

# Early Childhood Education Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum Guide



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## **Introduction**

Children are an absolute gift from God. We know what a blessing it is to be given the opportunity to work with children as they take their first steps in their education. The goal of our preschool is to give the children who come through our program the social & emotional skills, confidence, experiences, education, and joy in learning that will help them to have a smooth transition into Kindergarten. In addition to this, we guide the children in the process of becoming lifelong learners by encouraging imagination and curiosity. In order to do this, we use the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines as a foundation for our program and then build on that foundation with the goal of keeping every child challenged while enjoying our preschool setting. We are also very fortunate to be able to incorporate our Catholic faith in all of our everyday teachings. Our program offers preschool for our 3 year old students and pre-kindergarten for our 4 and 5 year old students.

## **Mission Statement of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium**

The mission of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium is to challenge all students to be disciples of Jesus Christ by empowering them to reach their fullest potential through quality academic, spiritual, and social experiences.

## **Exit Outcomes and Standards**

Children graduating from our pre-kindergarten program will demonstrate understanding and competence in the following core areas as recommended by the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines:

- a. Social & Emotional Development
  - 1) Self Concept
  - 2) Self Control
  - 3) Cooperation
  - 4) Social Relationships
  - 5) Knowledge of Families & Communities
  
- b. Approaches to Learning/Cognitive Development
  - 1) Initiative and Curiosity
  - 2) Reasoning and Problem Solving
  
- c. Health & Physical Development
  - 1) Fine (Small) Motor Skills
  - 2) Gross (Large) Motor Skills
  - 3) Health Status and Practices
  - 4) Nutrition
  
- d. Language & Literacy Development
  - 1) Listening and Understanding
  - 2) Speaking and Communicating
  - 3) Phonological Awareness

- 4) Book Knowledge and Appreciation
- 5) Print Awareness and Concepts
- 6) Early Writing and Alphabet Knowledge

f. Mathematics

- 1) Numbers and Operations
- 2) Geometry and Spatial Sense
- 3) Patterns and Measurements

g. Science

- 1) Scientific Skills and Methods
- 2) Scientific Knowledge

h. Creative Arts

- 1) Music
- 2) Art
- 3) Movement
- 4) Dramatic Play

In addition to the core areas recommended by the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines, children graduating from our pre-kindergarten program will also demonstrate understanding and competence in:

Religion

- 1) Formal and Spontaneous Prayers
- 2) Sign of the Cross
- 3) Jesus
- 4) God is Our Loving Creator
- 5) Bible Stories

### **4/5's Pre-kindergarten Program & 3's Preschool Program**

Children in the preschool and pre-kindergarten age groups can be at extremely different levels of maturity in both social/emotional and physical aspects. Respecting these differences, we offer a wide variety of experiences, in varying learning styles and different levels to our students. Our 3 year old preschool students are introduced to many of the same concepts that we offer to our 4 & 5 year old pre-kindergarten students, with a strong emphasis on developing social & emotional skills.

### **Family and School Partnerships**

Parents are the most important teachers a child will ever have. We welcome any information parents may have about their child that may assist in their education. We encourage open communication and cooperation between parents and teachers. If a parent ever has questions or concerns, we encourage them to schedule a conference time with the instructors. It is recommended that we avoid addressing these

issues in the hall or on the way out the door at dismissal times due to confidentiality reasons.

Parents can expect a monthly newsletter informing them of important upcoming events. Along with the newsletter will be a monthly calendar outlining classroom curriculum and activities for that month. Parents and teachers will also have the opportunity to communicate through parent teacher conferences twice during the school year.

## **Scope and Sequence of Curriculum**

Each child will be provided with daily opportunities necessary for introduction and/or mastery of skills in each of the following areas as recommended by the Nebraska Department of Education and outlined in the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3-5:

### **Social & Emotional Development**

#### **Self-Concept**

- Child develops independence, confidence, and competence
  - Likes self and shows pride in accomplishments
  - Joins other children in various play activities
  - Shows growing independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks
  - Chooses from a range of materials and activities within the program
- Child identifies own characteristics (name, age, gender, family)

#### **Self-Control**

- Child expresses feelings and shows concern for others
  - Shows awareness and responds appropriately to the feelings of others
  - Calms self after excitement, expresses strong emotions constructively and learns to control aggression and impulses.
  - Manages fears by expressing concerns and accepting support from adults
- Child follows rules, routines, and directions
  - Attempts to solve problems with other children independently, by negotiation or other socially acceptable means
  - Participates in daily routines without being asked
  - Builds awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules
- Child transitions between tasks with minimal direction from adults

#### **Cooperation**

- Child increases ability to sustain relationships
  - Uses compromise and conflict resolution skills
  - Plays actively with other children
  - Attempts to solve problems with other children independently, by negotiation, or other socially acceptable means
  - Uses language to engage others in meaningful conversation

- Recognizes how actions affect others and accepts consequences for own actions

### **Social Relationships**

- Develops secure relationships with adults and other children
- Child interacts empathetically and cooperatively with adults and peers
  - Receives social support and shows loyalty to a friend
  - Solves problems with other children independently
  - Shows awareness of and responds to the feelings of others
  - Knows how to join a group of playing children
- Adapts to new environments with appropriate emotions and behaviors

### **Knowledge of Families & Communities**

- Child understands and respects similarities and differences among adults and children in their program, home and community
  - Begins to understand various family roles, jobs and rules
- Child expresses some understanding of familiar locations in community such as where people live, and where stores, parks, and restaurants are located
- Child uses familiar words to identify family members and workers in their community
- Child understands that events happened in the past and how these events relate to, and can change self, family and community
- Child understands the reason for rules in the home, classroom and laws in the community

Opportunities for growth in Social and Emotional Development are provided throughout each day in every activity offered in our learning environment; in the classroom, at snack, in the gym or outside on the playground. Instructors teach social skills through role modeling, through stories and by guiding in problem resolution situations when needed. Children are also taught steps for properly using everyday life skills.

### **Approaches to Learning/Cognitive Development**

#### **Initiative and Curiosity**

- Child engages in activities with imagination and creativity
- Child engages in a wide range of new and familiar learning experiences in their daily lives
  - Explores ways to use new materials
  - Carries out complex and varied sequences of activities independently
- Child increasingly uses communication to ask questions and seek answers
- Child follows through with activities with persistence and focused attention
  - Plans and carries out activities with motivation and flexibility
  - Works through frustration and challenges to complete an activity

#### **Reasoning and Problem Solving**

- Child shows increasing ability to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences (past, present and future)

- Child recognizes cause and effect relationships
- Child tries several methods to solve a problem and is highly involved and persistent
  - Uses active exploration and trial and error to solve problems
  - Increases ability to make predictions and find more than one solution
- Child recalls and reflects on experiences and information, and interprets or draws conclusions based on the information
- Child uses drawings, movement, and objects to represent people, places, or things
- Child uses symbols/images/objects to represent something not present

Opportunities for growth in Approaches to Learning/Cognitive Development are made available daily throughout the classroom, especially in the art, math, motor skills, and science centers. The students are provided with manipulative/constructive learning tools in each of these areas. Teachers are present to help answer questions students may have, or to provide encouragement by asking the student questions like, “What are you creating?” or “What do you think will happen when you put water in the tube?”. These centers are provided to engage students in developing fine and gross motor skills and to use their imaginations and problem solving skills.

The goal of the instructor is to be there as a guide if needed, and to ask questions that may help the student come up with additional questions and solutions of their own.

## **Health & Physical Development**

### **Fine (Small) Motor Skills**

- Child uses finger and hand control to operate and use small objects to demonstrate fine motor coordination
  - Uses eye-hand coordination to perform a variety of tasks
  - Develops fine motor skills through participation in activities
  - Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks
- Child explores writing, drawing and painting materials

### **Gross (Large) Motor Skills**

- Child develops gross motor skills
  - Coordinates both hands to manipulate large objects
  - Continues to develop body flexibility and coordination
- Child uses indoor and outdoor gross motor equipment safely and appropriately
- Child develops coordination, balance, spatial awareness and strength through gross motor activities

### **Health and Safety Practices**

- Child develops an awareness of health, nutrition, physical activity and safety
  - Shows growing independence in hygiene, nutrition and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting
  - Develops knowledge and skills about what to do in case of injury or emergency
  - Identifies potentially harmful objects, substances, or behaviors, knows to leave them alone and tell an adult
- Child develops an understanding of the need for daily physical activity and rest

## **Nutrition**

- Child shows knowledge of healthy eating and lifestyle habits
  - Demonstrates knowledge that some foods are healthier than others
  - Uses manners during meals/snacks, including asking for seconds
- Child begins to develop interest in foods and eating styles of other cultures
- Child begins to distinguish more or less healthy foods, and understands that healthy foods help them to grow and give them energy to play and think
- Child begins to understand where foods come from and how they are produced

Opportunities for growth in this area are provided daily in the Motor Skills center, in the Art center, at the Small Group center and during "Get Up and Move Time" on the carpet. The pre-kindergarten classes will go to the gym for PE every week. The 3 year old preschool classes will go to the gym every other week. Students are taken outside to the playground as weather permits. Children also develop motor skills while doing everyday tasks like opening their napkins or milk cartons at snack time.

Daily snack time serves as an opportunity to reinforce good manners and is often used as an opportunity to discuss healthy food choices. The differences between "Sometimes Foods" and "Anytime Foods" is taught. Children are all encouraged to at least try the snack every time an "Anytime Food" is served since it can take anywhere from 7 to 15 times of trying a new food before acquiring a taste for it.

## **Language & Literacy**

### **Listening and Understanding**

- Child listens to directions and conversations with understanding
  - Demonstrates understanding of the meaning of stories, songs, and poems
- Child follows directions in sequences
  - Follows single, multi-step, and complex directions in order
- Child listens to others and responds to feelings and expressed ideas
  - Responds verbally or by alternative means to simple, direct, conversational sentences
- Child demonstrates understanding of home and/or English languages during social interactions, program directions, and activities

### **Speaking and Communicating**

- Child communicates needs, wants, thoughts, ideas and feelings through words, gestures, actions or expressions
  - Uses sentences that include two or more separate ideas using new vocabulary that has been introduced
  - Tells about another place or time
  - Child understands different rules for using language and variation in voice level
  - Child begins to understand body language as a nonverbal means of communication
- Child communicates for a variety of purposes
  - Attempts to solve problems with other children independently through communicating
  - Greets and initiates interactions with adults and peers

### **Phonological Awareness**

- Child shows knowledge of phonological awareness (the ability to hear and understand the different sounds of language)
  - Recognizes matching sounds and rhymes in familiar nursery rhymes, songs, stories and poems
  - Spontaneously repeats songs, rhymes and chants, and creates nonsense words
- Child progresses in listening and telling differences in phonemes (smallest parts of sound in a spoken word)
  - Identifies words that begin with the same sound (alliteration)
- Child recognizes the connection between spoken and written words
  - Shows growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words
  - Isolates beginning and ending sounds of printed or spoken words

### **Book Knowledge & Appreciation**

- Child demonstrates interest in and appreciation of reading-related activities
  - Shows interest when stories are read
  - Relates events in story to own knowledge and experience
- Child increases knowledge about books and how they are typically read
  - Holds book right side up
  - Turns pages front to back
  - Knows specific words related to books such as author and illustrator
  - Understands that the print describes what is happening in the picture
- Learns to sequence, predict, and retell a story
  - Picture reads; tells about the story from the pictures on the cover or in the book

### **Print Awareness & Concepts**

- Child shows an awareness of print as a form of meaningful communication
- Follows the print on the page, moving eyes from left to right and top to bottom
  - Identifies some letters and numbers
  - Recognizes and begins to write own name
  - “Reads” familiar environmental print such as logos, posters, signs
- Child understands that each spoken word can be written down and read
- Child recognizes words as a unit of print and understands letters from words

### **Early Writing and the Alphabet**

- Child shows an interest in early writing
  - Uses scribbles, shapes, or pictures to represent specific thoughts, ideas, stories
- Child progresses in the identification of letters
  - Identifies some letters and numbers
  - Uses pretend writing in play as a purposeful activity
- Child recognizes and/or writes own name on artwork or possessions
- Child recognizes that letters represent sounds



Each full week of school we will have a “Letter of the Week”. Many of the activities in the classroom will include exploration and emphasis of that letter. This includes opportunities to paint the letter, form the letter, learn about the sounds it makes, and even sing songs about the letter. A project completed at the Small Group center will have the “Letter of the Week” as its focus and will include a hands on learning experience. There will also be a daily review of the alphabet and its sounds for repetition purposes.

A story will be read on most class days to the group followed by a short group discussion to assess and encourage listening skills and comprehension. Pre-kindergarten students will go to our school library once a week to listen to our librarian read a story to them. Our 3 year old preschoolers will visit the school library every other week.

Opportunities to further explore Language & Literacy can be found in our Literacy center and Art centers. Books, puzzles, games, toys, books on CD, and art supplies associated with engaging children in literacy are made available on a daily basis.

## **Mathematics**

### **Number and Operations**

- Child develops awareness of numbers and numerals
  - Uses one-to-one matching (correspondence)
  - Distinguishes between numbers and letters
  - Identifies written numerals
- Child uses language to demonstrate understanding of space and time (next to, on top of, before, after)
  - Begins to learn sequences of events in time (first, next, last)
- Child develops an understanding of the counting process
  - Counts, in order, up to ten or higher
  - Counts all types of objects; plays with counting forward or backward
  - Can judge whether groups of up to five objects contain the same number of objects

### **Geometry and Spatial Sense**

- Child develops knowledge of geometric principles
  - Classifies and sorts different shapes
  - Recognizes and names simple shapes in various sizes and positions
  - Combines different shapes to make representations or patterns
- Child develops spatial sense
  - Uses comparison words correctly
  - Uses words that describe the relative position of things
- Child groups similar objects together and gives reasons for groupings

### **Patterns and Measurement**

- Child develops knowledge of patterns
  - Describes patterns in the environment and daily routine
  - Begins to recognize duplicates and extends simple patterns using a variety of materials
- Child demonstrates use of measurement

- Uses standard and/or non-standard measures
- Recognizes that different types of measurement can be made (height, length, weight)

Opportunities for development of mathematics skills are offered and encouraged at the Math center daily. The students can play math games, reconstruct or create patterns, work on number or shapes puzzles and play number games etc. Morning carpet time includes a calendar time involving counting and exploration of numbers. There will also be a daily review for number recognition and counting for repetition purposes. Each month we will focus on a particular number or set of numbers. Projects and crafts will be completed at the Small Group center during the month with these numbers as a focus. Shapes and colors will be taught and reviewed in a similar manner as numbers. Additional lessons involving math and offered throughout the year include lessons on money, time, and measurement.

## **Science**

### **Scientific Skills & Methods**

- Child develops scientific skills and methods
  - Makes observations, collects information, and describes objects and processes
  - Begins to make comparisons between objects that have been observed
  - Begins to look for answers to questions through active investigation
- Child uses sentences that include two or more ideas with descriptive details
- Child uses senses, materials, tools, technology, events in nature, and the environment to investigate and expand knowledge

### **Scientific Knowledge**

- Child shows interest in active investigations by observing, describing, and discussing
- Child describes or represents a series of events in the correct sequence
- Child demonstrates understanding of natural processes and simple cause and effect
- Child shows interest in measurement of time, length, distance, and weight
- Child develops increased ability to observe and discuss things that are similar and different
- Child can differentiate between living and nonliving organisms

Opportunities to develop in the area of science can be found in the Science center, and during outdoor visits. A science project will be performed approximately once a month in the pre-kindergarten classes. Children will be given the chance daily to explore science with items such as magnifying glasses, magnets, sensory table items, books, weights, and measuring tools.

## **Creative Arts**

### **Music**

- Child is able to sing, play, move and create music, expressing individual imagination
  - Takes the lead in music activities
  - Develops an appreciation in music
- Child responds to music through movement
  - Responds to the beat of songs or instrumental music with more complex movements (walking or jumping to the beat)

- Uses music as an avenue to express thoughts, feelings, and energy
- Describes and carries out movement sequences
- Child is able to distinguish between different types of music (loud/soft, fast/slow, happy/sad)
- Child uses music as a way of learning other concepts (literacy, rhyme, math, weather)

### **Art**

- Child progresses in exploration and experimentation with new materials and techniques
  - Uses materials to make a simple representation and describes or demonstrates how it was made
- Child gains experience in making shapes and linear patterns
  - Draws or paints images with a few details
- Child broadens artistic exploration
- Child develops confidence in own creative expression through experiences that celebrate what child learns through the process, rather than creating a product
- Child uses materials to build and create a three-dimensional structure to represent another item (blocks become a castle, clay becomes a snake)

### **Movement**

- Child expresses strong emphasis, steady beats and changing dynamics in various musical tempos and styles through movement
  - Responds to the beat of songs or instrumental music with more complex movements (walking or jumping to the beat, clapping)
- Child demonstrates a sense of balance and body coordination
  - Demonstrates a wide variety of positions (stretching, bending, rocking, twisting, etc.)
- Child represents experiences through movement
  - Demonstrates movement concepts (feelings, directions, words, ideas, etc.)
- Child understands the value of movement to stay healthy

### **Dramatic Play**

- Child participates in a variety of dramatic play activities
  - Uses creativity, words, actions and materials to portray a role, situation or setting
  - Engages in role play with two or more children
- Child imagines and clearly describes characters, their relationships and their environment in dramatic play situations
  - Assumes the role of someone or something else, or talks in language relevant to the assumed role
- Child recognizes differences between pretend/fantasy and reality

Students find opportunities to grow in the creative arts during, "Get Up and Move" time, in the Dramatic Play center, and in the Art center. Daily activities will include music, dance, singing and finger plays.

The dramatic play center is stocked with items for children to pretend and build their imaginations with. The dramatic play center themes may change throughout the school year. Themes may include a house, a grocery store, Santa's workshop, a Chinese restaurant, a Doctor's office, a veterinary clinic, a puppet theater, a flower shop, the set of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", or a campsite to name a few.

The art center is stocked with materials for students to explore and to create with. Supplies made available to the students include but are not limited to paper, scissors, glue, yarn, colored pencils, markers, crayons, paint, playdough, etc. Natural items like pebbles, sand, sticks, acorns, or leaves may be brought in from the outdoors also. Children are encouraged to use their creativity and imaginations to come up with their own unique pieces of art while in the art center.

## **Religion: Scope and Sequence of Curriculum**

In addition to the core areas recommended by the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines, each child will be provided with daily opportunities necessary for introduction and/or mastery of skills in religion.

### **Religion**

#### **Created by God**

- Child verbalizes that God made him/her
- Knows that God created our world
  - Describes/names people and things in our world created by God
- Knows that God made all people different and special
  - Notices differences in others and understands that God wanted us to be wonderfully unique.
  - Treats others as they would like to be treated
- Knows the name of God's son
- Knows that God sent Jesus, his only son, to teach us and to love us
- Knows that Mary is Jesus' mother and our mother in heaven

#### **Prayer**

- Child participates in formal prayer
  - Sign of the Cross
  - Mealtime Prayers (Before & After)
  - Hail Mary
  - Angel of God
  - Glory Be
  - The Lord's Prayer
- Child participates in spontaneous prayer
  - Quiets self before prayer
  - Takes turns saying what she/he is thankful for in our world
  - Takes turns praying for the needs of others
  - Knows that God wants us to pray/talk to him
  - Knows that God is always listening and wants to help us

#### **Bible Stories**

- Prepares self for Bible Story Time and Daily Blessings Time
  - Sits quietly on the rug, hands folded, eyes on teacher
  - Understands that the words in the bible tell us stories that God wants us to know

- and learn from
- Participates in discussion after Bible Story or Daily Blessing

Our hope is that each child will enjoy discovering the wonders of their world created by our loving God through stories, daily blessings, hands on activities, observations of positive actions of others, and by observing the amazing world around us.

Religion is incorporated into practically every lesson we teach throughout every day. When we teach about an animal for a science lesson, we have discussions about why God created that animal so wonderful and special. When we talk about trees, weather, gravity, bees, the changing of seasons, communities, family, friendship, or even about our feelings, we ask the children their thoughts on why God created them the way he did for us. Even when we do something as simple as trying a new fruit or vegetable in class, or paint with beautiful colors, we discuss the amazing world that God made for us. We give thanks to God every day, throughout each day, for the things that he has given us.

Prayers will be introduced one at a time. Each morning is started with a prayer, and we pray again before and after snack or meal time. The last portion of class each day is spent reading and discussing a bible story or a daily blessing, and then finishing with a prayer and song. Being aware that everything we have in our lives is a gift from God, and how absolutely amazing and loving our God is, is truly the foundation of our program.

### **Assessments and Reporting**

Each student will be assessed during the fall/beginning of the school year. This assessment will be used as a guide to assist individuals in academic, physical, and social/emotional growth. The assessments will also be used for comparison when assessments are performed and evaluated again during the spring. Parent teacher conferences will be available and encouraged shortly after each of these assessment periods. If at any point during the school year a parent should have questions or concerns about their child's progress, they are highly encouraged to contact the teachers to schedule a conference.

### **Graduation/End of Year Activities**

Students in the 3 year old preschool program will end their year with a fun celebration with their teachers and classmates.

The pre-kindergarten students will put on an end of the year "Graduation Song Performance" for family at which time they will receive a graduation diploma for completion of the pre-kindergarten program. This is a day where we are sad to be letting go of our pre-kindergarteners but marvel at their growth and at the progress they have made during such a short period of time. We happily send them on their way to Kindergarten, and thank God for the opportunity to have witnessed their first steps in the joy of learning.