



ST. MARY *of the* ANGELS SCHOOL

Early Childhood Program Curriculum Guide

EARLY CHILDHOOD OVERVIEW:

A child's first five years are a developmentally important time, laying the foundation for future success. St. Mary of the Angel's Early Childhood Team creates inviting and engaging classroom spaces where students are excited to learn each day. We also provide a nurturing, invigorating and welcoming environment that stimulates thinking and enriches social skills in these early formative years.

Students come together as a class community during times like Morning Meeting or to listen to a read-aloud. Our teachers plan appropriately challenging thematic units and small group lessons to meet the skills of each student and support their growth. SMA teachers also facilitate student creativity and curiosity by offering a variety of hands-on projects and opportunities for imaginative play.

We understand that learning is a social process; our teachers develop meaningful relationships with each student and work to help them explore positive relationships with their peers. Through this learning environment that encourages natural curiosity and creativeness, our young learners discover how the world works, they develop a joy of lifelong learning, and they learn to speak and think articulately.

We encourage our youngest to be sincere, honest and kind in their work and play, as well as to develop the ability to adapt to new situations, to understand their own and others' feelings and to manage them appropriately. Our "littlest" are a big part of the school community through interactions with older students at monthly All-School Mass, Faith Buddy activities, and other all-school activities.

LEARNING STRUCTURES:

We design our instruction so that our students can learn in different ways and in different settings.

- **Whole Group Learning** – Your child will develop important communication and self-regulation skills during whole group community-building time such as Morning Meeting, listening to a read-aloud, or engaging in a lesson. Feeling a sense of belonging in a group, sharing, listening to others communicate, and waiting your turn to speak are vital skills for your child both in the school environment and in the wider world community.
- **Interdisciplinary Learning** – SMA teachers understand that children develop best when the learning is connected to their everyday lives. This helps children make meaning and relevance between what goes on in the classroom and the rest of the world. Teachers plan thematic units to help students see how subjects are interconnected. SMA teachers also

know that every child is unique and that children learn in a variety of ways. Our small class sizes allow teachers to get to know each student individually so they can meet your child where he/she is and tailor engaging learning experiences to extend their knowledge. Early Childhood Program students also have weekly specials – gym, music, and library story time. Parents may also enroll their child in private violin lessons during the school day.

- **Independent Learning** – Free-choice time may look like “just play” from the outside, but play is a key part of your child’s development. As young children continually explore their surroundings, they use this new information to construct their knowledge, build connections, and understand their world. Our Early Childhood Program classrooms include daily opportunities for children to independently explore their environment in order to make new discoveries and connections. Students self-direct their learning by following their own interests. This is also a time where students learn from one another, and a time where teachers can extend the learning through open-ended questioning, modeling and testing out new academic skills through play. This free-choice time in your student’s day is a vital opportunity for him/her to engage in create pursuits, practice social skills, grow their capacities for communication, and make academic connections.

AREAS OF LEARNING:

We plan our curriculum in developmentally appropriate ways to ensure that teachers are reaching all students and fostering their personal best.

1. Social-Emotional and Self-Care Skills

- Core Values of Kindness, Respect, Responsibility and Making Smart Choices
- Catholic values of loving your neighbor as yourself and sharing God’s love by acting with love in the world
- Growth-Mindset Skills such as perseverance, practice, and positive attitude
- Social-Emotional Skills such as understanding your own feelings and beginning to recognize the feelings of others
- Exploring ways to share and take turns
- Self-Control and Goal-Setting

2. Communication, Language and Literacy

- Reading and writing your name
- Uppercase letter identification
- Letter Sounds
- Rhyming
- Story Comprehension
- Listening in a group
- Taking turns speaking in a group
- Asking and answering questions

- Vocabulary building

3. **Mathematical Reasoning and Problem-Solving**

- Counting out loud
- Counting objects
- Reading numbers
- Comparing quantities
- Identifying shapes
- Sorting objects
- Extending and creating patterns

4. **Physical Development**

- Fine motor activities such as building with play-dough, scooping and pouring sand at the sensory table, learning to use scissors, and threading beads
- Gross motor activities such as running, climbing, jumping, skipping, and playground time

5. **Creative Development**

- Use of imagination through pretend play, exploring art materials, singing songs, movement games, and acting out stories

6. **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

- Hands-on play with sensory materials
- Making observations
- Science experiments
- Learning about our community
- Sharing family traditions
- Exploring the natural environment