
PRESCHOOL

CURRICULUM GUIDE

This booklet contains an outline of the philosophy and instructional goals for the Preschool Program at St. Joseph School. Overall, the philosophy of St. Joseph School emphasizes that learning is integrated and experiential, value based and a foundation for continued and life-long learning. Learning is designed to promote the spiritual, intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth of each unique child.



Goals

- To help enhance the child's natural sense of spirituality through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd materials.
- To allow the child to discover the world around him/her through the Montessori materials.
- To feel a sense of security and have successful experiences when they come to school, which will enable them to feel good about themselves.
- To teach them appropriate social skills and manners with their peers and adults.
- To keep their natural love of learning alive through this classroom environment.
- To value the respect of life, people, and materials around him/her.

Exercises of Practical Life

Practical Life experiences involve the activity of the child. They include the ordinary daily movements performed in the course of living, such as carrying, pouring, washing, dressing, and cutting. These activities fall into four major categories:

- Care of self
- Care of the environment
- Acquiring control of movement, skill and grace of body and hands
- Social graces and etiquette

Within the Practical Life area each child is offered a scope of activities, appropriate for his/her age level. This not only prepares the child for all kinds of functioning, but the repeated practice helps them develop further physical control, focusing of attention, and building up of habits of personal involvement and perseverance.

The child is always encouraged to:

- Complete the whole task to the best of his/her ability
- Arrange all needed materials in order, use them correctly, put the item back, or replace them with fresh items
- Leave whole unit or piece of work in order, ready for the next child

As a result of the practical life activities each child is helped to achieve more and be thoughtful of the needs and rights of others.

Sensorial

Children understand the world around them through their senses, which bring impressions that guide them to form their own unique relationship with the world. These sensory impressions develop their intelligence and understanding of things, persons and events around them. In the first two years of life the child is guided by inner sensitivities to develop an understanding of the world and its vast panorama of stimuli.

For instance, the color tablets are small flat slabs each showing one of eleven colors. The game is to match the two that are alike, training the eyes to discern the differences between them. Each of the sensory materials can be classified by size, dimensions, colors, forms, shapes, textures, and weights. The sensorial materials and activities help a child to develop a keen sense of discernment and judgment and an accurate understanding of the many and varied qualities of objects in the child's environment.

Language

This area within the classroom has many exercises, which can be practiced by the child with the guidance of the teacher. The first level is verbal or pre-reading followed by additional activities which promote writing and reading. Language exercises are classified as follows:

- Enrichment of vocabulary – casual and social, specific and scientific
- Correction of pronunciation, articulation, enunciation and diction
- Analysis of sounds in words and word building
- Preparation of hand mechanism for writing

With frequent practice of these exercises the child begins to develop spontaneously into writing and reading at two levels, the first explosion comes as, in what Dr. Maria Montessori called, “an expression of the prepared mechanism,” resulting in the child writing letters of the alphabet whenever possible.

Moreover, the child sounds out the letters of a word whenever possible. Gradually, the child is led through more and more word building into reading words and visualizing their spelling until there comes the ability to read fluently and also to write with more ease and control through the practice of writing the words built. Comprehension is given help with many verbal games – conversations, stories, poems, and songs.

With the beginning tools of pre-reading and writing, the classroom environment is a fountain of opportunities to read and write through picture cards and objects which can be spelled out with the moveable alphabet.

In addition there are reading games for understanding the functions of words (parts of speech).

Mathematics

Through concrete materials, the child is led to explore and discover the learning of numbers. Numbers 1–10 are given first in their quantitative value with the numerals that represent the symbols 0–10. This is followed by a whole vision of the hierarchical system of base ten in the form of the decimal bead material. These consist of a loose unit bead representing the “ones”, bars of ten beads for the “tens”, squares of ten bars for the “hundreds” and cubes composed of 10 on hundred squares for the “thousands”.

This brings the child to visualize the powers of the decimal system and to understand that there can only be nine units in each category. The children can do addition and subtraction with this material. There are specific materials which teach children 11–19 and 1–100.

Geography

This area includes puzzle maps of the continents (the world), North America and the United States. Pictures are shown of the terrain, customs and lifestyle of each map. There is also a flag-making activity, so the children can learn about flags of different countries.

Science

Individual activities are set up on the shelf for the children to explore, and investigate concepts, such as sink/float, living/non-living and magnetic/non-magnetic.

- Botany – Puzzles and matching cards of parts of a flower, a leaf and a tree
- Zoology – learning parts of animals and insects

Music

An assortment of instruments and a set of bells which represent the scale of low C to high C assist the children auditorially to match the pairs and play some simple songs.

Religion

This very special area of the classroom is called the “Atrium”. This is formulated from a training called The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The Atrium unfolds with the liturgical year. The children are exposed to Jesus in the Atrium through a multitude of concrete materials, which represent the Church and the stories of Jesus’ life. For example, there is a child-sized altar. Hanging on the wall beside it is a cabinet holding the articles of Mass. The children are shown how to “set up” the altar so it is ready for Mass. As well as naming the articles, we pray and sing in the Atrium as a group, as well as individually.

Once the children have been shown how to do an activity, they are free to explore it and work with it at their own individual pace.

Rev. 3-04