



The Mission of St. Mary's Parish School is:
To Grow Disciples of Christ

**Curriculum for St. Mary's Parish School
Preschool through Eighth Grade**

Our integrated curriculum, from pre-school (3-year-old) through 8th grade, has a mission of growing Disciples of Christ. A major focus of our curriculum is learning to grow, work, and thrive as a community of learners in a Christ-centered environment. From kindergarten on, students serve as leaders at the school Mass on Wednesdays where they learn to speak, gain confidence in front of people, and know they are loved by God. In helping our community learn to be present to God in our very busy lives, each day, the entire school takes a few minutes at 12:30 pm where they sit quietly, close their eyes, and listen to and reflect on God's presence in their lives.

We start each day with an "All-School Assembly" where we recognize your child on their birthday or half birthday with a blessing, recognition of their gifts and talents, and a book that s/he has chosen that goes into the library in your child's name. We say the Pledge of Allegiance, prayers, and engage children in community. Your child (whether a 3-year-old through 8th grade) becomes known, valued, and loved by everyone in the school. Service, looking to help others, is an important part of our curriculum. As classes and as a school, our students learn to identify and help those in need within our community and across the nation and world. Additionally, our overall curriculum emphasizes leadership through religion, music, student council, and service activities. As one graduate recently wrote on the school's FACEBOOK: *"I went there almost 20 years ago and even before the expansion it was top notch! To this day, I credit St. Mary's for instilling solid work ethic, compassion, curiosity, and determination in me. I wouldn't change my time there for anything!!!"*

Our curriculum provides a strong foundation in the skills needed for life-long learning. These skills include, but are not limited to the areas of STREAM:

Science
Technology
Religion
Engineering
Arts
Mathematics

The focus in education today is to help students be prepared for the high-powered jobs twenty plus years from now. Reality? To be really prepared to face the unknown future, students still need to be fluent in all core subjects, especially reading and thinking skills; they must develop skills of resiliency and hope in the face of adversity. Lastly, they must develop skills of being able to work with others in cooperative and effective ways.

As you read about our curriculum starting in Preschool and continue all the way through Eighth grade, look for the many ways we are working effectively with our students now and for the future!

Education is the most
powerful weapon which you can
use to change the world.



Revised March 2019

Preschool Program (age3):

Curriculum Program for children at age 3***

Our mission is to provide a high quality developmentally appropriate program for young children and their families. We develop the curriculum based on the student's skills, needs, and interests. We encourage problem solving and emphasize process rather than product. We provide a safe and nurturing environment where children feel free to express themselves, explore, discover, and problem solve, fostering their growth and independence.



The school day is structured to help support creativity and deeper level thinking. Children are able to make choices and to learn at their own pace during free play and self-directed activities. Teacher-directed activities are provided to help guide children's thinking and to work towards certain goals. The daily schedule provides both quiet and active activities, individual and large group activities, and child-choice and teacher directed activities. A variety of materials and activities are prepared and available to help provide a rich experience. Children will grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, as well as academically. We intentionally provide activities to foster literacy, language, mathematics, science, arts, movement, social interactions, and practical life activities. In addition, they receive two days of music, physical education, and Spanish each week.

***** Child must be age 3 (and toilet trained) on/by September 1 (State of Idaho law)**

Revised March 2019

*What you are is God's gift to you;
what you make of yourself is your gift to God.*

Prekindergarten Program (age 4)

Our program provides a strong academic curriculum of basic skills, fosters a love of learning, and challenges students at their levels of learning with opportunities for success. Children are taught to love and accept themselves, others, and God.



Our curriculum consists of the following elements:

- ✚ **Religion:** Religious instruction *ABC Jesus Loves Me* Program, daily prayer, caring for others, dealing with feelings and morals while providing living examples of a loving Christian community. Children are encouraged to love and accept themselves.
- ✚ **Reading & Language Arts:** We work on recognizing names, sounds of letters, and capital and lowercase recognition. We read Nursery rhymes and classical stories. Learning continues at circle time, singing class songs, chants, finger plays, and exploring phonics activities. We have “show and tell” daily. We also use *Handwriting Without Tears* Program.
- ✚ **Writing:** drawing, coloring, painting, and cutting activities, working on fine motor skills, practicing writing each letter learned (upper and lower case, left to right, and top to bottom. The modern manuscript method of printing).
- ✚ **Social Studies:** The following are units that are developed: our environment, All about Me, Community, various holidays, famous people and family.
- ✚ **Science:** We focus on food groups, five senses, body/health, weather, seasons, spiders, bats, plants/farms, fairy tale study, life cycle of a butterfly, dinosaurs and space. We use *My Big World with Clifford*, which is a fun non-fiction magazine for early-childhood. This tool helps bring our themes to life with colorful photos and activities.
- ✚ **Art:** Creative expression is developed by developing the students’ fine motor skills, listening skills, and following directions, all the while using a variety of art media.
- ✚ **Math:** We have the students work with patterns, sorting, numbers 1-20 (recognition, counting, and using and writing numbers).
- ✚ **Music:** There is a class with the music teacher twice a week.
- ✚ **Spanish:** There is a class with a Spanish teacher twice a week.
- ✚ **Physical Education:** There is a class in physical education twice per week.

Revised March 2019

Kindergarten (age 5)

Our Kindergarten curriculum provides a solid foundational curriculum. Although we teach general studies and academics, a large focus is on social skills, manners, respect, responsibility, resourcefulness, and learning to be a young person with a love and desire to learn.



Religion: The religion book/program Kindergarten uses is called *God Loves Us* by Loyola Press. We use a workbook, and do and act out many other religious activities. We learn that God loves us and all the many good things in life such as: family, friends, body, weather, animals, and feelings. Kindergarten attends Mass about once a month and has one Mass they help lead with their buddies. Many themes are religion based and we cover holidays such as: All Saints Day, Advent & Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, & Easter. We spend a good part of the month of May talking about Mary. We are introduced to a few Saints. Religion is tied into our behavioral issues and everyday experiences.

Phonics/Reading/Writing: We study and learn to understand each letter of the alphabet; what the letter looks like, how to write it, how to read it, the sounds it makes, and automatically recognizing it. The students learn to rhyme and differentiate between beginning and ending sounds. They learn to blend letters/sounds together to form words and memorize sight words. The first half of the year, students use books in the classroom, while the second half of the school year the students can check out books from the school library. For children who are reading we work on fluency and comprehension. They are also able to use the *Accelerated Reader (AR)* program. We learn D'Nealian print. We focus on correctly forming and writing each letter. Students learn to differentiate between letters and words, how to write left to right, and top to bottom correctly on paper. They use their creativity to match pictures/stories with words, phrases, and sentences. They begin spelling and sounding out. By the end of the year the class as a whole will have published a class book and will have completed the writing process. Every day the children write in a daily journal and develop their writing skills. We use computer programs such as *Lexia Reading CORE5* and *Waterford* to supplement skills.

Mathematics: Kindergarten uses the *Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley* math basil. We focus mainly on number sense. Students practice recognizing, reading, writing, and counting to the number 31. Counting by 1s, 5s, and 10s to the number 100 and by 2s to the number 20. Simple addition and subtraction, beginning to count and identify money (coins) and tell time to the hour, daily time sense skills, such as calendar skills and time of day concepts are all introduced. Geometry shapes, measurements, patterns, and fractions skills are also introduced. Children who are more advanced in math skills and can read, may also participate in the *Accelerated Math (AM)* program.

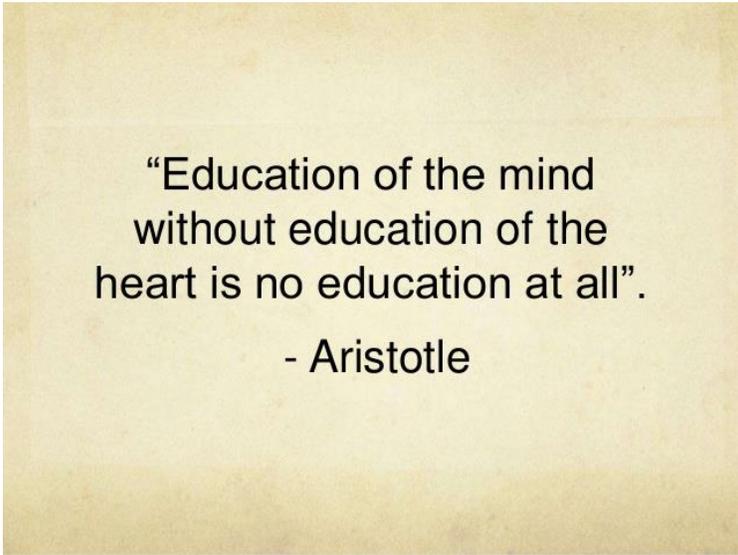
Science/Social Studies: We have weekly themes through the school year that are science and social studies related such as: plants, flowers, space, oceans, fish, seasons and weather, and dinosaurs. There is a 6-week long unit about health, nutrition, the human body, the 5 senses, and dental care. Social skills adapting to our world around us and working together as a community are a major part of the social studies curriculum. Holidays, Presidents, family, occupations, friends, safety, manners, and our community are some we cover. We take a few field trips as well as meet with our buddies about once a month to work together on activities.

Basic Daily Skills/Social Skills: “Recess and Free Choice Play” are times set aside specifically for students to practice their social habits. They have imaginative play and interaction with their peers. Students work through problems and ask for adult help only when needed. They implement taking turns and sharing. Every morning the class as a whole (with the help and guidance of the teacher) does “calendar”. We focus on: day of the

month and week, weather, calendar pattern, counting on an ascending time line and place value. There is a morning message the students read and talk about. We say a daily prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance as well as sing a patriotic song. After lunch each day, we have “Show and Tell” where the child has her/his day to “shine”. We rest and learn how to quietly listen to part of a chapter book story. There are several times throughout each day when a picture book is read and discussed.

Music/PE/Art/Spanish: Kindergarten has Music and PE four times a week, Spanish twice a week, and a formal art class once a month, though there are many art activities in any given week. We incorporate *SmartKids* into many activities.

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A rectangular piece of aged, yellowish paper with a slightly textured surface. Centered on the paper is a quote in a black, sans-serif font. The quote reads: "Education of the mind without education of the heart is no education at all". Below the quote, the name "- Aristotle" is written in the same font.

“Education of the mind
without education of the
heart is no education at all”.

- Aristotle

First Grade Curriculum:

While our curriculum follows the approved Idaho Department of Education guidelines for this grade level, we greatly enhance and supplement the basic curriculum with many different enrichment and faith activities during the year to provide an environment that promotes excellence in learning.



The focus of grade 1 is to:

- Foster a love of learning.
- Develop and learn all basic skills in math and language arts.
- Develop a sense of pride in doing work to the best of our abilities.
- Learn to work effectively, independently and cooperatively in groups and individually.
- Nurture a sense of community.
- Nurture and value individual differences.
- Use our curiosity to learn about our world and environment in science and social studies.
- To deepen our faith and put our faith into action through how we treat one another, and through service projects in our community and beyond.

Religion: The religion textbook that is used throughout the school is Finding God by Loyola Press. Every chapter in Finding God is accompanied with a hands-on activity to deepen students' understanding of the text and to put knowledge into practice. One such activity included making peg dolls of each saint and writing a brief biography. Its focus is to help each student know more about God and God's world. God is a loving God who desires deeply to have a personal relationship with each one. Each student is introduced to prayers that are learned by heart as well as time to experience God speaking with each one in his/her heart. Religion is integrated into the daily life of the children. First graders take turns being the prayer leader for the class. We try to put our faith into action by the way we treat one another and by carrying out different service projects to help those in need.

Math: The focus is on understanding and using basic operations, especially addition and subtraction. We practice math facts to develop speed and accuracy. We also work on problem solving, estimation, number families, time, measurement, number patterns and money. The basic math curriculum is enriched with the *Accelerated Math (AM)* program (computer managed, self-paced learning in math). Children are challenged to master math facts at their own pace, allowing some children to begin work on multiplication facts, for example. The first-grade class has a large collection of math manipulatives for the children to use as needed. Our big goals for the year are to be able to tell time to the minute, count money, add two-digit numbers without "borrowing" or "carrying." I incorporate hands-on activities such as the "shopping game" and "I have... Who has..." to help reinforce the concepts we learn from our math books, Scott Forsmann and Addison Wesley's "First Grade Mathematics," and *AM*.

Language Arts: (Reading, Writing, Spelling, Phonics, and Grammar): The focus in Language Arts is on reading and writing across the curriculum. We work to integrate content across the first-grade curriculum. For example, when we are studying animals in science, we will begin reading animal non-fiction books and writing simple animal reports. During a month-long focus on 'Once Upon a Time' tales, we independently read and/or listen to many different versions of the fairy tales and folk tales, both traditional and modern, and from different cultures. After comparing these stories, we write and publish our original fairy tale stories. The first graders publish several books during the year – poetry, Halloween stories, narrative stories, fairy tales, and Penguin

reports. We learn by acting out classic stories such as “Jack and the Beanstalk”, through readers’ theaters. We complete daily phonics activities such as word sorts and play word games, including chunks. We write funny stories using the story starter’s flip book which gives us wacky characters, settings, and problems to feed our imaginations. A flexible approach is used to develop children’s **reading skills**. We use whole language, key words, and phonetic readers, and try to match the reading material to the needs and strengths of the individual child. Reading instruction is carried out individually, in pairs (buddy reading), in small groups, and with the whole class. Reading books from the large classroom library are sent home daily in a reading folder. Children also select reading books from the school library. Children are read to from quality children’s picture books (e.g. Caldecott Honor books) and are also introduced to various genres and series of books (*Junie B. Jones* and *Horrible Harry* – realistic fiction, the Magic Tree house series – historical fiction, *Nate the Great*, *Jigsaw Jones*, *A-Z Mysteries* – mysteries.) We also read several longer chapter books such as *The B.F.G.* by Roald Dahl and *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White. Our **spelling program** is based on our phonics book. We study short and long vowel patterns and beginning and ending blends. The spelling program is supplemented by individual spelling lists based on commonly used words in English. We build our phonemic awareness through the use of words sorts, such as those in "Learning Phonics" and "Essential Word Sorts." Students enjoy categorizing the words based on sound and solving word puzzle challenges, while strengthening their understanding of segmenting and blending words.

Social Studies: The framework for our social studies units comes from the Engage New York Curriculum. Our focus is the fundamental needs of human beings – food, shelter, clothing, family and community – and how these needs are met depending on time and place. A favorite project is a month-long study of America Long Ago. We learn how Native Americans lived on the plains, in the woodlands and in the desert. This project involves a lot of artwork, literature and drama. Topics covered in our social studies unit include frontier explorers, a new nation (the founding of the United States), multicultural folklore, and the solar system. One of the students’ favorite social studies lessons involves imagining themselves as early explorers and writing journal entries with maps.

Science: The first graders begin with classification – living and non-living, animal and plant, and the characteristics of the vertebrate animals. We also study magnets, the water cycle and weather. We focus on making observations and predictions, and recording our predictions, observations, and results of simple experiments with words and pictures. Students participate in a weekly hands-on STEM project in which they design a solution to a given obstacle. The week prior to Christmas break, students were tasked with the challenge of creating a safe parachute for Santa. Students first drew blue prints of their design using their knowledge of the materials provided. They were then asked to look critically and evaluate the pros and cons of their idea. Students then got to build, time, and test their parachutes with their peers. In addition to the incorporation of science in our daily curriculum, first graders are encouraged to participate in the Moscow Science Fair.

Computers: Computers are used as tools to aid learning and communicating. Accelerated Math, Accelerated Reading, Math Facts in a Flash, Lexia Phonics, My Reading Coach, Lexia Core 5, and Math Blaster are some of the programs we use to practice skills. We also use Word and Power Point for publishing, and the Paint program for art.

Art: Every Wednesday we have an art lesson. We learn about a featured-artist through kid-friendly documentaries and articles. We analyze their techniques, then create our own work influenced by them.

Other activities:

- ✚ **Music:** The children have music lessons twice a week from a certified music teacher. They also participate in two whole-school musical productions throughout the year. Many first graders are also part of St. Mary's award-winning choir.
- ✚ **PE:** Physical Education lessons, from a certified physical education teacher, are held twice a week. The emphasis is on developing skills, playing as part of a team, good sportsmanship and fitness for life. The first graders spend a day hiking at Kamiak Butte as part of the fitness for life program.
- ✚ **Spanish:** Spanish lessons are taught twice per week from a certified Spanish teacher. Students learn to speak and sing songs through an immersion Spanish approach.
- ✚ **Enrichment days:** Several times a year the children participate in special enrichment activities led by members of our community. Recent enrichment activities have involved engineering and design, art, drama, writing, and sports.

✚ *Revised March 2019*

To the extent that the parents who send their children to these [Catholic] schools are parents like my own, who actually have faith in the church. Faith that it will provide their children with safety, a decent education and values about life and others. This is an institution that stands for all good in the world.

— *Sonia Sotomayor* —

Second Grade Curriculum

While our curriculum follows the approved Idaho Department of Education guidelines for this grade level, we greatly enhance and supplement with many different enrichment and faith activities during the year to provide an environment that promotes excellence in learning.

The Focus of grade 2 is to:

- Foster a love of learning.
- Develop, learn and grow in basic skills in math and reading.
- Develop of sense of pride in doing work well.
- Learn to work effectively in groups and individually.
- Increase our faith and the knowledge of our faith as we participate in the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- Develop a sense of community in our class and school as well as live our Student Learning Expectations: Respect, Responsibility, and Resourcefulness.
- Use our curiosity to understand and learn about our world and environment in science and social studies.
- Our religion is integrated into all facets of the curriculum. We are called to act like Jesus and treat each other the way Jesus would.

Religion: This is a special year in your child's life. We participate in two Sacraments; Reconciliation and Eucharist; we learn about the Mass, and how we fit into a larger church. The class prays for each other and for people in our community and their needs all during the year. We sing, we are prayer leaders at Mass, and we try to serve our school, community, and the larger community.

Math: We learn our addition and subtraction facts, work on estimating, problem solving, fractions, probability, measurement, telling time, money, and geometry. Multiplication and division are also introduced. We enrich our curriculum with the Accelerated Math program allowing students to progress through libraries at their own pace as well as IXL.

Language Arts: (Reading, Writing, Spelling, Phonics, and English): Our curriculum fosters a love of reading as well as basic skills. We teach phonics and spelling rules as well as sentence structure, word study, grammar and usage. We learn how to write sentences correctly but also write for content and the ability to express our thoughts in a variety of areas. We write poems during the school year. A love of books and reading is shared with books read by the classroom teacher such as special stories like *Ramona*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and selected biographies. The Accelerated Reader program helps students maintain and improve reading levels.

Social Studies: The focus of second grade is community, why we have rules, community service and workers. We also learn about our country studying George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and symbols of our country.



Science: We explore our planet in the areas of life science, earth science, and physical science. Second grade also studies matter, space, the earth, sound and motion, rocks, and our environment. Our second graders are encouraged to participate in the Moscow Community Science Fair. This year we are working on Coding with We-do's and Ozobots.

Extra Activities:

- ✚ Vandal Pen-pals – as part of the language arts curriculum we write to pen-pals at the University of Idaho weekly during the school year.
- ✚ Enrichment Days – Several times during the year, we have special people enrich our curriculum with a variety of activities.
- ✚ Spanish – Second graders have Spanish Class twice a week.
- ✚ Music/PE/Spanish – inOur music program is well noted in our community and our children excel in band and choir as well as regular classroom music. Our physical education program provides a strong foundation in movement skills, fitness, and a lifetime love of activity. These skills provide a strong foundation to future sport competition as well as life-long activities. All students participate in music, physical education, and Spanish from certified teachers.

✚ *Revised March 2019*

I think one of the unique aspects of Catholic school education is the opportunity to care for the material and intellectual needs of the child in a community atmosphere.

(Mark Foley)

Third Grade Curriculum



Your child's **THIRD GRADE YEAR** will be focused on increased independence in reading, creative writing, and math. New areas of study will be introduced and include (but are not limited to) cursive handwriting, keyboarding, multiplication, division, critical thinking, and scientific exploration. Also, students will experience band, choir, physical education, Spanish, computer study, and art. In order to better individualize learning, your child will have computer time on several programs as listed below with a quick summary of intended subject matter. Several fieldtrips, guest speakers, and videos are scheduled throughout the year. These are used to further explain and supplement classroom instruction. Examples are The Pritchard Art Gallery, McConnell Mansion, and representatives from PCEI (Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute).

Religion: Third graders focus on God as our creator and Father, what it means to follow Jesus, leaders of the Catholic Church, four of the seven Sacraments, and Christian morality as it applies to third graders. Integrated into our units are studies on specific Saints, and discussions on numerous Bible stories. Throughout the school year, students participate in School Masses, prayer services, and Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

Language Arts: Third graders focus on reading to learn. They practice comprehension skills and enhance their writing skills as they use grammar to write opinions, narrative, and persuasive pieces. Vocabulary skills are strengthened as students learn words based on their root, prefix, or suffix meaning. Students learn to identify the author's purpose, basic story elements, text structure, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions, summarizing, distinguishing between fact and opinion, cause and effect, identifying main idea, sequencing events, and making inferences and predictions.

Mathematics: Computational skills are very important in the 3rd grade. Students must master all four operations (addition subtraction, multiplication, division) which helps them with more advanced operations/concepts. Concepts include measurement, fractions, geometry, probability, elapsed time, counting money/making change, and place value to the millions.

Science: Students engage in many hands-on experiences as they learn the scientific method, science tools, weather/climate, rocks, minerals, soils, vertebrates/invertebrates, the solar system, adaptations, plants, animals, bugs, rivers, ponds, lakes, and the human body.

Social Studies: Third graders focus on the study of the United States. They explore each region, learning about the Native Americans who lived there, resources and historical places and people. Students learn map skills and locate each state and identify and locate its capital. Students learn government, geography, and economic principles.

Featured software includes: Star Reader, Accelerated Reading, Accelerated Math, Type to Learn and Type for Fun, Perfect Copy, LEXIA Core 5, Mindplay's Reading Coach, Math Facts in A Flash, IXL for math and language arts.

Our third graders are encouraged to participate in the Moscow Science Fair. And all our third graders participate in the following programs: **music, physical education, and Spanish** from certified specialty teachers throughout the week. In music, the students learn to play an instrument.

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Fourth Grade Curriculum

In **FOURTH GRADE** we continue to develop skills presented in the primary grades, as well as introducing skills that prepare students for more advanced work in fifth grade and beyond. One area that is unique to fourth grade is the study of **Idaho history**. Students learn about the geography of Idaho as well as the history of its settlement, and the diversity of the people who make up our state. Our study includes field trips to the Nez Perce Historical Museum, the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center, Sierra Silver Mine, and Old Mission State Park.



In **Religion** the main focus is on the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes and we help students develop their relationship with God via prayer and Living Faith for Kids.

Language arts include reading, English, spelling and writing. The students are exposed to a variety of areas within the field of reading, including comprehension, genres, literature appreciation through novels, reading strategies and word recognition. We also use Accelerated Reader, Lexia and Readwork on a regular basis in fourth grade. The mechanics of grammar are emphasized, with applications, such as reports, poetry, letters, essay and creative writing.

In **math**, students extend skills in the basic operations, as well as work with decimals, fractions, time, graphs, and measurement. Daily math review is used to solidify skills learned and cumulative review on a regular basis. Accelerated Math is used in fourth grade, which also provides for advanced individual progress.

The **science** curriculum covers animal and plant growth and adaptations, soil, water in the oceans, electricity and magnetism, motions, force and machines. Our fourth graders are encouraged to participate in the Moscow Science Fair.

For **health** we use the Great Body Shop which focuses on all aspects of health: nutrition, safety, physical and emotional wellbeing.

All students participate in **music, physical education, and Spanish** from certified specialty teachers throughout the week.

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**“CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PREPARE EVERY STUDENT
TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THEIR FUTURE
BY DEVELOPING THEIR MIND, YES, BUT ALSO
THEIR BODY AND THEIR SOUL AND SPIRIT.”**

DAVID VITTER

Fifth Grade Curriculum

In **FIFTH GRADE** students work on projects and tasks where they draw on the skills and strategies they have learned in previous years.

Religion: Religion is woven into the fabric of daily life at school. We follow a curriculum that covers Church teachings and scripture, Liturgy and Sacraments, community, morality and service to others. Students plan and present our weekly mass. Social justice is a major focus.



Language Arts includes reading, spelling, English and writing: Students will learn and use strategies for improved comprehension in both fiction and nonfiction materials in reading. All genres of literature will be presented, and related projects will be assigned. Students use Readworks for comprehension development and practice in written response to content. Vocabulary development is a large part of the language arts curriculum; we study spelling and make use of those learned words in written assignments. We will focus upon the correct use of language, sentence structure, parts of speech, fluency and proper spelling. We will then learn and practice correctly using those skills in written work. Written assignments will range from reports and critiques to creative short stories and poetry. Oral presentations will also be a regular part of all subjects.

Math: Mastery of operations with fractions and decimals will be a major part of the math program. We will continue to work on measurement, geometry, collection and interpretation of data and presentation of the material in charts and graphs. Cumulative review will be used regularly throughout the year with a particular focus on problem solving. Accelerated Math is used daily as both review and skill development as it also provides a means for individual progress and challenge.

Social Studies: Students study American History from the earliest civilizations and cultures through the Gulf War over a two-year period (continued in sixth grade). World geography and current events are also woven into this subject.

Science and Health: Topics in life, earth and physical science will be taught which have been coordinated through the upper grades in order to maximize the material covered. Students will participate in the Moscow Science Fair. We make as much use as possible of visiting science experts and events.

Across the curriculum we make use of real-life situations to enhance the learning experience. Enrichment activities are used in all subjects. A heavy emphasis is placed on greater personal responsibility towards schoolwork with increased independence in homework and projects and strong work, study, and organizational skills.

All students participate in **music, physical education, and Spanish** from certified specialty teachers throughout the week.

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Grades 6 through Grade 8

Our goal at St. Mary's Parish School grades 6 through 8 is to prepare students to focus on the future, not the past. They need to be prepared to meet challenges both in their current lives, and in the future that is not yet present. One key area that will be pursued is that the students have opportunities to develop resiliency and self-dependence in order to meet and get through the challenges they meet now as young teens, not just their future problems.



Our middle grades' curriculum is designed to address not only the academic needs of adolescents, but also their social, behavioral, and spiritual needs. Research indicates that a **K-8 middle school format** rather than having students grouped together in a middle school (Grades 6-8 only) was **most beneficial** in preparing students for high school.

The focus of our middle grades is:

- ✚ Student-centered rather than subject-centered.
- ✚ Fostering collaboration of students rather than competition.
- ✚ Both an affective and cognitive growth emphasized together.

We have chosen the more student-centered approach and cross-graded approach to learning. Grades 6 through 8 are designed to continue our focus on inquiry learning and differentiated instruction which our students have grown accustomed to in the lower grades.

RELIGION

The primary goals of the religion curriculum for students in St. Mary's Parish Middle Grades are three-fold:

- 1) to enhance students' knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic Faith,
- 2) to encourage living out the call as Disciples of Christ daily, and
- 3) to grow in one's love for their God and one another.

More specifically, the curriculum seeks:

- To promote students' awareness of the relevance and importance of Catholic Christian values and practices for *daily living*.
- To extend students' knowledge and appreciation of Catholic doctrine, liturgical practices, social teachings, and prayer.
- To increase students' interest in learning more about our Catholic faith, as well as to appreciate and respect other faith traditions.
- To help students share the Good News and our Catholic faith, both within our church community and outside.
- To engage in service activities and projects in charity and humility.

LANGUAGE ARTS, HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Excellence in Reading, Thinking, Writing, and Speaking are the pillars of the Humanities section of the St. Mary's Middle Grades program. To reach this excellence, students are expected to be able to evaluate complex reading material, write concisely within their journals and essays, and be prepared to speak and express their ideas. Their opinions must be supported with proof and they must be able to speak clearly and be heard.

To meet these requirements the Language Arts, History, and Social Studies curriculum are tightly woven together. Reading Comprehension is built through the study of Primary and Secondary resources that are based on historical events and contemporary current events. To make history relevant to the students' connections are continuously made between the stories of our past and our modern world.

Writing Skills are honed by building essays and answering open ended questions. Students are expected to be able to follow complex requirements to meet writing objectives and to fuse source material into their writing to support their main ideas and thesis statements.

Vocabulary is pulled from the middle grade's curriculum in Science, Math, Religion, and Humanities. Students are expected to know what the words mean as well as the proper spelling. Vocabulary is also stressed in their writing as the students learn how to develop more complex and concise sentences that will express more information in a limited space.

Students are expected to build study skills such as note-taking, research, and time management. Class time is often spent building concept maps, gathering research, reading, and expressing ideas to the larger group and in smaller collaborative groups. Students are expected to provide input for the building of units, projects, and class goal setting.

With this focus classes can study topics in-depth, explore the world in which they live and be able to differentiate between good information and poor sources. Students will be able to increase their knowledge of the world and develop needed skills that will help them academically in the years to come.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

Math and Science in the Middle Grades at St. Mary's Parish school is dedicated to enveloping mathematically and scientifically knowledgeable students who make connections between what they learn and the world in which they live.

Math is taught in order to enable each student to reach his or her potential in a supportive, academically rich environment. It is our belief that students will reach their potential in mathematics by using critical thinking skills, engaging in discovery activities, and developing connections among topics. The mathematics curriculum is developmentally solid and ensures that each student is prepared to meet the challenges at the next level. Our math curriculum is strong, with students typically entering high school a grade ahead in math.

*The general curriculum for **Math** in the middle grades covers:

Sixth Grade:	General math
Seventh Grade:	Pre-algebra
Eighth Grade:	Algebra

Depending on a student's ability and completion of the middle grades math curriculum, s/he may be enrolled in Geometry.

For **Science**, the focus is STREAM, an integration of **Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art and Math**. Students take part in hands-on science learning experiences framed around answering questions or addressing challenges that guide instruction and serve to organize their learning progressions. As students pursue answers, they conduct investigations, make models, collect and analyze data, weigh evidence, write explanations, and discuss and present findings.

Students practice science in the classroom the way that scientists and engineers do. They work in collaborative groups to iteratively solve problems and explore challenges. Science and engineering practices are not just found in isolated inquiry activities but permeates the entire curriculum.

*The general curriculum for **science** in the middle grades covers:

- Life sciences
- Physics and Chemistry
- Earth and Space Sciences

In addition to the above curriculum, all students take classes throughout the week in **music, physical education, and Spanish** from certified specialty teachers.

In summary, St. Mary's upper grades, 6th through 8th, are designed to meet the unique developmental needs of adolescents—at physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional levels. Excellence in both academics and behavior will always be encouraged as the students grow and mature intellectually as well as socially.

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