Classroom Mathematics is a comprehensive core mathematics program in book form that makes math accessible to all students. Everything works together to support teachers and empower students to connect to mathematics in new ways. The curriculum includes an instructional design that allows students to take ownership of their learning, rigorous practice opportunities that build students' conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. This curriculum enables students to advance quickly once they master a skill, which builds their confidence and maximizes their engagement. This curriculum presents real-world problems that help students understand the "why" behind the "how." We complement this curriculum with physical and digital Learning Games.

## Number Corner

Number Corner is a skill-building program revolving around the classroom calendar and used in Morning Meeting. It provides daily practice as well as continual encounters with broader mathematical concepts. Number Corner features short daily workouts that introduce, reinforce, and extend skills and concepts related to the critical areas of study at each grade level. New pieces are added to the display each day, providing starting points for discussions, problem solving, and short written exercises.

## 5 Minute Math

Elementary students perform daily math drills to help them memorize math facts, which frees up their brains to tackle more challenging math problems. Math fact fluency ensures that students aren't spending precious learning and testing time grappling with basic math facts. Students with automaticity of math facts solve problems quicker and more accurately than those who still struggle with basic facts recall. Students progress at their own speed through these daily drills.



## IV. Curriculum Components at a Glance

<b>Component</b>	<b>Purpose / Focus</b>	<b>Typically Used</b>
Heggerty	Daily phonemic awareness routines that support early reading success.	Pre-K–4
Orton-Gillingham (OG)	Multisensory, explicit phonics and language instruction delivered in small groups.	Pre-K–2 (and as needed 3rd and above)
Ready Reading	Core ELA program supporting reading, discussion, vocabulary, and writing routines.	1–8
Spelling/Grammar/Vocabulary	Weekly skill focus and academic vocabulary development (including Greek/Latin roots).	3–8
inquirED & Students of History	Inquiry-based social studies integrating literacy, sources, and informed action.	K–8
Generation Genius	Standards-aligned science videos and lesson resources supporting hands-on investigations.	K–8
i-Ready Classroom Mathematics	Core math instruction emphasizing conceptual understanding, practice, and problem solving.	K–8
Number Corner	Daily math routines connected to calendar and key skills.	K–4
i-Ready Diagnostics	Reading and math diagnostics to show growth over time plus individualized practice paths to monitor growth.	1–8
Enrichment	Foreign language, art, music, theater, physical education, and clubs to support whole-child learning.	All grades



## V. Assessments and Progress Monitoring

Assessment and progress monitoring at our school are designed to support our mission of nurturing the whole child and empowering every student to grow as an engaged citizen and critical thinker. We view assessment as a continuous, relationship-based process that helps teachers understand each learner deeply, respond thoughtfully, and guide students toward greater independence and ownership of learning. Across all divisions, we prioritize developmentally appropriate assessment practices that honor students' academic growth while also attending to social-emotional development, collaboration, problem solving, and well-being.

Progress is documented and communicated through multiple measures, including observation, student work, performance tasks, reflection, and formal tools when appropriate. Families are essential partners in this process. Through conferences, portfolios, and narrative feedback, we maintain clear communication about student strengths, next steps, and growth over time. This balanced approach ensures assessment remains meaningful and supportive—informing instruction, celebrating progress, and helping students set goals as confident, capable learners.

### Early Education

In Early Education, assessment is primarily observational and portfolio-based, reflecting our belief that young children show learning through play, exploration, language, and relationships. Teachers intentionally observe students during daily routines and learning experiences, documenting growth over time through work samples and authentic evidence of development. We hold bi-annual parent/teacher goal-setting conferences during which teachers and families partner to set individualized goals. Students' learning is captured through portfolios that highlight academic, social, emotional, and physical progress. Teachers provide detailed narrative reports throughout the year to communicate each child's development as a learner, problem solver, and community member.

### Elementary Education

In Elementary School, assessment practices combine ongoing, skills-based evaluation with meaningful opportunities for reflection and goal setting. Students receive three progress reports each year, and we hold bi-annual parent/student/teacher conferences focused on goal setting and goal review, with additional conferences available as requested. Students set personal goals while teachers provide skills-based assessments and narrative feedback



describing academic growth as well as social, emotional, and physical development.

Academic progress is communicated through standards-based, mastery grading. Progress reports reflect students' levels of mastery of specific West Virginia standards rather than traditional letter grades, offering families clear information about what students know and can do. Teachers use varied assessment methods, including projects, observations, writing, discussions, and i-Ready diagnostics, to evaluate mastery, monitor growth, and inform instruction. Students take the i-Ready diagnostic at the beginning, middle, and end of the year in math and reading. Students in third grade and above also complete end-of-year standardized testing. Narrative feedback provides families with a complete picture of each child's growth as a learner, collaborator, and contributing member of the school community.

### Middle School

In Middle School, assessment and progress monitoring support increasing independence, accountability, and critical thinking while continuing to reflect our whole-child approach. Students receive three progress reports each year, and we hold bi-annual parent/student/teacher conferences centered on goal setting and goal review, with additional conferences offered as needed. Students set personal goals and engage in reflection about progress over time. Teachers provide skills-based assessments and detailed narratives describing students' academic, social, emotional, and physical growth.

Student learning is assessed using a standards-based, mastery approach aligned to West Virginia standards. Progress reports communicate mastery through clear performance indicators alongside narrative comments that highlight strengths, growth, and next steps. Assessments include essays, projects, presentations, discussions, tests, and i-Ready diagnostics, providing multiple pathways for students to demonstrate understanding and apply learning in authentic ways. Students take the i-Ready diagnostic at the beginning, middle, and end of the year in math and reading and complete end-of-year standardized testing. Middle school students also receive letter grades, which provide an additional summary measure while mastery indicators and narrative feedback preserve clarity about specific skills and standards. This balanced approach encourages student ownership of learning and aligns with our mission's emphasis on independent thinking, responsibility, and meaningful engagement in a learning community.