



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND
Founded in 1956



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 6



Core Knowledge®



WELCOME TO TAVIS AND TO CORE KNOWLEDGE®

TAVIS Elementary School opened its doors as the first English-language elementary school in Ticino in the fall of 2005. Since its inception, the Elementary School has grown to 180 children with an international mix of over 20 nationalities and 21 different languages. The oldest American college-preparatory boarding school in Europe and world-renowned for excellence in education, TAVIS offers academic programs for day students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 13 and for boarding students in grades 7 to 13.

TAVIS has decades of experience in the education of the young from the ages of 3 to 18 in Switzerland, England, Greece, France, Spain, Italy, and Puerto Rico. We now offer Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 13 to children from over 55 nations on our campus in Montagnola, and in the summer we have educational programs for children from around the world ages 4 to 18. TAVIS England offers Pre-school through Grade 12 and TAVIS Dorado is a thriving

Pre-K-12 school in Puerto Rico. (For more information, please see www.tavis.com)

American Section

The majority of TAVIS Elementary School is composed of students in the American Section. Academic core subjects follow the rigorous *Core Knowledge Sequence* and are presented in English. Italian instruction is based on the current proficiency level of each student, from beginners to those with mother-tongue fluency. In addition to Italian instruction, American Section students participate in Physical Education and Art classes taught predominantly in Italian to further expand their language skills.

For students for whom English is an additional language, TAVIS Elementary offers Structured English Immersion classes for those in the American Section. Highly qualified teachers work with these students in the American Section to help bring them to grade-level proficiency as quickly as possible.

** The law of Ticino requires that children of obligatory schooling age (6 to 15) be educated in Italian. As of 2005, a special exemption came into effect that allows for children 6 to 15 who have been resident in Ticino for no more than six years to be educated in another language, in our case English, with one-fifth of the educational program in Italian.*

Italian Section

The Italian Section of the Elementary and Middle Schools (Grades 1-8, as well as 9th Grade) is designed for students whose families have resided in Ticino for more than six years.* Students entering the Italian Section must possess a grade-level fluency in Italian for placement. Most of the core academic subjects are taught in Italian, based on the best of the traditional Italian curriculum that mirrors much of the rich *Core Knowledge Curriculum*. 60% of the curriculum is taught in Italian and 40% in English, including *Singapore Math*. Each day, students receive formal instruction in English for reading and math according to their achievement levels in these subjects. Grade-level sections from the American and Italian Sections of the Elementary School are merged for Music, Art, and Physical Education to further develop language and social skills amongst the student body. Enrollment in the Italian Section is limited to no more than one-third of the entire Elementary School, with priority going to families already enrolled at TAVIS.

Curriculum

TAVIS Elementary School uses the *Core Knowledge Curriculum*, an excellent, sequential, content-rich curriculum also used at both TAVIS elementary schools in England and Puerto Rico and in hundreds of schools in the USA and other countries. Excursions to the rich cultural, artistic, historic, and natural sites of Ticino, northern Switzerland, and Lombardy enhance the children's education.

The *Core Knowledge Curriculum* is based on a conception presented by Prof. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in his well-known books *Cultural Literacy*, *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (a resource for elementary school parents and students), *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*, and *The Knowledge Deficit*, and practically developed by the Foundation he established in 1986.

The *Core Knowledge Curriculum* helps children become culturally literate or familiar with the traditions

and knowledge commonly shared by educated citizens in a society. Information is acquired in informal ways as well as by formal study. Core Knowledge develops cultural literacy in a way that is systematic while leaving room for creativity. The curriculum eliminates the gaps and repetitions that frequently characterize a curriculum in which textbooks and learning units are selected more or less at random and are not coordinated across grade levels or even within a grade level.

Parents are pleased to see how enthusiastic their children are about learning as the curriculum unfolds. No matter what level of ability students start with, they experience a sense of achievement as knowledge and skills are mastered. The *Core Knowledge Curriculum* covers language arts, history and geography, mathematics, science, art, art history, and music, and is also complemented by other subjects, such as Italian, drama, computers, and physical education. We recommend the series that starts with *What Your Kindergartner Needs to Know*, and continues with volumes through Grade 6. One book is available for each of the first seven years of schooling to enable parents both to share and reinforce what their child is learning in the classroom. The *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence* guides the planning of studies, experiences, and activities for children in Pre-Kindergarten by offering a coherent progression of knowledge and skills in all areas.

Music and art are prominently included in the Sequence and integrated whenever possible with history and literature. Even programs not included in the Sequence, such as Italian, cultural excursions, and physical education, can be related to various elements of classroom study. We believe the curriculum can be described as solid, specific, sequenced, and shared. Teachers are free to teach the subject matter as creatively as they like, but the content is specified and builds from year to year. For more details, please read the TAVIS Elementary School Current Information booklet and see www.coreknowledge.org.





Studying topics together in the same grade can build a sense of community in much the same way that common knowledge can bind the larger society together. A distinguished scholar of international renown, Prof. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. believes that a diverse society has a special need for commonly shared background knowledge and, further, that everybody has a right to share this civilized *res publica*, not just a select few. Students come to understand the shared dimensions of knowledge, how subjects relate to one another and build over time, as well as how history influences contemporary events. They can command the necessary vocabulary to comprehend the complex subjects that lie ahead as well as the increasingly complex world around them. Though initially and necessarily oriented to Anglophone culture, students come to share a larger civilizing culture exploring the best that has been thought, said, invented, and discovered in the world, the classic “liberal arts” ideal.

Leveled Instruction

Children at TASIS Elementary come from all over the globe with vastly differing abilities in math and reading in English. Here we level instruction in both reading and math across ages and grades. We use one of the most thoroughly studied and validated reading curricula in the world, *Reading*

Mastery, and one of the most effective approaches to math instruction, *Singapore Math*. Each student’s progress is constantly monitored as they are instructed and perform at their appropriate levels.

Student Discipline

Some in the teaching profession view discipline as something separate from instruction – something that a teacher must impose on her class so she can teach in peace. At TASIS Elementary, we have a different philosophy. Here, discipline is an important learning activity. We believe that some of the most important lessons children learn at school take place on the playground rather than in a textbook. Our approach to discipline is instructive rather than punitive. Whether a child is struggling with his multiplication tables or trying to learn how to desire and act well, the teacher’s job remains unchanged. It is not to punish, but rather to instruct and to increase virtue.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child’s education and to be in regular dialogue with their child’s teacher. Your interest in what your child is learning and your support in developing good study habits at home are crucial for the successful education of your child. This curriculum is a contract—and an invitation.



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