



ST. JOHN'S
PARISH DAY SCHOOL

Curriculum
for
Four-Year-Old Program

Mission of St. John's Parish Day School

We educate children with a stimulating and challenging academic curriculum in a culturally and economically diverse community. We create a safe and nurturing environment for students to grow and to learn, helping them to utilize their full potential and individual gifts. We provide an atmosphere that fosters spiritual grounding in the Christian tradition with respect for the dignity and beliefs of every human being. We promote the concepts of responsible global citizenship and active stewardship for the natural world.

Early Childhood Program

St. John's PDS has been serving pre-school age children for over 45 years. Our goal is to provide a stimulating environment where each child is allowed to explore, discover, and learn at his/her own pace. The children are encircled in a warm, safe environment led by caring, nurturing professional teachers. Each child is challenged to live to her/his full potential in an atmosphere that fosters social, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of the child's development. This strengthens a child's self-image and feelings of competence while instilling the love of learning.

The active classroom environment is comprised of rich learning centers that allow a child choice of activities to learn and explore individually or in small groups. These experiences are based on seasonal themes, children's interest, and learning goals of which language, math, science, and social studies are key components. The teachers guide the children as they choose activities, including play, that will help them develop and grow. Topics are introduced regularly and are based on our curriculum goals. These topics arise from the interests of the children and/or events that take place in the classroom on a daily basis. Teachers integrate literacy, social studies, math, and art into themes.

Meaningful play is a significant element of learning at St. John's. It is the one means children have of processing and understanding their world. Play encompasses social, emotional, physical, and cognitive benefits that the brain needs to fully develop and facilitates a child's physical and sensory motor development as he/she runs, jumps, digs, paints, draws, or has direct contact with the earth and culture around her/him. It promotes social learning as he/she plays with other children adjusting behaviors to the needs and demands of their peers. It supports emotional growth as the child projects feelings onto toys and works out her/his feelings in a constructive way. Play promotes cognitive development as the child works symbolically with art materials and dramatic play, constructing patterns of meaning from interactions with things and people. (Singer and Singer 1990)

In addition to the dynamic classroom experience, children attend daily chapel. Art, music, media, physical education, science, and computer classes are taught by Specialists. It is important to note that the specific content of the curriculum varies according to the program in which a child is enrolled with special knowledge and interest in these subjects.

St. John's uniquely balanced program, comprised of academics and meaningful play, fully prepares each child for a lifetime of success and instills the lifelong love of learning.

Overview

There are partial-day classes for three year olds, as well as an extended-day program and full- and part-time classes for four-year-olds. Transitional Kindergarten is a full-day class. Partial-day classes begin at 9:00 AM and end at 1:00 PM. Full Day classes are from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Before and After Care programs are offered daily beginning at 7:00 AM and extend after school until 6:00 PM.

All of our teachers and assistants are highly qualified dedicated professionals who are passionate about their work with children and their families.

Strong communication between home and school is vital. Two formal conferences are scheduled during each school year. Additional conferences are encouraged whenever additional time is needed to work through issues that arise.

Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the St. John's community. Volunteering in our very active Parents' Association affords an excellent opportunity to meet others, as well as to take an active part in the life of the school.

Guidance and Discipline

Our classrooms and programs are designed to meet the needs of children so that discipline problems are minimized and quickly resolved in the classroom. Children are encouraged to talk through disputes and put words to their feelings. When a child is disruptive to others or to himself/herself, the child will be asked to sit apart from others until she/he is able to return to the activity. When a child is unable to get the behavior controlled he/she will be brought to the Director and/or a phone call will be made to the parent. In the case of extreme disruptive behavior the child will be sent home for the day.

Language Development

Our goal is to provide opportunities for each child to begin to make connections between printed words and their representations in the world. To enhance these goals, each four-year-old classroom uses the following materials. **Scholastic Education Alpha Tales** is a series of alliterative stories reinforcing the alphabet and the sounds the letters represent, alphabet charts, games, and poems. Audio CDs build listening skills through songs, rhymes, and movement. Additionally, we use Scholastics weekly "Newspapers" to introduce current events and expand seasonal topics.

Specific activities which develop language and literacy include:

- Listening to and reading stories, poems, and finger plays.
- Taking field-trips.
- Seeing classroom charts and other print in use (dictionary, telephone books, maps, grocery lists, etc.).
- Participating in dramatic play and other experiences requiring communication. (Show and Tell and Scholastic's weekly newspaper "Let's Find Out").
- Talking informally with other children and adults.
- Beginning to recognize and identify upper and lower case letters.
- Beginning to develop left to right and top to bottom orientation.
- Understanding instructional terms.
- Developing visual discrimination through puzzles, matching colors, pictures, geometric shapes, and other simple objects.
- Developing auditory discrimination through rhyming words and awareness of initial sounds in words.

Development of Small Motor Skills and Individual Expressions

Fine motor skills can be defined as small muscle movements which occur in the fingers in coordination with the eyes. "**Handwriting Without Tears**" developed by Jan Olsen, allows children the opportunity to use a developmental sequences for drawing shapes, forming pre-strokes, and writing letters and numbers.

Specific activities that develop fine motor include:

- Learning to hold and use markers, chalk, crayons, and pencils.
- Developing eye-hand coordination through appropriate educational materials such as puzzles with large pieces, blocks, beads, etc.
- Developing motor control by pouring exercises using rice, sand, and water.
- Participating in activities involving both hands and legs, such as throwing and catching a ball, the balance beam, climbing, and swinging.
- Participating in finger painting.
- Learning to form upper and some lowercase letters and numbers.
- Learning to write own name using both upper and lower case letters.

Math

Young children are strongly motivated to do math. Using a variety of mathematical skills to explore and understand the world, our goal is to facilitate the development of basic math concepts. We incorporate components of ***Everyday Mathematics***, McGraw-Hill, to integrate math play and instruction using hands-on activities based on developmentally appropriate classroom themes.

Specific activities that help develop mathematical thinking include:

- Numeration – beginning to increase competence with oral counts as well as recognizing and writing numbers.
- Measurement – beginning to develop an understanding of measurement terms (year, week, pound) by matching and comparing classroom materials.
- Geometry – playing with, tracing, drawing, and constructing solid shapes.
- Operations – things we “do” with numbers (how many more cups do we need for this table?).
- Patterns and Functions – sets of elements that repeat in regular, predictable ways.
- Clocks and Calendars – helping children to begin to develop an understanding of the duration of units of measure (day, week, month, year, hour, and minute).
- Date and Chance – beginning to gather information and sharing it by means of surveys and graphs.

Social Studies

Social Studies is the study of people--how people live, work, get along with others, solve problems, shape, and are shaped by their surroundings. Learning about social studies begins at birth. The people whom young children know best are themselves, their families, and the people in their communities. These children begin to learn social studies by forming relationships, learning to communicate, and exploring the world around them. As they do these things, they are forming understandings that relate to geography, civics, economics, and history.

Specific activities that help develop these goals include:

- Learning about our neighborhood, country and world through stories, pictures, and conversation.
- Becoming aware of the people in our community through stories, pictures, conversation, and visitors.
- Increasing the knowledge of other cultures through cooking, celebrating special events, and studying important people from each culture.
- Recognizing the need for rules and laws in school, the community, and the world.
- Communicating, sharing, and cooperating with others through play and projects.
- Learning to recognize similarities and differences among people and appreciate the uniqueness of each person.

Specials

Science

Our goal is to provide opportunities for the children to understand their own relationship to the world and to develop an appreciation and sense of caring for the environment. In order to view science as a way of thinking and acting, the children will be encouraged to explore and question with confidence.

Specific hands-on activities that develop scientific thinking include:

- Observing – using the senses (smelling, tasting, touching, and seeing) to gather information.
- Comparing – looking at similarities and differences in real objects (leaves, shells, and rocks).
- Classifying – grouping and sorting according to size, shape, color, and use.
- Measuring – volume, weight, length, and temperature.
- Communication – describing ideas through pictures, words, and graphs.
- Recycling – basic respect for caring for the earth.

Music

Children are natural musicians, and exposure to music during the early years enhances the learning process by promoting language development, creativity, coordination, and social interaction. Our goal is to increase each child's individual skills and general understanding of music and to fulfill each child's need for self-expression, imagination, and socialization through the art of music.

Specific activities that help to develop these skills include:

- Vocal music – singing simple songs and accompanying them with rhythm instruments to a steady beat.
- Movement – moving in simple circle games and to repeat hand claps and body motions to music.
- Listening – discriminating a variety of sounds in their environment.
- Creating – acting out familiar song stories.
- Performing – demonstrating for others simple songs with movement in the classroom and at school programs.

Art

Exploring and creating with art materials helps children become more sensitive to the physical environment (for instance, shape, size, and color); promotes cognitive development (decision-making, nonverbal communication, and problem solving); and increases their social and emotional development (a sense of individuality, appreciation of others' work, and sharing). Young children who are encouraged to engage in expressive art activities also gain a sense of accomplishment and grow toward achieving independence and autonomy.

Specific activities that support these goals include:

- Exploring many kinds of art materials such as clay, powder and finger paints, paper, and collage.
- Talking about differences in art to facilitate the children's visual and sensory capacities.
- Providing a variety of opportunities where the children will learn that people think and feel differently about the same things and that there is not only *one* "right way".

Physical Education

The philosophy of our physical education program is soundly based upon imagination and creativity with each child. We use music and games as a part of each class that promotes fun and improves self-image and general physical fitness. The program is coordinated to seasonal and classroom activities.

Our goal is to help each child develop and refine their bodies in a fun and challenging environment.

Specific activities that support these goals include:

- Participating in challenging physical experiences.
- Promoting competency in general loco motor skills (ball tossing, jumping, etc.).
- Providing opportunities for large muscle development.
- Hand/eye and foot/eye coordination (catching & kicking a ball).

Media

Our goal for our media program is to introduce the children to books and computers in a positive and enriching environment. The children in the Full-Day Four-year-old program are introduced to basic computer skills including handling storage disks, turning on and off the computer, and using the mouse. Computer programs introduced reinforce the objectives of the classroom.

Specific activities which support these goals include:

- Exploring computer programs.
- Listening to stories read by the Media Specialist.
- Checking out books.

Faith Formation

Our goal is to provide an environment that will nurture each child's spiritual growth with acceptance and security; to encourage awe, wonder, and an appreciation of God's creation; and to establish a feeling of security in the knowledge that God loves us and is present at all times and in all places. We encourage each child to begin to accept responsibility for her/his own actions.

Specific activities which support these goals include:

- Attending daily chapel services.
- Hearing Bible stories and other significant religious stories on an age-appropriate level.
- Learning to say grace.
- Supporting the development of personal ideals and values (cooperation, kindness, self-discipline) through day-to-day conversation and encouragement.
- Relating directly with the school Chaplin in weekly services and in the classrooms.