

GRADE 1 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

First graders are engaged in a reading program that incorporates phonics, whole language, and guided reading techniques in order to support individual learning styles. Children's literature, big books, basic readers, and workbooks are used individually and in small groups. Students learn to decode using phonic skills, sight vocabulary, and context and picture clues. They also sharpen their listening skills, increase their attention span and learn to follow directions. Students learn to be thoughtful, reflective readers by responding to literature in writing and group discussions. Writing is integrated into all curriculum areas in first grade. Students draw from their own ideas and experiences to create stories. As their writing fluency increases, students practice handwriting skills to improve letter formation and spacing, and they begin to capitalize and punctuate their work.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Focusing on Hudson and Nashua, first graders study community as they explore their town/city. They learn about its people and how their needs are met. The geographical concept of a town and city and how this affects the transportation of people, goods and food is explored. As the first graders learn about where water comes from and how waste is removed, environmental issues are explored. Students also look at the physical structure of cities and towns, with an emphasis on famous buildings and parks. An integrated curricular approach utilizes maps, writing, art, and singing.

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 the 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.

The first grade science curriculum emphasizes an experimental approach. The students continue to focus on the scientific method as they observe, experiment, and record their findings in a wide variety of formats, including graphing, writing, and drawing. The science program integrates math, language arts, and art. Topics include reptiles, life cycles, urban ecology, technology, animals, plants, earth's resources, weather, seasons, astrology, matter and energy. A culminating science fair takes place in May bringing science to life in grade one.

MATHEMATICS

Students develop an understanding of number concepts, patterning, classifying, and sorting as they use real-life, mathematical experiences. These concepts are reinforced through a variety of board and computer games, as well as manipulatives, such as Unifix cubes and Cuisenaire rods. As students develop computational skills through concrete problem-solving activities, the students proceed to more abstract thinking. In cooperative activities, they create, solve, and share their own word problems and become familiar with math vocabulary. The use of tangrams, pattern blocks, and geo-boards helps students discover symmetry and geometric shapes in their environment as well as a sense of spatial awareness. Measurement is explored through the use of calendars, cooking, clocks and rulers. The first grade students begin the process of memorizing basic addition and subtraction facts and skills. Topics include, number sense and operations, addition and subtraction to 20, fractions, graphs, probability, geometry, patterns, money, time and measurement.

THE ARTS

ART

The art program is designed to provide our students with the opportunity to develop their own artistic sensibility while cultivating a solid foundation in classical artistic principles. Small and highly personalized classes meet once a week in our well-equipped studio where students are exposed to mixed media, drawing, painting, and sculpture. Lessons are presented through an art historical perspective in order to expose students to a wide array of classical and modern artists and their work.

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.