

# ST. AGNES SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

## 2023-2024

### Pre-K 3

#### **Overview**

The Pre-K 3 program follows the principles of child development as well as the New York Foundation for the Common Core. The physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains of child development are interrelated, and our curriculum is designed accordingly.

#### **English Language Arts**

During the Pre-K years, children's experiences with communication and literacy lay a foundation for elementary school success. Children develop listening, comprehension, and phonological awareness skills. They learn that letters form words. They learn what books are and how to use them. *Frog Street Press* is used to guide learning.

#### **Reading**

Children participate in activities throughout their day that build vocabulary and comprehension skills. Lessons include engaging read-alouds, activities designed to develop vocabulary, formal introduction to the alphabet, phonological awareness practice (such as rhyming), and writing and fine motor skills. Students begin to participate with confidence in group discussions. They perform such tasks as drawing letters, painting letters, and writing simple words.

#### **Math**

Children are challenged to explore ideas about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logical reasoning and problem solving. In Pre-K 3, we nurture their exploration of ideas, which include number patterns, measurement, shape, space, and classification. They learn to count to 20 and recognize numbers 1-15. We use puzzles, games, and interesting objects to explore these concepts.

#### **Science**

In the Pre-K 3 classroom, children are exposed to a multi-sensory, interactive and stimulating environment. We investigate and experiment to discover information. Children are encouraged to ask questions, make predictions and communicate their observations.

#### **Social Studies**

Pre-K children use social interaction to develop an awareness of self as growing individuals. They learn about their own needs, interests, and abilities and how they are similar to and unique among their peers. Daily activities include interacting with other children and teachers one-on-one and within groups, making good choices, and expressing ideas and feelings in socially acceptable ways. We subscribe to *My Big World with Clifford*, which provides young learners a variety of information about life experiences, animals, and various cultures.

## Religion

Pre-K 3 students develop a genuine love for God. They learn about loving themselves and their peers. They learn that prayer is a way to talk to God.

## Social Emotional Learning Skills

Developing strong social emotional learning skills fostered by the Pyramid Model program and CASEL's competency framework is a big part of the preschool day. Students who develop better social emotional skills have an improved attitude about self, others, and school. Children exhibit positive classroom behavior and are able to develop strong relationships with their teachers and peers. We focus on identifying emotions, problem solving, listening, sharing, and being good class citizens.

# Pre-K 4

## Overview

The Pre-Kindergarten curriculum is designed to meet the Next Generation Standards and NY State's Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core in a developmentally appropriate manner. The curriculum is designed to prepare children for a positive Kindergarten experience. We guide learning in pre-K 4 using the creative curriculum. The creative curriculum explores learning through studies, which are hands-on, project-based investigations. The creative curriculum for preschool enables teachers to build children's confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills and promote positive outcomes, while building pre-academic skills and Kindergarten readiness.

## English Language Arts

Expectations: In Pre-K 4, our focus is on preparing children for later reading success and building a foundation of language and literacy skills. Children are learning oral language and emergent reading skills (phonological and phonemic awareness, print knowledge, and storytelling) through small and large group instruction, as well as during center time.

## Reading

Expectations: In Pre-K 4 students work on letter and sound identification, rhyming, and knowledge of books. By the end of Pre-K students are expected to have a solid understanding of print concepts and interest in books. Children are expected to be familiar with a Level A reader going into Kindergarten.

Written Curriculum: We use *Fountas and Pinnell* guided reading and the Heggerty curriculum to build phonemic awareness and Wilson's Foundations letter formation. Once students are ready, they meet in small groups and practice their reading skills.

## Math

Expectations: Children spend the year working on shape and number identification, practicing rote counting, patterning, sorting, and one to one correspondence. Students use manipulatives to master their skills.

Written Curriculum: Classroom math experiences are based on Engage NY Pre-Kindergarten Math modules, which use interactive mini lessons, small and large group instructions, centers-based activities, and hands-on projects to foster a love of numbers.

## **Social Studies**

Expectations: Children in preschool learn social studies through exploring themselves and the world around them. Children explore through themes such as “all about me,” “friends and family,” and “community.” We subscribe to Scholastic *Let's Find Out* magazine to connect home and school experiences.

## **Science**

Expectations: Preschoolers are naturally experimenters and testers. Throughout the year children are encouraged to make observations and predictions about the world around them. They are able to experiment, predict, and make conclusions about what happened. Children are provided with hands-on materials and multi-sensory experiences to develop skills associated with scientific discovery.

Written Curriculum: Students explore science and social studies topics through the creative curriculum embedded throughout the learning experience.

## **Lasting Lessons**

Expectations: Throughout the year children develop social-emotional skills through explicit instruction, role play, and social stories.

Written Curriculum: A variety of trade books and games are used to assist students in developing social skills. These are used in conjunction with the Pyramid Model strategies to develop emotional literacy and problem solving.

## **Religion (all-day program)**

“God Made the World,” is a preschool program that develops religious awareness by capitalizing on children's natural sensitivity and wonder. It is designed to draw preschoolers to know and love God by focusing on the world God has created. Children come to feel at home in a community, laying the foundation for a deeper life within the Christian community later.

# Kindergarten Curriculum

## **Overview**

High expectations are set in Kindergarten using nationally normed benchmark measures to monitor growth and aligning curriculum with the rigorous New York State Common Core Learning Standards to create a developmentally appropriate process for building on early academic skills developed in the pre-kindergarten program.

## **English Language Arts**

Expectations: In Kindergarten, children focus on learning letter-sound association, phoneme segmentation, and the encoding and decoding of words. Students also explore rhyming, word families, and sight words, as well as beginning to apply vocabulary comprehension and prediction to grade-level texts.

Written Curriculum: The Kindergarten uses *Foundations*, a reading program by Wilson Language. This program incorporates a variety of multimodal approaches to developing letters and language skills and follows the scope and sequence of Science of Reading.

## **Reading**

Expectations: At the Kindergarten level, reading ability varies greatly. Children are encouraged to blend sounds together to read short fiction and nonfiction passages fluidly and with comprehension by the end of the year. Reading instruction is dynamic and can be individualized to meet students where they are, supporting growth and achievement for all learners.

Written Curriculum: We use *Literary Footprints* to develop reading skills in Kindergarten. Children meet in leveled groups several times a week to practice listening, reading, and speaking to one another. A teacher facilitates this process. Students also have daily opportunities for independent reading. Children progress through book levels based on their reading accuracy and fluency.

## **Writing**

Kindergarten students progress from writing individual letters to words to full sentences during the Kindergarten year in a writer's workshop model. Students focus on letter formation, basic punctuation, and spacing, as well as phonemic spelling activities. Students take turns sharing the work they have created with their peers and developing a portfolio of written projects.

## **Math**

Expectations: Children spend the first part of Kindergarten working on one-to-one correspondence and number identification and manipulation. Children become comfortable with identifying numbers and counting to establish a total. We introduce single-digit addition and subtraction, as well as three-dimensional shapes and the basics of time, measurement, and money.

Written Curriculum: Kindergarteners use the Engage NY modules. This curriculum is based on the National Education Standards and the New York State Common Core Learning Standards and provides a rigorous pace for students to develop number sense and foundational mathematics skills.

## **Science**

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Students participate in a comprehensive science curriculum designed for a classroom's whole-group instruction and encourages young learners to think "outside the box" and prove their thinking through hands-on and engaging learning experiences in the areas of life science, earth science, space, and simple machines.

## **Social Studies**

Expectations: Children learn about their environment during Kindergarten social studies through a variety of explorations of their own culture and those of other people. By the end of the year students are able to identify land and water bodies on maps, understand the basic needs and wants of people, and realize how their own lives compare and contrast with those around them.

Written Curriculum: *Studies Weekly*, a newspaper-based curriculum, guides discussions and provides interactive stories and activities that are supplemented by classroom projects.

## Religion

"Christ Our Life: God Loves Us" provides children with a thorough presentation of the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church and matches it with their ability to learn complex concepts when presented in ways that are friendly and proven to work with four-to-six-year-olds. With Scripture and Church tradition, "Christ Our Life: God Loves Us" provides everything needed to shape a child's faith formation and guide them on their lifelong journey as disciples of Christ with developmentally-appropriate content and prayer experiences for young children.

# First Grade Curriculum

## Overview

The first grade program continues to accelerate learning. Throughout the year first graders make tremendous progress transitioning from emergent readers to fluent readers. Content areas are complemented by a creative approach to teaching intended to make lessons relevant to all learning styles. A guided, differentiated approach to teaching and learning allows students to develop core skills while learning at their own pace, so that every student is able to reach his or her potential.

## English Language Arts

Expectations and Written Curriculum: *Foundations* is a phonics-based Language Arts program that integrates reading fluency, phonics/word study, handwriting, phonemic awareness, comprehension strategies, and spelling. The program comes alive with multi-sensory, structured language activities.

## Reading

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Students benefit from guided and independent reading as they practice comprehension of various genres of literature including informational text. The classroom library contains hundreds of books – picture books, easy readers, chapter books and informational books from which students are welcome to choose. Throughout the day, children are encouraged to read when they have completed assignments and learn that with lots of reading practice they can explore any subject they wish.

## Writing

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Students express their thoughts in writing and apply the conventions of written language. In a first draft, students record all their thoughts so they won't be forgotten, then rewrite using feedback from conferencing with the classroom teacher.

## Listening and Speaking

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Students contribute to discussions about first grade topics and are encouraged to express their own ideas and thought process. Positive feedback promotes continued participation by teaching students that their ideas are important and valued.

## Math

Expectations and Written Curriculum: First graders use Engage NY modules to develop an understanding of addition, subtraction, place value, measurement, and geometry. An important component of first grade math is the use of manipulatives that promote strong understanding of new concepts. The students use manipulatives to demonstrate strategies to solve problems. They also verbalize how the manipulatives

help them find the answers. The incorporation of “math talks” builds mathematical thinking. First graders are expected to apply acquired math skills to solve computation and simple word problems.

### **Science**

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Students enjoy a weekly science lab period that fosters participation and offers hands-on experiments based on the Next Generation Science standards. Units of study include space, animals and habitats, weather, and matter. First graders are introduced to the Scientific Method. In-class experiments and demonstrations begin with a question. Students predict an answer and are guided through the process of proving their predictions and arriving at a conclusion.

### **Social Studies**

Expectations and Written Curriculum: Using *Studies Weekly* and a variety of other sources, first graders learn that as members of a community they have responsibilities. They are introduced to elements of diverse cultures that make up our world. Students also learn some basic facts of U. S. history and world geography.

### **Religion**

The first grade program of the “Christ Our Life” series, “God is Good” is designed to provide a simple overview of the mystery of our faith. Through learning of the goodness of God, and the love of Jesus, children respond to God in friendship and prayer. Children become aware of God’s presence and goodness in their lives, in others, in the world, and in his Church. Children learn to respond to God’s goodness by loving him and others.

## **Second Grade Curriculum**

### **Overview**

In second grade students continue to push themselves by building on skills they have learned in Kindergarten and first grade and applying them to more rigorous, grade-level application and content. Students in second grade spend time working collaboratively with partners and in small groups, improving focus and information processing, and making connections between concepts to begin to analyze and respond to information with strong, independent thoughts.

### **English Language Arts Curriculum**

Students use a variety of approaches to develop speaking and listening skills in second grade. There is an emphasis placed on collaborative conversations in the classroom where students are asked to listen and respond to others, and ask and answer questions about what a speaker says, to clarify comprehension and gather additional information to deepen the understanding of a topic or an issue.

### **Reading**

Curriculum: Students in second grade read with accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. Students continue to use a guided reading model, as well as structured independent reading time to move through reading levels and build mastery of grade-level texts in a variety of genres.

Expectations: Second grade students are offered opportunities through the curriculum to build reading expertise at an individualized pace. Students learn to read with confidence, with expression, and for fun.

They should demonstrate comprehension of texts both fiction and nonfiction, including an ability to make predictions, identify the main idea and details, understand point of view, and use context clues to support arguments about the text.

### **Writing**

Curriculum: The second grade uses *Foundations*, a multisensory, structured language activities program. *Foundations* integrates reading fluency, phonics, words study, and handwriting for phonemic awareness, comprehension strategies, and spelling. Spelling and grammar rules are taught and learned in context, rather than in isolation to build understanding of the English language. Students use the skills they're learning to develop written pieces of work in a writer's workshop model, exploring persuasive writing, opinion writing, research projects, expository writing, and narrative pieces.

Expectations: Second grade students learn grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding and encoding words. They distinguish long and short vowels, form and use the past tense, use reflective pronouns, use appropriate punctuation, work on prefixes and suffixes, and build a list of irregularly spelled words. Students learn to expand written work to meet expectations set out in rubric assessments.

### **Math**

Curriculum: In math class students use number talks to define mathematical thinking and apply skills old and new to multi-step problems. Second graders use Engage NY modules to develop a deeper understanding of addition, subtraction, place value, measurement, time, money, and geometry. Mathematics is taught using many different strategies and techniques, as to find the best one for each student. Manipulatives are used to develop better understanding of key concepts and problem-solving strategies are developed in depth verbally and with written responses.

Expectations: Second grade students read, write, count, and sequence numbers, identify place values, represent quantities in multiple ways, add and subtract 2, 3, and 4-digit numbers, and identify, describe, and extend repeated numeric patterns. They further develop their first grade skills of telling time, counting, adding, and subtracting money, and collecting, sorting, and interpreting data in various graphs.

### **Science**

Expectations and Curriculum: The expectations in second grade help students formulate answers to questions. Students are expected to develop an understanding of plants and their life cycle, compare the diversity of life in different habitats, and have an understanding of observable properties of materials through analysis and classification. Students are able to use information and models and organize concepts of wind, water, patterns, and the cause and effect of science on society and the natural world. Second grade students are expected to demonstrate grade-appropriate proficiency through planning, models, and carrying out investigations.

### **Social Studies**

Expectations and Curriculum: Students are exposed to multi-cultural topics around the world using a variety of resources. Second grade students create hands-on projects, study different print sources, have and have exposure to different cultures that make up our world. Students discuss current events, recognize historical figures and their contributions to society, and appreciate the diversity among cultures in our community.

## Religion

The second grade program of the "Christ Our Life" series, "God Cares For Us" is designed to prepare children for their first celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Children come to realize God's loving care for them, especially through the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Children learn to respond to God's call to give themselves in loving service to him and to others.

# Third Grade Curriculum

## Overview

Third grade students are leaders at the primary level and serve as role models for younger students. Designed specifically with developmentally appropriate pedagogy in mind, St. Agnes ends in third grade where students achieve mastery in numerous skills they have been working on for the past five years. Upon exiting third grade they are ready to flourish in an upper elementary environment applying the skills they've learned to grade-appropriate content they will encounter. Third graders have an opportunity to serve as role models for the younger students at St. Agnes, especially for their second grade classmates. Throughout the academic day they partner, guide, teach, and support the second grade students in the classroom, which instills confidence and a deeper understanding of material.

## English Language Arts

Expectations and Curriculum: Third grade students explore fables, legends, myths, poems, and plays as supplements to fiction and nonfiction reading using a variety of resources, including texts from the school library and classroom library that are offered at various levels and genres. Students work on novel studies, as they begin to analyze longer chapter books. They progress as independent readers and work up to an appropriate comprehension level. Students have the opportunity to read in groups, with a partner, or to the class to build fluency and vocabulary. Throughout the academic year students read chapter books that can be either applied to school or just for fun. Students become accustomed to using a dictionary to check the accuracy of the spelling, definition, and pronunciation of a word as well as be able to look up information in a book by using a table of contents, glossary, or index.

## Writing, Listening, and Speaking

Expectations and Curriculum: Third graders use Wilson Language Training's *Foundations*. Students learn to write in cursive (longhand); write in paragraph form, using transitions; and use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar (e.g., verb tenses must agree in sentences). Students demonstrate how to use reference books, such as the thesaurus and dictionary, to make more interesting word choices and apply the writing process: pre-write, outline, draft, revise, edit, and polish. Students demonstrate the use of outlines to write a paragraph and short story and write in a variety of styles.

Third grade students keep a journal to practice personal writing and handwriting skills. Students demonstrate and understand written instructions and follow them independently, listen actively to a speaker inside and outside of the classroom setting, whether that is a teacher, another adult or a fellow student, and answer questions in complete sentences verbally and in written work.

## Math

Expectations and Curriculum: Students continue to increase their knowledge about addition and subtraction while being able to add and subtract complex numbers using a variety of strategies and



becoming fluent in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. Third grade students continue to develop the process of explaining in words how a math problem is solved, use measuring tools to calculate volume, area, length, and height, and analyze and graph data (e.g., collecting and charting the birthdays of all the boys and girls in class to determine how many boys were born in April). Students work with simple fractions, round to the nearest whole number, predict patterns in shapes and numbers, and relate number problems to everyday situations (e.g., using a budget to plan a party).

### **Science**

Expectations and Curriculum: Students demonstrate an understanding of science through hands-on projects that illustrate the subject matter. They demonstrate how to formulate answers to questions and organize, collect, and interpret data. Third grade students demonstrate an understanding of forces and their interactions, interdependent relationships in ecosystems, the inheritance and variations of life cycles and traits, and weather and climate.

### **Social Studies**

Expectations and Curriculum: Third grade students develop knowledge on how to read world maps and be able to find locations on the globe. Students compare different parts of the United States (e.g., contrasting year-round climate of the various regions) and study topics relating to American history from different locations around the world. They are exposed to different cultures of the world and appreciate the diversity of each culture.

### **Religion**

The third grade program of the "Christ Our Life" series, "We Believe" presents the main truth Catholics believe and express in the Apostles Creed. Children grow in the power to make decisions in the light of God's Revelation and the redemptive acts of Jesus. Children come to a knowledge and an appreciation of the mysteries of their faith expressed in the Apostles Creed.

## **Enrichment**

### **Studio Art**

At St. Agnes School, children joyfully create and express themselves through art. Art students in Kindergarten through third grade explore many mediums, including paint, clay, and 3-D printing. By immersing themselves in art projects, children build fine motor skills, create neural pathways, and problem solve. Many of their creations decorate our school building before they are treasured at home. In thematic alignment with students' social studies and science curricula, art projects often have to do with community and our natural environment.

### **French**

The St. Agnes School French program introduces students to both language and culture, with an eye toward meeting NYS foreign language standards as those standards become applicable. Our students begin learning French at a very early age, starting in Pre-K 4, when such learning comes so easily. Vocabulary (including parts of the body, months and date, and objects in the classroom) is introduced within units (which include family life in France, Mardi Gras, landmarks of Paris and French people in history). We incorporate various oral and written exercises, games and online learning. At the end of lessons and units, students are encouraged to express their thoughts and reflections.

## **Physical Education**

In our physical education program, students learn to be good teammates, respect others' boundaries, listen carefully, and have fun. Classes usually begin with a greeting and a warm up, and every month features a different set of activities, all of which help improve coordination, balance, and overall physical development. Students learn the importance of personal health and wellness, practice basic skills and drills related to specific sports, and enjoy organized play.

## **Music**

The music program at St. Agnes School is an exciting opportunity for students in all grades to enjoy an exposure to rhythm, song and theatre. Students meet once a week to sing, dance, play instruments, and practice for upcoming shows. Each year, students participate in the Christmas show in December and the spring musical in May.

## **Social Emotional Learning**

Research shows that children whose social and emotional growth is supported in a school setting do better in pre-academic and academic areas and have fewer discipline problems. St. Agnes uses the collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning (CASEL) to guide social emotional learning. Taught co-curricularly with the religion program and woven into the fabric of the day, SEL skills of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness are stressed during peer interactions and throughout the school day. Students meet for a lunch bunch program to develop explicit skills, such as growth mindset, sharing, empathy, and cooperation. Lessons are engaging, interactive, and enjoyable and promote problem-solving skills and positive peer relationships.

## **SPARK (Stem, Play, Art & Recreation for Kids) After School, Club Activities, and Summer Camp**

SPARK at St. Agnes School is a place where students can create, invent, explore and discover using a variety of tools and materials. Students guide their own learning, making things that they are curious about, things that spring from their imagination. The informal, playful atmosphere allows learning to unfold, rather than adhere to a specific agenda. Students develop problem solving and critical thinking skills by taking simple things like cardboard, straws and tape and making them into real things, like this suspension bridge. With your participation, we will continue to develop a generation of dynamic learners and thinkers.

## **GAP (Growth Achievement Plan)**

GAP provides educational coaching and services, including speech, occupational, and physical therapies, 1:1 and small group counseling, and academic support to every student who would benefit. In most settings, educational services are not available until students "score low enough" on tests to begin to experience a lack of school success. At St. Agnes, our on-site certified specialists and trained teachers offer intervention and enrichment to all students experiencing one or more delays, as well as accelerated opportunities for students working beyond their grade level.

## **Advanced Math**

The St. Agnes curriculum is designed to allow students to move at their own pace, build core skills, and develop a deeper understanding of content knowledge as they become ready.

In the classroom: students who demonstrate readiness are offered additional materials in a project-based learning format, in which they learn to solve real-world problems with higher order thinking questions to

answer. These enrichment materials allow students to integrate cross-curricular content areas and apply mathematical skills to informational texts.

Out of the classroom: students are selected based on growth and progress scores along with teacher recommendation to attend a twice-weekly accelerated math program called IXL. Students in IXL complete hands-on projects that explore mathematical thinking, delving into tessellations, building projects, and complex numerical operations.

### **Advanced Reading**

Students at every level are encouraged to develop strong reading fluency, comprehension and analysis skills. Using instructional-level expectations to track growth and achievement in reading, students are assessed every five to ten weeks for accuracy and comprehension. Materials are adjusted to continuously reach the zone of proximal development, when students are appropriately challenged, to maximize growth. In this way, students can work at their own pace while progressing through levels as quickly as they are able. Students are assisted during guided learning time with scaffolding supports targeted at their individual level. Frequently, students exit St. Agnes reading well above grade level.

### **Homework**

Homework at St. Agnes is designed to target individual learning needs for every student. Students use the I-Ready platform to assess skills mastery three times a year, using an adaptive diagnostic and homework lessons that reinforce skills that students still need to develop. The I-Ready platform is research driven, and there is a demonstrated correlation between spending at least 45 minutes per week per subject and classroom gains. As with other programs at St. Agnes, students are encouraged to progress at their own pace, and they are always welcome to put in additional time working on lessons to advance skills independently.

### **Response to Intervention**

If a student is not progressing through curricular material at the expected rate, Response to Intervention (RTI), an after school program, is provided to give an additional opportunity for students to master classroom material and increase their growth rates. Growth scores are rechecked quarterly, and RTI programming is reassessed as necessary.

### **Technology Integration**

St. Agnes recognizes that technology is an important part of accelerating learning in the 21st-century classroom. Students are taught to embrace technology as a tool to be used for powerful learning. Classrooms are equipped with the latest technology, allowing teachers to select appropriate mediums based on current learning objectives to further instruction. Additionally, students in the primary grades are exposed to a series of lessons about "digital citizenship," which help them to be appropriate, responsible, and kind when using technology.