Student Support at Tenacre

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**Student Support at Tenacre Country Day School**

In keeping with the school’s mission to nurture and challenge each child, every day, Tenacre’s teachers and support staff are working together to set goals for academic and social/emotional growth for students at each grade level and to help students meet those goals.

Through small group instruction and individualized attention, Tenacre’s teachers seek to meet the needs of individuals while keeping expectations high for all students. Tenacre’s small classes, team-teaching model and strong academic curriculum help all students become effective learners and critical thinkers. The purpose of the academic support program is to provide remedial support and enrichment opportunities to those students who would benefit from additional services in order to enable them to reach their academic potential.

Social/emotional growth is addressed at all grade levels, for all students, in a variety of ways throughout the school day by all faculty and staff. Homeroom teachers, through age-appropriate social curriculum, group and individual discussions and communication with parents, attend daily to their needs. There are times in a child’s development when more pronounced needs may arise. When this occurs, the school uses a team approach to develop a social/emotional support plan.

**In-House Support, Enrichment, and Tutoring Philosophy**

Tenacre’s mission statement clearly states the school’s intent to nurture and challenge all students. One of the ways the school aims to fulfill its mission is by providing students with academic support and enrichment. These needs are identified through ongoing assessment and are accomplished through classroom support or in small or individualized instruction through specially trained support staff.

Tenacre recognizes fully the vital role that social/emotional well-being plays in meaningful academic learning. Students who thrive are those who can connect and collaborate with peers, open up to and be curious about their world, manage stress, take risks, develop resilience, and become self-aware and comfortable with who they are. As a school, we continue to expand our support system for students’ social/emotional health.

**In the Classroom**

At Tenacre, our homeroom teaching model provides for careful attention to each student’s needs. Students may be divided into smaller groups for instruction. Teachers assess student performance and individualize instruction as necessary.

In Grades 1 and 2, the model accounts for four instructors teaching reading to small groups of children. In Kindergarten, and Grades 3-6, there are three reading teachers. In Grades 1–6, there are three math teachers, providing options for flexible groupings. The small size of these flexible groupings maximizes the teacher-student interaction and makes it possible for teachers to meet individual needs for support or enrichment more effectively. At times we are able to add a group should the needs of the students require it. Our low teacher to student ratio allows us to add groups to grade levels when needed and support student needs as they arise.

The social/emotional development of students is addressed through a curriculum that includes targeted discussions, community building exercises, and ongoing character development. The “Responsive Classroom” program is used as a guiding resource in the early grades. The Social Thinking Curriculum guides instruction in grades 1-6. In addition to homeroom activities, the school has a Social Emotional Team (SET) including the Head of School, School Nurse, Director of Educational Support and Enrichment, and Consulting Psychologist that meets weekly to discuss any social emotional needs that may arise. In addition, the consulting psychologist meets several times a year with upper grades students.
(grades 4-6) to lead discussions on their transition to adolescence. The consultant also meets with other grades on selected topics.

**Protocol for Additional Academic Support & Enrichment**

**Academic Support**

There are times when a student will benefit from additional practice and direct instruction beyond what is offered in the classroom. When student needs arise, the following protocol is used to determine the appropriate plan for support.

1. Students are referred by homeroom teachers to the Director of Educational Support and Enrichment so strengths/needs can be objectively assessed. Special subject teachers may be involved in the referral process as well.

2. A follow-up meeting with homeroom teachers and Educational Support Staff is scheduled to discuss results of assessments and develop student support plans.

3. Plans are reviewed with parents at a meeting that includes homeroom teachers and a member(s) of the Support Team. A follow-up meeting with parents is scheduled to assess progress. Additional meetings may be requested by the teachers or parents.

**Social/Emotional Support**

When a student requires more individualized attention to social/emotional needs, the following protocol is used in response.

1. When a student demonstrates specific social/emotional needs, every attempt is made to meet those needs within each teaching environment.

2. When added accommodations/interventions are needed, the teachers seek consultation from the Social Emotional Team (SET), which includes the school’s consulting psychologist, administration, student support staff, and faculty.

3. An individual plan is developed and communicated to the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s) and all of his or her teachers. In addition, follow-up meetings take place in order to monitor progress.

4. At times, student support may require additional resources, including outside testing and/or therapy. When a family works with outside professionals, the school strongly recommends open communication among all parties.

**Enrichment**

Tenacre provides an enriched general program for all students, which is characterized by exposure to intellectually stimulating content, reading of advanced literature, in-depth study of topics, integrated study of disciplines, and opportunities for problem solving throughout the curriculum. Tenacre subscribes to the philosophy of horizontal enrichment, which strives to deepen student understanding without going ahead to next year’s curriculum. An example of this would be in math, where students who demonstrate a high level of competency with practice tasks move into solving sets of non-routine problems that require higher order skills. While built-in opportunities for enrichment meet the needs of most students, there are, on occasion, students who require more than the available enrichment to meet their potential. When a student is observed to be significantly beyond peers in both skill and content knowledge, the same protocol listed above is enacted (see Page 3, #s 1, 2 and 3).
Work with Support Staff

- Tenacre employs the following support staff:
- Director of Educational Support/Reading Coordinator
- Math Coordinator
- 4 Learning and Enrichment Specialists
- Orton Gillingham Learning Specialist (A/AOGPE)

Director of Educational Support and Enrichment & Reading Coordinator
The Directory of Educational Support and Enrichment & Reading Coordinator oversees a team of Learning and Enrichment Specialists, as well as overseeing the reading curriculum throughout the grades. The Director works with Learning and Enrichment Specialists and Homeroom teachers to design appropriate interventions within the classroom and also provides reading and learning support for individuals and small groups. The Director oversees school-wide reading assessments, and monitors student progress toward grade level benchmarks and communicates regularly with parents to support students.

Math Coordinator
The Math Coordinator is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the math program, Grades PK–6. She/he works with teachers to improve math instruction and provides enrichment and remedial support as appropriate. She/he serves as a resource for professional development and works to identify interdisciplinary connections across the curriculum.

Learning and Enrichment Specialists
The Learning and Enrichment Specialists work with individuals or small groups of students to provide either targeted skills or enrichment support throughout the curriculum. She/he also supports the reading program by teaching some reading groups and delivering reading assessments with the Reading and Educational Support Coordinator.

Orton-Gillingham Learning Specialist (A/AOGPE)
The Orton-Gillingham Learning Specialist supports the phonics-based reading program in the early grades. When students may not be meeting phonemic awareness or phonics benchmarks the Orton-Gillingham Learning Specialist will work with students to provide the multisensory, repeated phonetic practice proved to remediate early literacy deficits. This phonics support is mirrored in the phonics based curriculum in the earliest grades and allows for students to practice the skills they need to master early skills in decoding, reading fluency and reading comprehension.

Additional Programs
Assisted Study Hall
An Assisted Study Hall is available twice a week for students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who receive academic support from the support staff, are new to Tenacre or are recommended by their homeroom teachers. The goal of the program is to provide a time for students to work on homework in a structured and supportive atmosphere where progress is monitored and assistance is provided. Study and organizational skills are also modeled and monitored. It provides newly enrolled students with an opportunity to start the year off successfully and become familiar with Tenacre’s expectations for homework.

After-School Homework Time
Supervised homework time is available daily as part of the After-School program and is a good option for students needing homework time without additional support. Sign up is arranged by contacting Julie Connelly, After-School Director.

Foreign Language Waiver
Occasionally, the school may make the decision that students will not take Spanish in their fifth or sixth grade year to allow for increased academic or study skill work. When this decision is made it will be communicated to parents by the Head of School and/or the Director of Educational Support. Students enrolling in Grades 5 or
6 will be evaluated by the Spanish teachers to determine whether or not foreign language study is in their best interest at this point in their academic career.

Outside Tutoring
In some instances, students continue to struggle when attempting to master important reading, writing, spelling, math or organizational skills. In these situations, gaining outside-of-school support, such as meeting with a tutor during the week, may provide that one-on-one attention that will help a child overcome his or her difficulty. When deemed beneficial, a teacher or Director of Student Support will raise the question of tutoring, and after meeting with the parents, the homeroom teachers or support staff will provide the parents with names of possible tutors.

Any recommended tutor has been interviewed by a member of the school staff and has an understanding of Tenacre’s program. Fees range from $65–$90 per hour, and should be agreed upon by the tutor and the family in advance. If parents are interested in initiating tutoring, when none has been recommended, they should contact the Director of Educational Support, who oversees tutoring.

Any time that a tutoring relationship is established, it is critical that your child’s teachers be aware of it so that an effective relationship between the tutor and the school can be established. In this way, a child gains the maximum benefit of common approaches, goals, and expectations.

Tutoring can occur after school hours; however, the office must be notified of any such arrangements. Financial aid for tutoring may be available for families receiving tuition assistance. Please contact the Director of Enrollment Management for further information. For any other family for whom this extra expense may be a hardship, please contact the Head of School.

Academic Enrichment Tutoring
While every effort is made to expand students’ learning in areas where they demonstrate proficiency and academic strength, there may be times when teachers or parents feel a student would benefit from some additional enrichment work outside of school. Attending a math program, book club or writing activity can enhance a child’s interest, develop confidence, and be fun. Enrichment tutoring can be a meaningful activity and a wonderful outlet for a child—boosting confidence and developing an area of competence.

However, such tutoring can also be overwhelming if expectations are set too high. As in the case with remedial tutoring, enrichment tutoring in academic areas should be discussed with the homeroom teachers so that the students can gain the benefit of shared goals and expectations.

Standardized Test Preparation (SSAT, ERB, and ISEEs)
Tutoring for Test Preparation is often a focus for parents and children in the older grades where successful standardized test scores are part of the secondary school admission process. Before taking standardized tests, students in Grades 3–5 practice their test-taking skills by completing reading comprehension and math booklets that present information in a similar format. Students in Grade 6 spend one class period per week during the fall semester practicing test-taking skills in preparation for the ISEEs and SSATs. In addition, we offer all students the opportunity to use Test Innovators Software in order to practice for the ISEE test. We believe that students respond to the test-taking process in different ways, and this software provides real-time practice that allows students to measure growth.

As is the case with any skill, it is one that improves with practice and time. For instance, we notice at Tenacre that ERB scores steadily improve from Grade 3 to Grade 5. Sometimes, students do not need extra support to develop test-taking skills. If, in preparation for the ISEEs you notice the software does not improve your skills, you have concerns about your child’s skills in this area, please discuss the topic with the Head of School during your secondary school conversation.

For 6th grade students we offer the ISEE test twice annually in a safe space during the year monitored by familiar adults. We offer the test during two school days (Fall, Winter) and parents are advised on the best testing environment for their children.
Academic and Psychological Testing
At times, teachers and/or parents may feel that academic and/or psychological testing would be beneficial in order to gain more information about a student’s learning style and current knowledge and skills. Before recommending testing, the homeroom teachers consult with the Director of Educational Support.

Working together, they develop a plan of action, which may include: in-house testing, the completion of student inventories, adapted teaching practices, and testing by an outside professional. Parents are viewed as partners in this process and suggested plans of action are shared with them during designated conference times that include support staff and homeroom teachers.

If outside testing is deemed to be the most beneficial course of action the school will provide parents with several recommendations of professionals with whom they have had successful past interactions, as well as some general information about pursuing testing through their local public school system. When outside testing occurs, the school requests that the evaluators visit the school and have contact with the Director of Educational Support and homeroom teachers. Any time that outside testing occurs, it is critical that the school be provided with copies of the testing report so that the information can be used to make the best possible educational decisions for the child.

Consulting Psychologist
Tenacre employs a part-time consulting psychologist, Dr. Alan Wyatt, who is available to the school one day a week for four hours. During that time, Dr. Wyatt consults regularly with faculty to aid in the goal of promoting the social and emotional well being of individuals and the school community. He is also available for consultation with parents and faculty regarding specific issues. Meetings are scheduled through the Wellness Coordinator.

Repeating a Grade
Having a child repeat a grade is a difficult decision for both parents and the school to make. At Tenacre, this decision is the result of a thorough, thoughtful, team-based analysis, knowing that it affects many aspects of a child’s life. We rely heavily on the input and advice of our professionals, the teachers who work on a daily basis with the child. For some children, retention allows them to develop at a more appropriate pace and to follow their own time schedule.

Before deciding on retention, homeroom teachers will work with the support staff to develop a plan and a time frame to address academic or social concerns. The plan will be shared with parents. If retention is deemed to be the best course of action, parents will be informed no later than February.

Occasionally, it may become clear to a child’s teachers and support staff that Tenacre is not the right school for a child. In these cases, Tenacre works closely with the family to help them determine a more appropriate school setting where their child can have the feelings of success that every child deserves.

Annual OT/Speech Screening
All children receive occupational therapy and speech screening during the Pre-Kindergarten. Speech and OT screenings are a part of PK-1st grade and new 2nd and 3rd Grade Students.

Feedback from these screenings is shared with parents, in writing, and when necessary will include recommendations and resources for follow-up evaluations and therapies.

By giving attention to student needs, in terms of support and enrichment, Tenacre strives to fulfill its mission to nurture and challenge each student, every day. In this warm and supportive community we are all learners striving to discover and expand our best abilities, helping others to do the same.