Creating curiosity and a love of learning

In our Early Childhood Program, a principal goal is to instill a love of learning in each child. Students engage in an inspiring, developmentally appropriate curriculum that is carefully designed to promote social and emotional growth while challenging students intellectually. Preschool is all about learning how to learn— to think, to question, be in a group and to explore the world around them. We make learning fun, by providing materials that allow children to develop literacy, math, science, problem solving, and motor skills all while encouraging creative and divergent thinking. Zoo-Phonics and Creative Curriculum are intertwined to help mold our students into caring, curious, imaginative and unique learners.

We offer our students:

- A strong social, emotional, and academic foundation that nurtures the whole child.
- A safe, creative environment for learning, where we celebrate the love of God and teach respect for everyone and all of His creation.
- An environment that realizes children develop at different rates and learn in different styles and modes.
- A unique combination of nature-play, exploration and curriculum helps expand curiosity and understanding connections.

Our learning through play approach in Preschool and Pre-K classes includes the foundations of many principles used at every grade level. In open-ended play spaces, their playground, exploring our campus and during teacher-initiated lessons classroom life is continually connected with the world beyond St. Paul. Students learn through direct, hands-on, experiential work. Teachers listen carefully, and make sure the conversation is led by the students’ own curiosity and questions. Students are continually discovering that they can be active participants in their own learning, and that their individual choices impact their communities and help shape their world.

St. Paul's nature play-based program stimulates creativity and imagination, encourages problem-solving skills and promotes curiosity that will last a lifetime. Reading, writing, math and science are integrated throughout the day to strengthen students’ emerging skills. In Pre-K our learners venture beyond their classroom each week to learn from specialists in the fields of music and physical education.
Building a Relationship with Christ

We believe young children should also learn about the Catholic faith and the Catholic values we treasure as adults. In our Preschool and Pre-K, we introduce your child to Catholic prayer, liturgy, the sacraments, and invite each child to develop a relationship with Christ. Students will participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and spend time in the Atrium to support their natural awe and wonder about God and all He has created. In our classrooms, we celebrate how God created us and that He gave each of us special gifts and that we are all different and exceptional. Preschool begins the discovery of those gifts and the realization that God has a plan for each life He created.

Becoming part of a Community

Preschool is a time to learn important skills for getting along with others, including values, virtues, cooperation, sharing, teamwork and self-confidence. Our Preschool teaches children they are part of God’s family, and a broader community, by providing experiences such as circle time, group projects, dramatic play, learning tools and games to develop the social and emotional skills needed to become participants in a caring community.

Discipline Policy

St. Paul Early Childhood Education Program stresses positive discipline. Praise and recognition is given for appropriate behavior. We help children discover acceptable behaviors to replace an inappropriate response to a situation. Brief periods of “pondering time” may be used to help some children break a cycle of negative behavior and begin again in a positive manner. It is important this is a cooperative process with both parents and teachers to help shape our students moral and behavioral compass.

Through Nature exploration, Creative Curriculum, Zoo-Phonics, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and other engaging activities St. Paul Catholic School Early Childhood Education Program has incorporated the following objectives:

The following are general curriculum goals for children aged three through five. As children mature and develop through these preschool and pre-kindergarten years, the behaviors expected in meeting these goals increases in complexity.

Social–Emotional

- Regulates own emotions and behaviors
  - Manages feelings
  - Follows limits and expectations
  - Takes care of own needs appropriately
- Establishes and sustains positive relationships
  - Forms relationships with adults
  - Responds to emotional cues
  - Interacts with peers
  - Makes friends
- Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
  - Balances needs and rights of self and others
  - Solves social problems
Physical
- Demonstrates traveling skills
- Demonstrates balancing skills
- Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
- Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
  - Uses fingers and hands
  - Uses writing and drawing tools

Language
- Listens to and understands increasingly complex language
  - Comprehends language
  - Follows directions
- Uses language to express thoughts and needs
  - Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
  - Speaks clearly
  - Uses conventional grammar
  - Tells about another time or place
- Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills
  - Engages in conversations
  - Uses social rules of language

Cognitive
- Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
  - Attends and engages
  - Persists
  - Solves problems
  - Shows curiosity and motivation
  - Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
- Remembers and connects experiences
  - Recognizes and recalls
  - Makes connections
- Uses classification skills
- Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
  - Thinks symbolically
  - Engages in sociodramatic play

Literacy
- Demonstrates phonological awareness
  - Notices and discriminates rhyme
  - Notices and discriminates alliteration
  - Notices and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound
- Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
  - Identifies and names letters
  - Uses letter–sound knowledge
- Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
  - Uses and appreciates books
  - Uses print concepts
- Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
  - Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations
  - Uses emergent reading skills
  - Retells stories
• Demonstrates emergent writing skills
  o Writes name
  o Writes to convey meaning

Mathematics
• Uses number concepts and operations
  o Counts
  o Quantifies
    o Connects numerals with their quantities
• Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
  o Understands spatial relationships
  o Understands shapes
• Compares and measures
• Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Science and Technology
• Uses scientific inquiry skills
• Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things
• Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials
• Demonstrates knowledge of Earth’s environment
• Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks

Social Studies
• Demonstrates knowledge about self
• Shows basic understanding of people and how they live
• Explores change related to familiar people or places
• Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge

The Arts
• Explores the visual arts
• Explores musical concepts and expression
• Explores dance and movement concepts
• Explores drama through actions and language

English Language Acquisition
• Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English
• Demonstrates progress in speaking English

Religion
• Develop a relationship with our loving God and learn about God’s gifts
• Develop awareness of church as being family of God
• To begin to understand the importance of prayer (spoken, sung, spontaneous, rote, etc.) and God’s Word in one’s life
• Develop a sense of right and wrong behavior