

### **3. Philosophy and Mission (338.045-2c)**

It is the philosophy of *Arthur Academy* to provide a school that is academically focused and that accelerates academic achievement of all children without placing inappropriate stress on the child. *Arthur Academy* will combine the benefits of traditional educational content with the most advanced teaching methods available. It will prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens who will proceed through their endeavors with purpose, passion and proficiency. These goals will be accomplished by providing activities and programs that are age appropriate, that children enjoy and that teach effectively and efficiently. The educational philosophy of the program assumes that we must impart to all children the content knowledge and academic skills that will provide them with the necessary intellectual capital to succeed in mainstream culture. It also assumes that all children can learn and be successful in the early grades if taught appropriately.

The kind of educational experiences provided at *Arthur Academy* will contribute toward increased self-esteem, confidence and personal growth of each child. The school will facilitate the learning process within an environment that encourages high behavioral and academic standards and reinforces the positive values taught at home. Activities will take place within a comfortable, safe and pleasant setting under the care and direction of competent and caring teachers where children can feel emotionally secure and where they can develop close relationships with other children and caring adults. Within this context all children will be taught and expected to exhibit exemplary school behavior conducive to learning.

#### **The MISSION of *Arthur Academy*:**

- **To accelerate the educational achievement and academic competency of all its students;**
- **To become an effective and innovative school model; and**
- **To provide the community with an alternative approach to teaching children.**

### **4. A Description of Learning and Teaching Techniques Utilized (338.045-2i)**

The *Arthur Academy* teaching staff will use a mastery-learning model approach to teaching and learning. Curricular programs designed according to a mastery-model of teaching and learning are constructed as a result of a synthesis of learning theory, a detailed analysis of knowledge and skills to be taught and a clear means of communication. This design of curriculum makes it possible for all children to be successful. In fact, it is believed that, if the instruction and curriculum is designed and carried out according to these principles and guidelines, virtually all children can learn and be successful.

This approach is a straight-forward, step-by-step, goals and objectives approach to teaching. It holds that a child's learning and rate of progress is affected by the extent to which s/he masters carefully sequenced lessons and activities that lead to the overall mastery of essential foundational skills and bodies of knowledge. This means that all content to be learned must be carefully arranged and clearly presented incrementally from the simplest and easiest to the more difficult and complex. In this way, skills and knowledge are gradually accumulated into larger and more difficult composite tasks.

In order for this design of curriculum to work, mastery of each step along the way is necessary. Without mastery, the rate of progress becomes slower and students may become discouraged. On the other hand, if students master critical beginning skills thoroughly, they will learn subsequent, more complex skills more quickly. While initial learning may require careful, more deliberate work, eventually the pace accelerates. Adequate practice and regular assessment is built into the curriculum to further assure the mastery. With a firm foundation laid, over a relatively short period of time, a student's learning can begin to accelerate. The child then learns more within a given time.

E.D. Hirsch, of Core Knowledge refers to this approach to teaching as systematic, analytical, and explicit. He states:

“If you want to learn fast – be explicit. Break down each domain to be learned into manageable elements that can be mastered. Then systematically build on that knowledge with new knowledge. This is the most efficient mode of learning for everybody, but it is the essential mode if the aim is making up for lost time in knowledge and vocabulary.”

A complete review of the research supporting this approach to teaching can be found in the publication, “Research on Direct Instruction: 25 Years Beyond DISTAR” by Gary Adams and Siegfried Engelmann (1996, Educational Achievement Systems).