

# PRE-K CURRICULUM

## OVERVIEW

The school has organized its educational programs to be consistent with its Catholic mission and philosophy, recognizing that all students are unique individuals, created in the image and likeness of God.

The Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs promote learning in a developmentally appropriate manner. In Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, children are seen as learners, thinkers and investigators. They are encouraged to interact with the world through a variety of activities.

The Grade 3-5 program is designed to encourage students to actualize their potential as independent, self-motivated and well-rounded students. Creative projects allow students to express themselves through a variety of media.

The Middle School years are a particularly important time for developing personal responsibility, decision-making and higher order thinking skills. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of planning for long-term assignments and projects.

## RELIGION

In Catholic schools, no matter the subject, teachers have the opportunity to catechize by infusing the message of the Gospel throughout all aspects of the educational process. Whether teaching the sciences, history, art, or physical education, each subject area provides a venue for opening the eyes of faith. Catholic teachers have a unique role as catechists because they have the privilege of working with students throughout the week and over many years of education. They have the opportunity to “teach as Jesus did” in a setting that creates the learning community within the context of faith.

The National Directory for Catechesis further states the following about catechesis in the Catholic schools:

***“The Catholic school affords a particularly favorable setting for catechesis with its daily opportunity for proclaiming and living the Gospel message; for learning and appreciating the teachings of our Church; for acquiring a deep understanding, reverence, and love of the Liturgy; for building community; for prayer; for proper formation of conscience; for development of virtue; and for participating in Christian service. In addition, Catholic schools strive to relate all the sciences to salvation and sanctification. Students are shown how Jesus illumines all of life – science, mathematics, history, business, biology, and so forth. For these reasons, whenever possible, parents should send their children to a Catholic school.” (NDC no.9d)***

Religion at Presentation of Mary Academy is approached as a way of life rather than a subject to be taught. All students at PMA are required to take Religion classes taught by a classroom teacher or a religion teacher beginning in pre-k through grade 8. Religion classes examine the stories of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus as well as Christian morality, following the traditions of the Catholic faith through the development, study and lived experiences of the sacramental programs. Through religion classes, students study the ways personal and community values develop and what it means to be individuals of faith and integrity.

## FOR STUDENTS OF OTHER FAITH DENOMINATIONS:

The Religious Studies curriculum encourages each student’s spiritual growth while providing a foundation of Biblical and religious literacy. Built on a Christian foundation, religious education classes provide a welcoming and safe environment for students of all religious backgrounds to learn and grow. Through intentional incorporation of the core values and themes from our Christian traditions, classes foster a loving environment for students to listen to each other’s beliefs, practices and questions.

### ***Presentation of Mary Academy students excel at***

- connecting the core values to lessons in the Scriptures;
- actively and respectfully participating in worship services;
- respecting the diversity of religious faith and practice in the world and within the Christian tradition;
- connecting lessons from scripture to everyday decision-making;
- actively listening to the ideas, beliefs, and questions of their peers;
- engaging with Bible stories through skits, songs, art, sign language, and class discussion;

- putting faith into action through outreach programs, such as Soup Kitchen, and collections for natural disasters;
- participating in Lenten projects, and faith based multi-media competitions.

As much as possible, all students and staff participate in monthly liturgies, a time to nurture the community's spiritual life through the Eucharist. The students serve in leadership roles at liturgies as greeters, readers and acolytes. The entire school community gathers for special prayer services throughout the school year that highlight the liturgical cycle.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

Our Pre-Kindergarten language arts program begins with an in-depth study of the alphabet. The class focuses on letter recognition with “The Letter of the Week” activities. The classroom walls are filled with pictures, signs, calendars, graphs, the morning messages, and other information. Story time helps children process information, understand feelings, and enjoy the humor that can often be found in books. One of the most important aspects of Pre-Kindergarten development is when children recognize that a series of printed letters creates a word that has meaning. To encourage this recognition, students dictate their own picture captions and stories. In this manner, they discover that their words can be translated into print as they watch teachers write what they describe. Children also have opportunities to chart information like their classmates’ birthdays and favorite ice cream flavors. Students emerge with an understanding that writing can serve many purposes.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

As the classroom and the school become increasingly familiar, the Pre-Kindergarten students gain an understanding of their new environment. The students study both the nuclear and extended family to build an understanding and appreciation of the interrelationships and continuity between generations. Students are also introduced to different cultures through the recognition of holidays. The study emphasizes the importance of appreciating the history of a holiday as well as people’s beliefs and traditions.

## **SCIENCE**

As Presentation of Mary Academy seeks to innovate in education, our faculty actively engage students through an interdisciplinary, inquiry-focused, hands-on curriculum based upon STEM lessons that integrate Science, Technology, Engineering and Math concepts into topics being taught . Our science program is creating excitement in pre-k-5 as students explore and build machines, problem solve in the digital and real worlds, design, implement, and analyze outcomes from scientific experiments, and explore how the natural and human-designed worlds work. This foundation will help prepare the students to be active, informed participants in the explosive growth of scientific and technological discovery in the world.

Pre-Kindergarten students are natural and spontaneous scientists who gather data on a daily basis using their senses as a primary means of discovery. Through scientific inquiry, they learn about the characteristics of the plants, people, and animals that inhabit their environment. They also learn to describe and chart the weather. Students examine how weather changes through the seasons and the effects of these changes on nature, as well as what people wear, eat, and do. Pre-Kindergarten students also study the migration and hibernation of animals.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Students learn to classify and compare objects based on shape, size, and color. At first, they focus on one attribute as a means of sorting objects. As the year progresses, students learn to consider several others when classifying. They also start to appreciate patterns as they recognize and create sequences of objects using repetitions of these attributes. The importance of math in everyday events is also emphasized as children graph and chart types of pets and favorite foods, among other things. Cooking and setting up snacks are wonderful opportunities to appreciate the real-life value of using measurement to identify quantity.

# **THE ARTS**

## **CREATIVE MOVEMENT**

Creative Movement is offered in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. The program uses imagery, rhythm, tempo, and problem-solving to teach children about their bodies. It provides them with opportunities for using movement as a vehicle for creative self-expression and developing a sense of confidence.

## **ART**

The art program is designed to provide our students with the opportunity to develop their own artistic sensibility and skills. Students are exposed to computer art, mixed media, drawing, painting, sculpture, sand art and collage.

## **COMPUTER**

The core operating dynamic of the technology curriculum is about empowering students through the use of technology. In service to this goal, students are encouraged to become independent twenty-first century learners. Through recognizing, expanding, and applying personal knowledge in terms of technology skills and project topics, each student has the experience of being a more active participant in his or her own learning.

At Presentation of Mary Academy technology is used as a learning tool to enhance and enrich the core curriculum in all grades. Students in K through Eighth Grade attend classes with the computer specialist to learn fundamental technology skills, which, in turn, are integrated into classroom activities throughout the day. Students learn proper research skills and abide by the acceptable use and safety policies when using computer equipment and the internet. Emphasis is placed on helping students become safe, savvy and educated consumers of electronic media. Specific subject-related software and relevant internet websites reinforce concepts in language arts, math, science, social studies, Spanish, music and art.

## **LIBRARY**

In our library, the goal is to promote intellectual curiosity and freedom while developing a lifelong love and appreciation of reading. We are continuously updating our media collection in order to focus on the needs and desires of students and faculty. Our commitment is to develop the research skills necessary to be successful in using all types of media, including primary and secondary sources as well as a variety of print and electronic media. The library partners with the computer curriculum to develop joint projects that enrich and aid students in their core curriculum subject areas. This partnership also allows the library to stay current with emerging technologies.

## **MUSIC**

The Grammar School music program helps to develop each student's ability to understand, enjoy, and perform music. In addition to musical literacy (reading, writing, and listening), singing and playing instruments are important components in music education. Helping students increase their sensitivity to the expressive qualities in music allows them to discover and use their creative talents. The curriculum's flexibility allows the teacher to meet the varying needs and interests of classes and individual students. Musical selections for performance come from a wide variety of sources, including liturgical music, folk music, seasonal songs, music from around the world, children's choral arrangements and popular music. Whenever possible, connections are made with the curriculum. Music appreciation is part of the program throughout the grades. Students also perform two concerts during the school year.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The physical education program is designed to foster a life-long interest and enjoyment in movement and physical activities. Throughout the program, children develop and refine gross motor skills. From Pre-Kindergarten, where basic motor skills and body awareness are taught, through grade 8, where group activities and lead-up games for team sports are introduced, there is a progression from the mastery of individual skills to their application in a variety of situations. In fifth and sixth grades, students learn the fundamentals of touch football, floor hockey, volleyball, basketball, softball, and a variety of non-competitive games that improve physical skills and foster teamwork.