



ST. JOHN'S
PARISH DAY SCHOOL

Curriculum Guide

Transitional Kindergarten

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 his/her 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, often through 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 constructive ways. 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 beyond the day 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.

In developing a Transitional Kindergarten program that promotes enthusiasm for learning, it is important and necessary that the natural sequence of language is reinforced; experiencing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

It is our goal that the children will be happy, successful, and independent with confidence to function in their environment. It is intended that this class be a "gift of time" for the children; time to mature and be developmentally ready to enter a more academic kindergarten class.

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 and Reading Readiness Development

Our goal is for each child to continue his/her path of language acquisition and to nurture her/his emerging language skills and knowledge. Our teacher facilitates this process by offering many opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen.

Phonemic awareness is taught through the use of **Alpha Tales** by Scholastic, a series of 26 books designed to assist in learning the alphabet and the sounds the letters represent and children begin to read. Scholastic's **Word Family Tales** are humorous read aloud stories helping children to recognize "families" of words that share the same spelling pattern. **Pair-It Books** builds early literacy and language skills, phonological awareness and letter-sound awareness using fiction and non-fiction books. **Pinnell and Fountas, Phonics Lessons, Letters, Words and How They Work** is an additional resource used in TK, although it was developed for use in Kindergarten.

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. (Share a Book)
- Talking informally with other children and adults.
- Recognizing and identifying upper and lower case letters.
- Developing left to right and top to bottom orientation.
- Understanding instructional terms.
- Reinforcing and applying visual discrimination through puzzles, matching colors, pictures, geometric shapes, and other simple objects.
- Reinforcing and applying auditory discrimination through rhyming words and awareness of initial sounds in words.
- Recognizing that it is print that is read in stories, thereby connecting print to language. (Weekly Reader newspaper-Kindergarten level)
- Understanding and following a sequence of oral directions.
- Connecting information and events in a story to real life experiences.
- Demonstrating understanding of the literal meaning of a story through questions and comments.
- Recognizing beginning and ending sounds in words and print.
- Learning the parts of a book and their functions.
- Tracking print when listening to a familiar text being read.
- Retelling or dramatizing stories.

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 sequence for drawing shapes, forming pre-strokes, writing letters and numbers.

Specific activities that support small motor development include:

- Learning to hold and use markers, chalk, crayons, and pencils.
- Developing eye-hand coordination through appropriate educational toys such as puzzles, blocks, beads, etc.
- Developing motor control by pouring exercises using rice, sand, water, etc.
- Enjoying activities involving both hands and legs, such as throwing and catching a large ball, using the balance beam, climbing, swinging.
- Developing enjoyment and appreciation of color and form through art activities.
- Reinforcing formation of letters and numbers.
- Practicing to write own name.
- Encouraging children to experiment with writing by keeping a journal.
- Letters and Numbers for Me Workbook (Handwriting without Tears resource for Kindergarten level).

Mathematics

Activities begin at a simple level, increasing in complexity with the children's experience. They include numeration, recognition and writing of number symbols, measurement, geometry, patterning, money, one-to-one correspondence, and telling of time.

Specific activities that begin to develop mathematical thinking include:

- Numeration – increasing competence with oral counts as well as recognizing and writing number symbols to record counts and measures.

- Measurement- beginning to develop more accurate ideas of matching and comparing everyday types of measure; length, weight, volume, and time.
- Geometry- playing with, tracing, identifying, drawing, and constructing solid shapes.
- Operations- exploring simple addition and subtraction number sentences. (Are there enough snacks for everyone? How can we share equally?)
- Patterns and Functions- sets of elements that repeat in regular, predictable ways.
- Money- using money materials to recognize differences in the size and markings of coins, and identifying coin values.
- Clocks and Calendars- helping children to begin to develop an understanding of the duration of units of measure (day, week, month, year, hour, minute, second).
- Data and Chance- asking meaningful questions connected with classroom situations and recording data through surveys and tally activities.

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 preschoolers know best are themselves, their families, and the people in their communities. Young 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, specifically through a partnership with the residents of Fairhaven.
- 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.
- Recording – children maintain a science journal, recording findings throughout thematic units.

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 taught through these avenues.

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.

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

Children who are enrolled in our Transitional Kindergarten program have an opportunity to go to the Media Center to develop an awareness of Media resources, hear stories related to a classroom theme and check out books to share at home.

Computer Lab

Working in the lab in the media center, the children will learn basic computer skills including keyboarding, the use of a mouse, and a GUI-graphical user interface.

Faith Formation

Our goal is to provide an environment that will nurture the student's spiritual growth with acceptance and security; encourage awe, wonder, and an appreciation of God's creation; as well as, 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 his/her 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 chaplain in weekly services and in the classrooms