



## ACADEMIC RIGOR AND EXCELLENCE

*“The aim of education must be the training of independently acting and thinking individuals”*

*--Albert Einstein*

Heritage firmly believes that true academic excellence and success can only be achieved when students are driven by their own intrinsic desire to learn. This happens when students find meaning, make connections to prior knowledge within an authentic context, and discover purpose and joy in learning. Children and adolescents thrive when they are challenged to reach new heights of skill development and plunge new depths of insight—and this, we believe, is the true definition of rigor.

Creating this sort of learning environment starts by empowering teachers and supporting them with the resources they need to genuinely transform the classroom from a place where students are the passive recipients of “content” to an interactive workshop, laboratory, field or studio where students and teachers together uncover knowledge and discover truth through a process of experience, reflection and dialogue that leads to genuine, enduring understanding.

This necessarily requires that students are grounded firmly in basic skills which transcend individual disciplines, such as focused observation, accurate documentation, thorough assimilation of information, comparison and contrast of multiple views, analysis and synthesis of ideas and information and, ultimately, the generation of something entirely new and original. This process happens in the **Junior Program**, when we lay the foundation in such essential academic disciplines as Numeracy and Literacy through integrated units that tap into children’s innate curiosity and inquiring minds.

In the **Middle Program**, we expand on the integrated approach through collaborative learning which again encompasses these basic disciplines, along with environmental sciences, social sciences, information and computer technology through a real-life, hands-on approach to learning. Teachers spend hours designing the curriculum, preparing materials and creating a rich environment within which students work collaboratively in “crews,” growing socially and emotionally as they learn.

By the time the students make the transition to the **Senior Program**, the foundation has been established and they are ready to move into ever more complex and abstract levels of academic pursuit, as the subjects diverge into discreet disciplines and that prepare students for higher education and careers. While we recognize that we need to prepare students to “crack the boards”, we continue to believe that we must help them find connections and meaning if they are to succeed ultimately—which means that they retain what they have learned and can access it for future learning, far beyond short-term recall which gets them from one paper-pencil test to the next.

We recognize that, while the examination system continues to be the gateway to India’s most esteemed colleges, we must go beyond the syllabus and incorporate what are often identified as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to truly prepare our students to take their place as productive, creative members of a complex, increasingly interdependent global society. It is no coincidence that changes advocated by the NCERT and articulated by national and international leaders in educational excellence coincide with principles we are already implementing—and that we are rapidly being celebrated for our “innovative pedagogy” and the degree to which we invest in teacher empowerment and resources.

As we complement our academic core with a full range of co-curricular offerings, such as visual arts and crafts, music, physical education and drama, not to mention field trips, Community Outreach projects, internships and service opportunities, we are confident that we are providing the best education available to our students anywhere—and we believe that the parents and students recognize this as well.