

# KINDERGARTEN

The underlying philosophy of the St. James Kindergarten program is a developmental one. It is based on the belief that all people, upon birth, have a series of milestones to master as they develop. Each one of us reaches these milestones at our own pace. In addition, no phase of a child's growth (cognitive, emotional, social, physical and religious) can be accelerated without upsetting the balance of nature.

Therefore, the teachers in the St. James Kindergarten program operate within the confines of a developmental philosophy. As trained observers and teachers, it is their responsibility to determine the emotional, social, physical and religious levels of development of each child in the Kindergarten program. They then strive to provide an environment rich in hands-on materials that will foster the optimum growth of each child.

## INTRODUCTION

The Kindergarten program offered at St. James serves as the children's first step in the formal educational process. The Kindergarten experience sets the stage for the children's positive image of school, and the skills he/she learns at this level will prepare him/her for the reading, writing and mathematics programs offered in the first grade.

The Kindergarten program should be viewed as part of the Early Childhood Development Program which began at St. James in September 1990. At this point in the children's life there is a transition from the security of home and parents to the challenge of learning and functioning independently. In the Early Childhood Development Program, pre-school children and their families will have opportunities to develop strong family ties, good communication skills and positive role modeling so that these children will feel loved and accepted for who they are. This early childhood preparation will result in a child who is ready to move into the wider world with a sense of anticipation and confidence.

## OUR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The St. James Kindergarten Program consists of two full-day classrooms. All children who are registered for Kindergarten are screened by the Kindergarten teachers to determine their readiness for the program. Testing material from the Brigance Screening Process and Gesell Readiness Test are used to determine the children's developmental age. Final decision for acceptance will be made by the Kindergarten teachers with the approval of the Principal.

Children continue to develop in the Catholic faith through the cooperative work of their parents and

teachers. Throughout the year various opportunities for parent enrichment evenings are held for parents of all school-aged children to fine tune parenting skills and prepare them for the challenges of raising growing children.

## THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF STUDY ARE OFFERED IN KINDERGARTEN

**MATHEMATICS** Mathematics readiness is acquired through informal group activities and planned experiences which occur in games and discovery in working with manipulative materials. They include rote counting, recognition and understanding the value of numerals 1-20, learning about comparisons, calendar, time measurement, sets, one-to-one correspondence, equivalence, geometric shapes, money, graphing, patterning, perimeter, area, and preparation for simple addition and subtraction. Weekly math activities are provided during center time that allow for group work or individual work on number concepts.

**READING READINESS** Readiness for reading requires a prolonged and gradual period of training and development. Success or lack of success in reading depends on the children's mental, physical, social and emotional maturity. Opportunities that include language development, auditory and visual discrimination along with fine motor skills are provided to nurture growth for eventual formal reading. Among the many activities are: left to right progression, alphabet recognition, hearing rhymes and initial consonant sounds, participation in choral speaking of poems and finger plays, following directions, listening with interpretation, developing oral vocabulary, drawing conclusions, recalling story details in a sequence,

eye-hand coordination, creative thinking, picture interpretation and printing.

A combination of the Whole Language and phonics forms the foundation of the language arts program in Kindergarten. The children share and enjoy many big books throughout the year. They are also introduced to the letter sounds through the Alpha Letter People.

**RELIGION** Religion is a vital part of the St. James Kindergarten program. Our religion program enables the child to become aware of his or her uniqueness as a child of God and of God as our loving Father. It is our belief that your child is the Jesus of his/her generation. Kindergarten stresses the concept of school family. The emphasis is on treating one another as Christ would have treated us. For example, snack time in Kindergarten is called "Our Family Meal." Children are encouraged to socialize and enjoy the experience as they would a family meal.

**FAMILY LIFE** The Kindergarten Family Life Program reflects and reinforces a major priority in the church today: the preservation of the importance and sacredness of the family. The materials are organized into five themes:

- I. FAMILY LIVING  
(identification of home and family)
- II. PERSONAL GROWTH AND SELF UNDERSTANDING  
(recognition of one's skills and gifts from God)
- III. RESPECT FOR LIFE  
(learn about God's gift of life)
- IV. CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY  
(learning how boys and girls are alike and different)
- V. SOCIAL LIVING  
(learning how to be good friends with others)

**LEARNING CENTERS** Learning centers form the core of our day in Kindergarten. The children visit centers daily. Through the course of a five-day week they participate in several different center activities. Each week the centers revolve around a variety of themes. All centers are coordinated with the presentation of seasons, story themes and phonetic concepts. Among the centers set up in the Kindergarten classroom or in the space between classrooms are the following: Math (group), Math (independent), Sand/Water Table, Large Blocks, Art, Construction, Toys, Clay, Listen and Do, Writing, Drama, Painting at Easel, Independent Language Arts, Group Work

(craft & cooking), Science, Teacher and Me (used for individual assessments), Computer, and The Work Shop (woodworking).

**ART** The children are encouraged to develop individual creativity, expressive imaginations and fine motor skills through the use of drawing, painting, cutting, pasting, constructing, modeling and sewing.

**SOCIAL STUDIES** Children are encouraged to adjust and modify their behavior to a larger group by practicing good social behavior. For example, they are assisted in learning how to take turns, share, acquire skills in leadership and fellowship. Social Studies concepts include learning about children of other countries and their customs, conservation of valuable resources, community workers, patriotism and history.

**SCIENCE** The science program increases the children's awareness of and the ability to observe their environment.

**MUSIC** Children experience music through singing, listening to recordings, creative rhythms, body movement and dramatization. In addition to class activities, the children attend weekly music periods.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY** Children begin learning about body structure and function, personal cleanliness, dental health and nutrition. Basic principles of safety in the classroom, on the street, on the playground and "stranger-danger" are also stressed.

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE** In Kindergarten children enjoy a brief, age-appropriate weekly Spanish lesson.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION** Children attend a weekly 30 minute class. Physical activities are geared for the overall gross motor development of the five-year old.

**COMPUTERS AND LIBRARY** Each week the children receive a lesson with our computer teacher or a lesson with our library teacher.

