

Dear Families of Amazing Grace and Renton Prep:

Whether you've been with us for years or this is your first year as part of our school family, we know many of you may be interested in looking more deeply at our curriculum from early childhood through high school content. Many people think that curriculum is a textbook publisher. However, curriculum is broadly defined as the totality of student experiences that occur in the educational process.

You will hear words like:

- Curriculum
- Standards
- Blended Learning
- Technology
- STEM/STEAM
- Assessment

This document will break down these terms for you and give you links with student projects and videos as examples to understand how these pieces have been intentionally built to create a world-class educational environment for your child. You'll be able to see actual student examples, many of which have been selected to present at local, national, and international conferences to train other educators to help make their learning more dynamic. We are so excited to be leaders in education for preparing students for a future where they can succeed in whichever direction they choose to go.

The first part will give a slightly expanded explanation of each of the terms above and some examples. Below that, you'll see a more extensive list of resources for you to explore and see in more detail.

You will be able to look directly at examples, websites we use both in the classroom and for educator professional development, as well as websites for curriculum aligned, experience-based learning off campus. We call that kind of learning "experiential learning" because it is based in experiences rather than being told in a lecture or reading about something.

If Curriculum is the overall experience combination, then standards help create a structure for that learning to ensure there aren't gaps in knowledge across grades. Assessments are what help us to understand progress, student understanding, and the ability to apply learning. Blended Learning allows us to combine more than one way of learning at the same time. Technology can assist in each of these areas from curriculum content to blended learning, aligning standards and helping us understand student knowledge. The combination of these elements makes our system of learning more dynamic than if students were only allowed one perspective from one set of textbooks that are print source and may become outdated when new information emerges (especially in the sciences).

Although we do utilize some print sources, the value of drawing on digital and internet resources is to provide your child with a global perspective rather than only one perspective of one textbook company that aligns with one type of curriculum for the totality of their experience of learning. We want educational experiences to reflect a beauty in global diversity, as well as multiple ways of learning. These ways can include books, real-life experiences on field trips that connect with core subjects, real-life experiences working with peers and those of different ages, internet resources that are created for young people like Discovery Education (established by the Discovery Channel), PBS LearningMedia and Nova to name just a few.

Curriculum

Curriculum is the combination of experiences that create an educational process. To ensure consistency, we align our curriculum to standards. Standards help to ensure that your child is getting a broad and deep range of learning. Standards also help provide an anchor and framework for the curriculum. We have selected Core Knowledge Curriculum for the rigor and consistency that has strong alignment with Common Core State Standards. Core Knowledge becomes the base content knowledge that we cover. It provides an outline to creatively approach how that learning happens. See more information about Core Knowledge here: <https://www.coreknowledge.org/>

You are also welcome to download the curriculum guides here:
<https://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum/download-curriculum/>

To support our Core Knowledge Curriculum, we draw on a variety of additional sources. Here are a few examples:

Accelerated Mathematics

SumDog: <https://www.sumdog.com/>

Engaging, evidence-based learning for early childhood through 5th grade to learn foundational math in a fun way.

ALEKS: <https://www.aleks.com/>

Developed by McGraw Hill Mathematics. Available to accelerated 3rd grade students through high school. ALEKS is an adaptive program that allows students to accelerate through more than one year of mathematics in a school year regardless of age and grade level. Students master concepts before moving on to the next course.

Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Personal Safety, Technology Safety, and Digital Citizenship

Common Sense Media has a range of resources for educators, curriculum, parents and students:
<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

<http://www.kcsarc.org/communityed>

Circle of Concern: http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-mcc/files/circle_of_concern_pitch_and_guide_1_0.pdf

Student example: <https://doc.co/a7qWCB/8dJ4hd>

Cultural Studies and World Languages

Duolingo: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

National Geographic Live: <https://events.nationalgeographic.com/event-series/seattle-speaker-series>

Seattle Center Festal: <http://www.seattlecenter.com/festal/>

Harvard Graduate School: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/uk/one-and-all>

Harvard Graduate School: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/educators/toolkit/strategy-guides>

National Network of State Teachers of the Year Social Justice book list:
<http://www.nnstoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NNSTOY-Social-Justice-Book-List.pdf>

Science

Discovery Education (established by the Discovery Channel):
<http://www.discoveryeducation.com/>

PBS LearningMedia: <https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/>

Nova: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/>

Fine Arts:

Fine arts begins with experience and the framework for our experiences begins with Visual Thinking Strategies: <https://vtshome.org/>

Experiential learning connecting to multiple subject domains

Pacific Science Center: <https://www.pacificsciencecenter.org/programs-teacher-school-groups/>

Student Examples: <https://doc.co/K5fxLZ>

MOHAI: <http://mohai.org/education/>

MoPOP: <https://www.mopop.org/programs/for-educators/school-groups/field-trips/>

Living Computer Museum: <http://www.livingcomputers.org/>

Paramount Theatre: <http://www.stgpresents.org/education>

Seattle Art Museum: <http://seattleartmuseum.org/>

Video capture: <https://youtu.be/usUP5Zj1Q7c>

Video capture: <https://youtu.be/i8twkVUrXGw>

Meany Center Student Matinees: <https://meanycenter.org/outreach/k-12-programs>

Seattle Asian Art Museum: <http://seattleartmuseum.org/visit/asian-art-museum/>

Seattle Children's Theatre: <http://www.sct.org/>

Seattle Rep Theatre: <http://www.seattlerep.org/Programs/Education/>

Seattle Shakespeare Company: <http://www.seattleshakespeare.org/education-programs/>

Seattle Symphony: <http://www.seattlesymphony.org/families-learning/schools>

Seattle Opera: <https://www.seattleopera.org/classes-camps-clubs/for-schools/>

Student Example: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-zLQUncJvaO6aMviu9cvLakUMYL5vct2>

School dance show: <https://www.rentonprep.org/truth-bravery-dance-show/>

Standards

With all the great elements of learning that extend beyond printed book sources, having standards helps to create a framework and consistency across grades from early childhood through high school to prepare your students for college and career readiness.

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards/standards>

Next Generation Science Standards: <https://www.nextgenscience.org/>

World-Readiness Standards for Language Learners: <https://www.actfl.org/publications/all/world-readiness-standards-learning-languages>

Technology

We are a Microsoft Showcase School. Please enjoy a student co-created video to learn more about what that means: <https://sway.com/UzHDsQeWVfElyq6M?ref=Link&loc=play>

In order to train our teachers and connect with other educators globally, we're all part of the Microsoft Educator Community: <https://education.microsoft.com/> and each of our educators are Certified Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts.

As an adult, you may also choose to join the community and learn the tools with tutorials and courses that your children will learn in school as part of projects and assignments. Here are some examples of Microsoft tools your child will use:

- Microsoft Teams
- Sway
- OneNote Class Notebook
- Forms
- Outlook
- PowerPoint/Office Mix

- Digital Ink
- Minecraft Education Edition
- Office 365
- OneDrive

Our educators go through extensive and rigorous training and are all Certified Microsoft Innovative Educators. Educators who have been at Renton Prep for more than one year are eligible to apply to be selected by Microsoft as Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts (MIEExpert). This program provides MIEExperts to present nationally at conferences to help inspire and train other educators to do what we are accomplishing at Amazing Grace and Renton Prep. Minecraft Education Edition has the ability to harness learning across multiple domains from science and social studies to history and the arts, not to mention social and emotional learning. Please enjoy a student created video on perspectives about Minecraft and learning: <https://youtu.be/BMTkCmh6giY>. Getting Smart conducted a research study with our school and several others, investigating social and emotional learning. You can find the report here: <http://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/06/minecraft-social-emotional-learning-k-12-education/>

The companion podcast exploring from a slightly different perspective is here: <http://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/06/getting-smart-podcast-how-minecraft-improves-sel-outcomes/>

In addition, our students frequently present at educational technology conferences. Read some stories here:

<https://www.rentonprep.org/renton-students-presenting-ncce-2017/>

Student collection from presenting:

<https://www.rentonprep.org/renton-presents-fetc-2017/>

<https://www.rentonprep.org/renton-prep-students-wow-at-tcea/>

<https://www.rentonprep.org/stem-summit-4-0/>

Along with Microsoft tools, we also work with Mixed Reality, Virtual Reality, and other types of electronics:

<https://venturebeat.com/2017/04/06/lifelige-takes-microsofts-hololens-augmented-reality-glasses-into-the-classroom/>

Virtual Reality with HTC Vive:

Student created video: <https://youtu.be/cwXfR63iXXE>

STEM/STEAM

You may have heard, or will hear, your child say STEM or STEAM and wonder what it means. One of the goals for your child is to ultimately be able to articulate their learning to you and what it means. This guide will give you an overview to help with the basics.

What is STEM/STEAM?

STEM is an acronym that represents a way of learning that combines science (S), technology (T), engineering (E), and mathematics (M). When the arts are integrated into this combination, it is referred to as STEAM. This is an article that talks about the importance of including the arts with STEM:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-m-eger/arts-based-learning-of-st_b_8724148.html. As mentioned above, one goal is for students to be able to articulate their learning. Click on the link to see an example of how students describe and demonstrate STEAM learning: <https://doc.co/3muVUj/8pSXku>

Our students have talked about STEAM learning all the way in New York, invited by Scientific American, Macmillan, and at New York Academy of Sciences. Watch a recording of the discussion here:

<https://youtu.be/CDAmkHikHEk>

This is an example of STEAM in middle and high school: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq5C-pYmqz8>

Here's an example of early childhood STEM: <https://doc.co/5L4jFe/5E3aDm>

A vision for STEM Education 2026: <http://www.air.org/system/files/downloads/report/STEM-2026-Vision-for-Innovation-September-2016.pdf>

Blended Learning

Blended Learning can be defined several ways. It can be combining multiple subjects together. It can combine experience-based learning and more traditional instruction. Blended learning can also combine online components with technology

Example of blended learning with online course work from Duke University, experiential learning seeing literature on stage, book print source literature, English Language Arts, Philosophy and symbolic logic.

<https://doc.co/Ci6dk3/Lwz7tZ>

Blended learning can include STEAM. This is an example of an entirely created student final product that became an assessment: <https://youtu.be/ypd8lDhPxQo>

Standards provide a guideline of how much, what level, and what kind of things students should ideally master through school experiences.

Assessment

Assessment can take many forms. This section will talk about different types of assessment we use including:

- Summative
- Formative
- Non-traditional demonstrations of knowledge
- Standardized
- Competency

Click the link to see more detail: <https://sway.com/o5rwYqtrWn7GEE0M?ref=Link&loc=play>

Summative

In traditional education systems, the model is to assess with a test at the end of a lesson, semester/quarter, or the end of the year to produce a “grade.” The original purpose of a grade is to report how much memory a learner has at the end of a learning segment. Traditional grades are based on a percentage out of 100 points.

Formative

Formative assessment has a different purpose than summative assessment. Think of it as forming a picture of how a student is progressing along the way so that educators and family can help support and assist learning before the course of study is over. Formative assessment helps educators adjust, re-teach, or decide new ways of helping students demonstrate different ways of knowing. Not all students excel at taking tests. Some students do better in applying their knowledge to real-life concepts through projects, writing, or speaking.

Non-Traditional Assessment

We use non-traditional assessments to help students show their knowledge in more ways than only traditional assessments. Non-traditional assessments can include any way that requires students to understand a concept or content and show what and how they learned, or demonstrate how they can apply the new learning to another situation. It requires a different type of thinking other than just memorizing content. It is often a very different type of challenge compared to memorizing to repeat content. Students who typically find memorizing for tests easy feel much more challenged by these type of assessments because they inherently require mental struggle. Students who typically find memorizing challenging and a struggle often feel like they can shine for the first time with non-traditional assessments. They are used to the feeling of struggle, but with this type of assessment, they feel like they can show their knowledge in a way they couldn't before. Don't be discouraged if your child typically easily scored high on traditional assessments and easily memorized but is initially struggling with non-traditional assessment. This is normal. We work with students to understand that struggle is important for learning and applying knowledge to use it.

Standardized

Standardized assessment focuses on knowledge that children can recall without assistance. It often focuses on mathematics, reading and English Language Arts, and is in a multiple choice format. The questions are created by an external organization. That organization determines the content certain age students should know without assistance. The data is numerical. They find what they consider "normal" compared to students across the United States. At Renton Prep and Amazing Grace we don't look at Standardized Assessment as a tool to assign "grades" for students or to track them. It is a tool to help teachers understand their impact on a class, as well as ways to support learning. We use Edmentum to check on learning 3 times throughout the year. The scores are not for families as they will not count toward grades. The scores are to help faculty know the best ways to support and challenge learners, as well as for our own professional development as educators.

<http://www.edmentum.com/>

<https://www.edmentum.com/resources/videos/edmentums-individualized-learning-solution>

Competency

Competency assessments measure growth and show consistent and accurate proficiency on specific skills or concepts. When a student demonstrates proficiency, they have done everything required to accurately and completely show learning through a task. The goal is to move toward mastery, where students are able to communicate, collaborate, self-regulate, and create without the assistance of external adult prodding or checking in. They bring in additional resources and perform above the requirements necessary to become proficient. When students go above and beyond mastery, consistently bringing in novel approaches, outside resources, creative solutions, and combine domains in meaningful ways, communicating their learning in a clear way to specific audiences outside the classroom, they have attained more than mastery-their work is exemplary. Competencies are measured against standards through intentionally designed assessments or projects, which may include Summative, Formative, Non-Traditional, and/or Standardized assessments. They include Experiential Learning, Blended Learning, STEAM, and/or Technology. Renton Prep and Amazing Grace competency based assessments aim to move beyond an individual skill or content component of learning to demonstrate proficiency within a given context, specific audience, authentic problem or challenge to solve, and with a broader scope than just the classroom. Think of it as a way to practice life skills of applying "school" to life beyond the classroom. Collaborative and interdisciplinary components, creativity, working within constraints, and authentic settings. It's not just a one-time data point. There are multiple opportunities to demonstrate. The focus of a competency-based assessment is that a learner should master all aspects of a skill or concept prior to moving to the next level of challenge or difficulty.