Every day the Domes Stage I program is filled with a great amount of activity, lots of laughter, lively conversations — and even a few tears.

Welcome to Stage I: Domes, where some of the youngest Roeper students live. Ranging in age from 3 to 5 years, these children are at school for either a half- or full-day, five days a week. Both options afford this special group participation in special classes, hands-on learning activities and project and play-based learning. What is most important for this group of young, gifted children is to remember what their developmental, emotional and social needs are. Those needs are balanced with their curiosity, thirst for new information and blossoming academic growth. While this is a challenge and juggling act for both students and teachers, it is also lots of fun and greatly fulfilling for everyone involved.

Each day affords students opportunities for social and emotional growth. We want our students to feel comfortable with themselves and their peers. We work hard to build relationships between students and adults, but especially relationships with one another. We hope to help these young children be empathetic, flexible, optimistic, persistent and resilient, and be able to problem solve, negotiate and compromise with each other. Not only are these skills needed now, but throughout their lives. We help our children begin on the path toward becoming autonomous and confident individuals. As we watch them develop more compassion, respect and understanding of others, we are continually amazed and proud of the hard work they do!

Growing up can be challenging: learning to be part of a group that expects you to listen, share, wait, take turns and get along isn’t easy. But every day, these youngest of students do it with joy and openness to all around them. As they struggle into jackets, put on their own mittens for the first time, help cook or clean up, the smiles of delight as they discover what they are capable of are pure magic. We constantly celebrate what may seem like small steps to adults but are giant victories for young children. And as we recognize the strengths in each child, we nurture the areas in which help is needed. Working with these students at their pace — not ours — guarantees their success and develops their desire to meet new challenges. They are sure they will be helped over each bump, not pushed or asked to do something for which they are not yet ready.

George and Annemarie Roeper’s understanding of how children learn shapes what we do. We appreciate how strongly they believed in the young child's being allowed to move at his or her own pace, how they recognized the asynchronous behavior of the gifted child, and how the joy and innocence of every young child should be respected, protected and celebrated.

Please drop in and help us celebrate each day as we discover each other and the world!
In the homeroom, Stage I children are presented with materials that cover a wide range of skill levels. The areas of math, language arts, social studies, art and science are explored. The children learn through play as well as through specific, concrete, guided lessons. There is an emphasis on helping the child gain listening skills as well as communicative skills in all the above areas. The children are encouraged to ask and answer questions, participate in discussions and to solve problems.

The cognitive skills which are addressed within our lessons and projects are too interrelated at this developmental level to be accurately divided into subject areas. Correspondence, for example, is reinforced by math lessons, yet it is a necessary skill for reading readiness. The awareness of symbolic expression fostered by writing is just as important to their work in art.

Curriculum and content choices are not dictated by a prescribed format or program. Current events, resource opportunities, student interests, teacher expertise and celebrations become part of ongoing and varied curriculum development. Often, lessons are “open-ended,” permitting individuals to participate and improve at a variety of skill levels.

Individualization of instruction within the general format is crucial to providing challenge and stimulation to gifted learners with a wide range of skills.

Students’ progress via the social/emotional curriculum happens constantly. Each child is learning to adapt to all the other children in the group so that successful play, group work, and friendships may occur. The child is also adapting to a new type of adults — teachers. Social and emotional success in school, then, is extremely complex. To make this adaptation happen as easily and quickly as possible requires careful supervision of the children by teachers. It is important that teachers are very consistent, clear and concise in communicating expectations in order for social and emotional growth to occur.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

To develop socially and emotionally, children need to develop the capacity to experience, express and gain self-control over their emotions and social interactions. In our classrooms, we work to refine our social skills through group exchanges. Honest, open communication and the thoughtful listening to one another’s ideas are emphasized. We create an atmosphere that encourages the children to become cooperative members of the group. We try to develop an awareness of the rights and feelings of others and to assume responsibility for individual behavior.
LITERACY AND LANGUAGE ARTS

Our language arts program uses a whole language approach in which reading, pre-reading, writing, speaking and listening are integrated. The program is literature-based using the children’s writing and ideas as well as the writing of published authors. The environment we provide for children is rich in language. The children are developing communication skills through daily correspondence with others, word of the day, creative oral expression, games and songs. They also broaden their frame of reference and appreciation for literature and art.

MATHEMATICS

Our mathematics program is designed to help each child learn to value mathematics. The classroom environment invites children to explore, develop, test, discuss and apply ideas. Through extensive interaction with a wide variety of physical materials and supplies, participation in group and individual activities and discussions, children are assisted in gaining confidence in their ability to problem solve and reason mathematically.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our emphasis in Social Studies is to help children discover and value their own uniqueness, as well as foster an appreciation for the diversity in our community and in our world. Conflict resolution, cooperation and leadership are the basis for our classroom discussions and activities. The children will learn to reflect upon the nature and quality of their thinking. Understanding what others have done and how it affects us is also emphasized. Respect and appreciation of nature and the environment are also stressed.

_In the Stage I: Domes program, specialists offer the following subjects._

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

To develop the physical self at this age, we concentrate on body awareness, gross motor as well as rhythmic skills and manipulating objects. We share, take turns, help others, cooperate, and follow both verbal and visual directions. Safety is addressed when using equipment and when all children are moving together.

MUSIC

Activities include differentiating between speech and singing, singing in tune, development of beat, simple iconic representations, vocal chants, games involving kinesthetic movements and social skills, and respecting instruments. Both individual and community music-making experiences are included.
ART

The Stage I Art program is designed to encourage art as a basic form of expression. At this young age, it is all about exploring new materials, learning about the big world of art, and having fun. Learning is accomplished through touching, feeling, and manipulating materials and through experiencing new processes.

DANCE/MOVEMENT

Stage I children love to explore their imaginations and express themselves through movement and music. Learning is accomplished through creative movement games, manipulation of props, improvisation, theme dances, and music interpretation. Children gain confidence, body awareness, balance and coordination, while developing social skills such as sharing, taking turns, cooperating, and respecting personal space.

FRENCH

Our Lower School is unique in that we introduce students to French as early as age 3. As the year progresses, children begin to hear and comprehend French, and learning draws upon the themes studied within the homeroom. Young children acquire new language skills quickly through a wide variety of activities including songs, story telling, dialogues, illustrations, handouts and games.

LIBRARY

Stage I classes visit the library for a read-aloud, related activities, and to borrow books. Students listen to books and participate in discussions that encourage critical thinking and engagement with texts. They begin to make connections between their own experiences, themes and topics they are learning about in class, and the stories and information books we share during library class. Students also begin learning where and how to find picture books and information books of interest in the Children's Library.

SCIENCE

Stage I children are natural scientists, engaging their senses fully in exploring and discovering. Through authentic experiences, they begin to ask questions, to recognize cause and effect relationships and patterns, and to form concepts based on observations. At this level, the primary goals are to enhance children’s enthusiasm and interest in science, to expand their conceptual understanding through engaging experiences, to strengthen their ability to make observations and comparisons, to ask questions, and to problem solve.
AFTERNOON PROGRAMMING

The Stage I Domes afternoon program provides a different set of opportunities for children to learn. Each of the four teachers brings their passions and interests to our Afternoon Adventures. Immediately following lunch all four Stage I Domes teachers offer a special class on a rotating basis. Each afternoon the children are divided into three groups for focused learning on a topic. Topics change each year, but past classes have included Spanish, STEM, Art, Fairy Tales, Artists and Cooking. During this time the teachers and children explore together around a focused topic. The Afternoon Adventures last 30 – 45 minutes before children return to their homeroom class for rest, snack and classroom projects.

INTENSIVE

This year the entire Lower School will be spending a few weeks in January and February dedicated to working intensively on topics of study through Project Based Learning (PBL). While Stage I does most of their learning using PBL, we will have a few small changes during this time. Both classrooms will work together to provide activities, books, experiments, and projects around one topic based on the children’s questions and interests.
DISCIPLINE POLICY

No form of corporal punishment is ever used. All methods of discipline are positive with the emphasis on finding out what caused the problem and allowing children to use words to work out difficulties. Ongoing problems will be discussed with the parents as we strive for consistency between school and home. Consequences are used with discussion between teacher and child as to the nature of the problem and why a particular behavior is unacceptable.

FOOD & SNACKS

Snacks are provided twice daily by the families on a rotating basis. We ask for healthy snacks, including real juice or water. Please note that we never serve pop. Please try to send in nutritious foods. See your child's teacher if you need suggestions.

Lunch provided by parents must be sent in an insulated lunch box with a cooler pack inside.

When bringing in special treats or snacks, please refer to the Roeper Handbook Community Guidelines for allergy procedures.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

We encourage parents to keep up informal communication with the teachers. Do not wait until a scheduled conference to ask a question, make a comment, or raise a concern. Feel free to ask about your child, procedures or anything! Email is always a great way to reach us.

Assessment is a constant process of observation of the children, their work and interactions. No formal instruments are used. This places an extra burden of attentiveness on the teacher, but also frees the teacher to examine the whole child. Constant conversation between student and teacher provides ongoing feedback regarding progress.

Ongoing evaluation of each child is recorded and presented to parents through written statements of progress at mid-year and end-of-year reports. Constant communication between staff members who have contact with the children provides information concerning their progress. Communication with parents, both informally and at scheduled conferences, provides additional important information.

Advancement to Stage II is determined by the teachers, based on consideration of the whole child. Factors include academic skill level, IQ test scores in the gifted range, age, social and — most importantly — emotional maturity.
ENROLLMENT/TUITION/WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Our program runs from September through June on a regular school calendar. We assume that children will be with us for the whole year. As stated in The Roeper School Enrollment Contract, parental obligation to pay the fees for the full academic year is unconditional, and no portion of such fees paid or outstanding will be refunded or cancelled in the event of absence, withdrawal or dismissal from the School.

In view of this obligation, parents are offered the option to participate in the Tuition Refund Plan. This program will provide an opportunity to insure fees (prepaid and due) in the event of separation according to the terms of the policy.
THE ROEPER SCHOOL

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