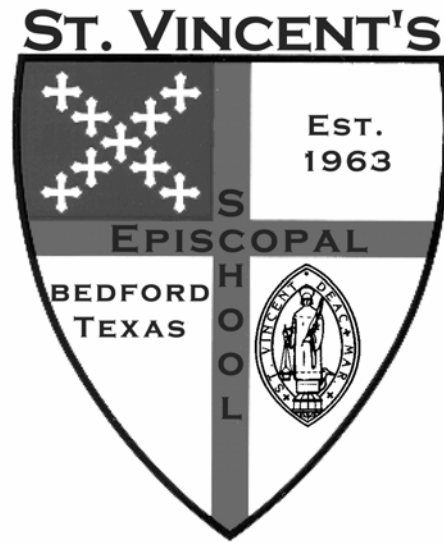


St. Vincent's Cathedral School



Curriculum and Course Guide Early Childhood

2008-2009

Early Childhood Curriculum Guide

The Early Childhood program at St. Vincent's has a threefold purpose: to prepare children with a solid foundation in literacy and math, to help children develop socially and emotionally, and to instill the joy of discovery and learning in each child. Research confirms the value of early education for young children. Early Childhood programs, like those at St. Vincent's, that support effective teaching practices, lead to important growth in children's intellectual and social development, which is critical to their future academic success. The St. Vincent's program provides a challenging, but achievable, curriculum, engaging children in thinking, reasoning, and communicating with others. Through a balanced program, teachers guide and direct children, while children respond to the challenges and acquire important skills and concepts.

The Early Childhood program at St. Vincent's encompasses nine areas of content. The children are exposed to the content areas through various teaching methods in each classroom, all of which are integrated into center activities based on thematic units.

Language and Early Literacy

During the Early Childhood years, children's experiences with communication and literacy begin to form the basis for their later school success. These language and literacy accomplishments are best achieved through activities that are integrated across different developmental areas: cognitive development, fine and gross motor development, and social and emotional development.

The areas addressed in the St. Vincent's language program are:

1. Listening comprehension – Children demonstrate understanding through their questions, comments, and answers.
2. Speech production and speech discrimination – Children learn to vocalize, pronounce, and discriminate the sounds and words of language.
3. Vocabulary – Through exposure to language and literature, children experience rapid growth in their understanding of words and word meanings.
4. Verbal Expression - Children are exposed to and acquire sufficient knowledge of vocabulary to become adept at using language to express their needs and interests, to play and pretend, and to share ideas.
5. Phonological awareness – Children acquire the auditory skills that involve the understanding of the sounds of spoken words. Phonological awareness is a crucial step toward understanding that letters or groups of letters represent phonemes or sounds. This understanding is highly predictive of success in beginning reading.
6. Print and book awareness – Children learn that print carries meaning and can recognize some of the common features of print (writing moves from left to right and is divided into words).
7. Letter knowledge and early word recognition – Children use the letter/sound connection to begin to identify printed words.
8. Motivation to read – The classroom environment associates reading with pleasure and enjoyment, as well as learning and skill development.
9. Developing knowledge of literary forms – Children become familiar with the language of books and story structure.
10. Written expression – Children begin to explore the uses of writing for themselves.
 - Demonstrate story appreciation
 - React to the mood of the story
 - Attend and listen to a story or book for ten minutes
 - Tell a story with/from three sequential pictures

- Begin to distinguish between reality and fantasy (fiction/non-fiction)
- Recall information/meaning from a book/story
- Identify upper and lower case letters
- Associate consonants with sounds
- Recognize proper use of singular and plural forms of nouns and pronouns
- Recognize names of peers
- Expand vocabulary

Mathematics

Mathematics learning builds on children’s curiosity and enthusiasm and challenges children to explore ideas about patterns and relationships; order and predictability; and logic and meaning. The St. Vincent’s program provides quality instruction in an environment that is rich in language, encourages children’s thinking, and nurtures children’s exploration and ideas.

The mathematics component of the program includes:

1. Numbers and operations – Children move from beginning to develop basic counting techniques to understanding number size, relationships, and operations.
2. Patterns – Children learn to recognize patterns and gradually begin to use patterns for problem solving and forming generalizations.
3. Geometry and spatial sense – Children recognize the properties of various shapes and figures, use words that indicate direction, and use spatial reasoning to analyze and solve problems.
4. Measurement – Children learn to make decisions about size by looking, touching, and comparing objects, while building vocabulary to express the size relationships.
5. Classification and data collection – Children learn to sort by using various attributes. Children are actively involved in collecting, sorting, organizing, and communicating information.
 - Use math vocabulary
 - Predict outcomes
 - Estimate
 - Rote count to 20
 - Count objects to 10
 - Recognize numerals to 10
 - Write numbers to 10
 - Use comparative language with measurement
 - Recognize and use patterns for prediction
 - Classify and sort objects by one attribute
 - Recognize circle, square, rectangle, triangle, oval, and diamond
 - Draw circle, square, and triangle
 - Read information from a graph

Science

Young children are naturally inquisitive and are natural scientists. They are eager to discover all they can about the world around them. They constantly ask why or how. In the Early Childhood program, children participate in simple investigations that help them develop the skills of asking questions, gathering information, communicating findings, and making informed decisions. The thematic unit approach to learning is employed within the science curriculum.

- Compare and describe objects by color, shape, and size
- Make predictions about experiment outcomes
- Begin to identify cause and effect relationships

- Classify animals by type
- Identify characteristics of each season
- Make predictions by gathering information and through observations
- Participate in group experiments
- Identify living and non-living, magnetic and non-magnetic
- Determine/predict whether objects sink or float
- Measure and compare quantities of objects

Social Studies

The social studies program exposes children to the nature of people and their world, both past and present. The curriculum integrates history, geography, community, culture, and tradition. The social studies curriculum is based on the thematic unit approach to learning.

Fine Arts

The Fine Arts program includes the following areas:

1. Art – Children are exposed to a variety of materials and encouraged to express their creativity.
2. Music – Children learn to experiment with and appreciate different types of music through singing, movement, and simple rhythm instruments.
3. Dramatic Play – Children use imagination to act out spontaneous productions. Cooperative play and leadership skills are developed through dramatic play.

Personal and Social Development

In the Early Childhood program, children begin to develop a sense of self, separate from that of the parents or siblings. They begin developing skills that enable them to function well in the classroom, as well as within social settings. They establish positive relationships with others and effectively participate in classroom activities. Children learn alternatives for resolving conflicts and communicate their needs verbally.

- Work/play independently, as well as with a group
- Verbalize needs
- Be respectful of others
- Recognize the consequences of personal actions
- Recognize personal space
- Recognize body language in others
- Seek help when appropriate
- Demonstrate good listening skills
- Focus on task at hand
- When in a non-directed center, choose an activity without being prompted
- Display self-control – recognize other’s emotions as well as own emotions
- Accept disappointments (share)
- Value own work and progress

Physical Education

The physical education component of the program provides experiences that foster fundamental motor and movement skills. Gross motor development requires thought and deliberate movement. Skills are developed through throwing, catching, bouncing, and kicking activities. Cooperative and team play are introduced through developmentally appropriate games.

Technology Applications

Regular access and exposure to computers and related technology expand the children's ability to acquire information, solve problems, and communicate with others. Children use engaging, age-appropriate, and challenging software to enrich their learning of curriculum content and concepts.

Health and Safety

Health education includes personal hygiene and nutrition education. Early Childhood students acquire everyday routines and procedures to remain safe and avoid injury. They learn about fire safety, traffic, environmental and personal safety, and what to do in emergency situations.

Thematic Units

The thematic units used in the classrooms may include, but are not limited to: Circus, Colors and Shapes, Me, Growth, Nutrition, Senses, Teddy Bears (feelings, shadows), Apples, Pets, Fire Prevention, Nocturnal Animals, Fall, Harvest, Indians, Pilgrims, Thanksgiving, Family, Christmas Traditions, Winter, Hibernation, Migration, Arctic, Antarctic, Australia, Explorers, the Ocean, Western Heritage, Community Helpers, Valentines, Dr. Seuss, Dinosaurs, Transportation, Spring, Air/Wind, Water/Rain, Insects, Farm, Zoo/Safari, Seashore, and Famous Artists. These thematic units are representative of those used in the Early Childhood classrooms. Each classroom will select units from these topics.

Bridge Program

Language Arts Overview

The Bridge language arts curriculum focuses on reading and writing readiness in preparation for Kindergarten. Two specific language programs provide the foundation for the curriculum. Both programs use musical melodies and songs to teach the alphabet and associated sounds. The first program, AlphaTales, features a learning library of 26 humorous storybooks that build phonemic awareness and teach each letter of the alphabet. The second program used in conjunction with AlphaTales is the Leap Frog Press Alphabet Little Books. This program helps students develop language skills, vocabulary and pre-reading skills necessary for success in Kindergarten. The students enjoy making their own books at the end of each segment. They have ample opportunities to practice what they have learned in associated learning centers designed to compliment both programs.

Assessment

The children are assessed using a variety of tools. Anecdotal records, teacher observations, and individual assessments give a clear picture of the child's developmental progress. Each child is assessed informally for his or her growth over the course of the year and formally twice a year. Assessment is truly an ongoing process in the Bridge program!

Math Overview

The purpose of the Bridge math program is to strengthen beginning math concepts in preparation for Kindergarten. Each day begins with the utilization of numerous math concepts during circle time – days of the week, months of the year, patterning, graphing, counting 1 through 100, counting by 2's, 5's, and 10's, concept of time, temperature and numeration. Through the use of songs and melodies, students are able to remember many of these basic math concepts. In addition

to circle time, we use Magical Mathematical Melodies by Frog Street Press. This program teaches and reinforces basic number concepts, number recognition and math facts using music, rhythm, and rhyme. Mini books are included with each song to read, sing, and take home to share with family. Concepts incorporated throughout the activities are: numbers, operations, quantitative reasoning, geometry, spatial reasoning, patterns, and relationships. Nursery rhymes are also used as thematic units to teach mathematical concepts as well as to strengthen memory.

Center time provides an opportunity to reinforce each concept. We use many activities from the Hands-On Math program by Creative Teaching Press. Activities from this program provide the children with countless opportunities to use manipulatives and practice what they are learning.

Assessment

The students are assessed daily using both formal and informal tools. Anecdotal records, individual assessments and daily observations enable the teacher to monitor a student's progress in their understanding of basic math concepts.

Science Overview

The Bridge science program aims to relate science to everyday life. Hands-on science experiments and related learning centers are the basis for the program. Through the use of thematic units, children learn about the seasons, air and air resistance, balance, temperature, insects and animals, marine life, weather, and our atmosphere. We also seek to leave room in our days to study anything else that interests us. For instance, we may go on a shadow walk, go out and look for birds and nests, or even make mud pies!

Assessment

Students are evaluated using teacher observation and anecdotal records. Assessment is ongoing, as we look for progression in skills and understanding in each child.

Social Studies Overview

The Bridge program seeks to provide an environment for each child in which he/she can develop those life and social skills so necessary in today's world. A more defined and positive knowledge of self leads us to a more complete knowledge of the world around us. Most of our lessons are integrated into the whole curriculum. We work daily on improving our social skills and our ability to work cooperatively with one another. Learning to work in a group setting is an important goal in preparation for future grade levels. Understanding our school community, as well as the community in which we live, is also a focus of the program.

Assessment

Evaluation of these skills will be dependent upon teacher observation and anecdotal records.