VILLA DUCHESNE

Lower School Curriculum Guide

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INTRODUCTION

The Lower School at Villa Duchesne offers a truly individualized approach to learning, where our teachers and curriculum adapt to the needs of each student. We provide a research-based approach rooted in the study of how boys and girls learn best. We know them as individuals, meet each student where they are, and challenge each student to reach their fullest potential.

In this guide, we outline the foundational concepts and skills by grade level to give you an overview of the lower school curriculum year by year. Through a challenging curriculum and extensive specials program that includes play and outdoor learning, lower school students not only learn and master foundational skills and concepts but also gain a love of learning and the ability to apply their knowledge to moral, intellectual, and social questions.

We approach learning in a mindful way, centered on our faith. Self-awareness and strong interpersonal skills are vital components of our curriculum. We accompany our students as they learn to treat themselves and others with empathy, love, and respect. We strive to uplift our students and prepare them not only for future academic success, but for deeply meaningful lives.

I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions about our curriculum or our school. We welcome you to our Sacred Heart community!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Christine Phillips
Lower School Principal

OUR MISSION

Madeleine Sophie Barat, who founded the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1800, envisioned a transformational education. Inspired by that vision, Villa Duchesne strives to educate the heart and mind of each child in a nurturing and challenging environment. We are dedicated to educating the whole child and preparing our students for lives of faith in God, integrity, leadership, and service to others.

Our mission is to transform the world, one child at a time.

The foundation of our mission and education philosophy are the *Goals and Criteria* of Sacred Heart Schools. These give meaning and purpose to our objectives and unite us through a common thread with other Sacred Heart schools around the world. Serious in principles, strong in studies, and rich in the spirit of love and life, we are a Catholic school which takes great pride in living Saint Madeleine Sophie's vision.

Goal 1: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a personal and active faith in God.

- The school identifies itself to the wider community as a Catholic-independent-Sacred Heart School and embodies the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart.
- The school forms its student and adult members in attitudes of the heart of Jesus, such as gratitude, generosity, compassion and forgiveness.
- The school community reflects an ethos of joy, hope and celebration, and its programs assert that there is meaning and value in life.
- The school community welcomes and respects persons of all faiths and educates to an understanding of the religions and spiritual traditions of the world.
- School leadership prioritizes space and time for silence and contemplation for its members to deepen their interior life.
- Members of the school community, open to the transforming power of the Spirit of God, engage in personal and communal prayer, discernment and reflection which inform their actions.
- The school community, rooted in the love of Jesus Christ, nurtures the spiritual lives of its members through the exploration of one's relationship to God, to self, to others and to creation.

Goal 2: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a deep respect for intellectual values.

- Sacred Heart educators and students engage in challenging experiences that inspire intellectual curiosity, a global mindset and a life-long love of learning.
- Sacred Heart educators develop and implement a dynamic curriculum, effective instructional methodology, current educational research and ongoing evaluation.
- Sacred Heart educators and students utilize a variety of teaching and learning strategies to support their growth and development.
- The school curricular and co-curricular programs integrate innovation and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, the exploration of emerging technologies and critical evaluation of information.
- The school utilizes space and the physical environment in alignment with best pedagogical practices.
- The school cultivates aesthetic values and the creative use of the imagination.
- Sacred Heart educators assume responsibility for their professional growth, supported by resources and a culture that promotes life-long learning.

Goal 3: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a social awareness which impels to action.

- Sacred Heart educators prepare students to serve the common good in an interdependent world.
- Sacred Heart educators immerse students in diverse global perspectives, developing competencies such as critical consciousness, language facility and cultural literacy.
- The school, drawing from Catholic Social Teaching, educates students to analyze and work to eradicate social structures, practices, systems and values that perpetuate racism and other injustices.
- All members of the school community accept accountability for the care of God's creation, practice effective stewardship of the earth's resources and work to alleviate the climate crisis.
- School programs promote informed active citizenship and civic responsibility on the local, national and global level.
- The school community engages in direct service, advocacy, outreach and partnerships to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.
- Sacred Heart educators work to develop in the students a life-long commitment to service.

Goal 4: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to the building of community as a Christian value.

- The school, affirming that all are created in the image and likeness of God, promotes the inherent dignity of the human person and strives for relationships characterized by inclusion and mutual respect.
- The school implements an ongoing plan for educating all members of the community to the charism, mission and heritage of the Society of the Sacred Heart.
- The school engages with the Network of Sacred Heart Schools in the United States and Canada and Sacred Heart schools around the world.
- All members of the school community support a clean, healthy and safe environment.
- Members of the school community practice and teach with a spirit of peace and reconciliation the principles of non-violence and conflict management.
- School leadership demonstrates a conscious effort to recruit students and employ faculty and staff of diverse races, ethnicities and backgrounds.
- School leadership allocates financial resources to support socioeconomic diversity both in the admissions process and in the daily life of students.

Goal 5: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

- Student and adult members of the school community model, practice, and teach safe, ethical and responsible use of technology.
- Sacred Heart educators cultivate in the students life skills, such as initiative, creativity and agility.
- Sacred Heart schools recognize and educate to motivational, inspirational, and transformational leadership. Student and adult members of the school community grow in courage and confidence as they discover new abilities, cultivate strengths, learn from mistakes, develop empathy and exercise resilience in meeting challenges.
- All members of the school community take personal responsibility for health and balance in their lives supported by a school culture that promotes spiritual, intellectual, physical and social-emotional well-being.
- Members of the school community model and teach respectful dialogue in support of clear, direct, open communication.
- All members of the school community endeavor to practice informed, ethical decision-making and accountability.
- Student and adult members of the school community model, practice, and teach safe, ethical and responsible use of technology.
- Sacred Heart educators cultivate in the students life skills, such as initiative, creativity and agility.
- Sacred Heart schools recognize and educate to motivational, inspirational, and transformational leadership.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN 3

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

Starting in the Junior Kindergarten 3 (JK3) classroom, the goal of our lower school curriculum is to incorporate best practices in Early Childhood education and to provide a developmentally appropriate program to meet the needs of each individual learner. The junior kindergarten program for three-year-olds is carefully and thoughtfully designed to personalize the early learning experiences for each child. A focus is placed on providing a curriculum that develops positive interpersonal relationships and a love of learning through exploration, play, and problem-solving activities. As the children are observed and assessed, opportunities are developed for them to learn and reach challenging and realistic goals.

BIG IDEAS

The curriculum includes social and emotional development, literacy and language arts, math, religion, science and discovery, creative expression, French, music, and physical education. Outdoor education plays a significant part in the JK3 curriculum. Throughout the year, students in the JK3 class learn about various life cycles. Specifically, students will learn about embryology through a focus on chicks hatching from eggs and the care of the young chicks. To continue their understanding of birds, the JK3 classroom has window bird feeders that allow children to observe and identify a variety of birds. They also make bundles of nesting materials to set out in trees on the nature trail for nest building. This leads the students to make observations and have conversations about what materials might have been used by the birds. Building on that understanding, the curriculum also covers metamorphosis with caterpillars collected from the school garden and seed and plant growth. The nature trail provides many opportunities for observation and discovery throughout the school year.

LANGUAGE ARTS

As we build upon the natural interest and enthusiasm for books and story time that is inherent in young children, our curriculum is designed to inspire a lifelong love of reading and communicating. This curriculum focuses on using developmentally appropriate activities that integrate reading, listening, speaking, and writing. This is a literature-based curriculum, and a special story is selected from classic children's literature each month. The theme for the month is developed around this story, and it is integrated into math, science, art, music, and creative activities. Children are actively engaged during story time as they learn to make predictions and develop an awareness of the nature of the characters and events in the story. Phonological awareness is developed as the children think about how words sound, and they participate in letter games and activities. Language development is integrated into the whole curriculum throughout the day. Children are encouraged to describe their block structure, express their feelings as they dramatize a favorite story, share observations at the science center, tell the story of their artwork, listen for comprehension at story time, learn finger plays and nursery rhymes, and begin to express themselves through writing. Pre-writing skills are enhanced as the children participate in activities to strengthen their fine motor and visual/spatial skills through the use of manipulatives and hands-on materials. Beginning writing tools include crayons, colored pencils, and chalk. The environment in our classroom is rich with wonderful books, print, and writing materials. The children will experience enthusiasm, joy, and success in their pre-school language arts experiences.

MATHEMATICS

Through the use of a variety of manipulatives, which are considered "objects to think with," children will observe, investigate, create, and validate their mathematical experiences. Concepts that are introduced are one to one correspondence, patterning, sorting and sets, counting, number recognition, shapes, comparisons, and measurement. The children will be exposed to geometry through visual spatial activities such as puzzles, tangrams, and construction planks.

SCIENCE

Students in JK3 benefit from the STEMscopes Early Explorer curriculum which provides centers to enhance math skills, music, art, engineering and science. Big Books, hands-on materials, and engaging STEM activities help prepare students for elementary success. These activities will enhance the natural curiosity that young children have about the world around them. Through hands-on activities they will be encouraged to observe, question, explore, experiment, predict, and solve problems. Their growing language skills help the children to talk about their observations and share information with their teachers and classmates. The science activities enable our children to develop the problem solving and critical thinking skills that they will use the rest of their lives.

SOCIAL STUDIES

As students at Villa Duchesne, JK3 children will be introduced to a new community as they begin the school year. They will meet classmates, teachers, and school personnel. They will form friendships and develop relationships within the classroom and the whole school. They will begin to know and understand the role of the school personnel who are part of their first year in Junior Kindergarten. Learning to develop and maintain friendships, acting in a polite way, and sharing good manners will be an important part of our curriculum.

RELIGION

Through the Catechesis of the Good Shepard, the JK3 children will enter into a relationship with God. The children attend a room called the "Atrium." Here the children are presented with short scripture passages which they ponder with the trained adult Catechist. After hearing the scripture, the children are invited to "work" with materials that lead them to internalize the scriptures and contemplate it in a personal way.

The children will learn to understand that God created them and made them good, happy, active, and special. They will grow in an understanding of God's love and experience the joy of God's world around them. The JK3 children will celebrate Mass and will learn 10 Bible stories by creating *My First Book of Bible Stories*.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

To enrich the study of life cycles and scientific discovery, students in JK3 have the opportunity to extend their learning through activities off-campus. In the past, students have gone to the Zoo to participate in special classes focusing on bears, visited the Butterfly House to observe and learn more about caterpillars and butterflies, and taken a trip to Powder Valley to learn about birds. There are also visits to local farms and the Magic House.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN 4

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

In the Junior Kindergarten 4 (JK4) classroom, each student has individualized goals to help meet their specific needs. Assessing each child early in the school year allows the teacher to, in collaboration with parents, set goals that will help each student to reach their full potential over the course of the year. To prepare students for a more formal classroom after JK4, students work on raising hands, listening, and following directions. Combined with learning – uppercase and lowercase letters, sounds, and inventive spelling – a focus on school and reading readiness, as well as social and emotional growth, works in tandem to strengthen pre-academic skills that will benefit the students for years to come.

BIG IDEAS

The JK4 curriculum teaches each student to understand and appreciate the world around them. To that end, various curricular units teach students about snow, the solar system, volcanoes, the rainforest, and more. These lessons about the physical world become all-encompassing, as the curriculum ties in literacy, art projects, and related science labs that help students to visualize and relate to the material they are learning.

LANGUAGE ARTS

To incorporate literacy and early reading throughout the year and across all subject matters, students work on individualized reading activities, work in guided reading groups, and have access to apps that allow them to find interesting reading material that meets their specific needs. JK4 students develop an awareness of the written language through their frequent review of letters and sounds. They begin to understand that letters have sounds for a purpose, and together the letters make a word. The children enjoy story time where the introduction of characters, sequencing, and comprehension are discussed.

RELIGION

The JK4 students learn about and experience God's love in their lives. This leads them to learn how they should share this love with others. In addition, the JK4 students attend Mass and engage in daily prayer to build their relationship with God.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Through the social studies curriculum, the JK4 students develop an ability to process and apply new knowledge and make connections to learning in other curricular areas using a variety of learning tools – books, magazines, projects, and online interaction.

SCIENCE

The STEMscopes Early Explorer science curriculum benefits the JK4 students by helping them develop an ability to hypothesize, explore, observe, and gather information. This center-based program allows students to engage in activities that strengthen their understanding of science, math, and literacy as well as improve their fine motor and gross motor skills. Students explore questions such as “Why do the animal areas at the zoo all look so different from one another?” and “What are the things in the sky?” These hands-on STEM activities help prepare students for elementary success.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In the lower school curriculum, learning happens both through classroom and school-wide experiences. In the JK4 classroom, students have a number of opportunities to cook with their teacher, as well as alongside a parent. In addition to teaching about cooking, this provides a natural opportunity to work on counting, measurement, timing, temperature, estimation, and more. Later in the year, the students are able to connect their focus on the world around them to their lessons related to cooking as they visit the Rockwood Reservation to tap maple syrup from trees, and they work in the school garden growing plants.

KINDERGARTEN

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

As students move into the kindergarten classroom, they will again be assessed to identify areas of strength and areas that need growth. To set up each student for success in the coming years, they are then taught at their own individualized level using a variety of differentiated instructional techniques. Students then have choices in their learning throughout the day, allowing the teachers to build on material students have less exposure to and to strengthen areas they are already familiar with. To best prepare students for later grades, the goal of the kindergarten experience is to help students grow in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as to teach independence.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In the kindergarten classroom, the Benchmark phonics program is used to teach phonemic awareness and phonics on a daily basis. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment is used to assess the students multiple times throughout the year, allowing the teacher to differentiate the reading that students are doing during small, guided reading groups. Kindergarteners work on their phonics and reading skills through the use of the Daily Five program, a series of reading rotations that include reading to themselves, reading to someone else, working on writing, working on words, and listening to reading. The students use technology to support their reading skills through apps like Raz-Kids and Osmo. Raz-Kids gives students access to thousands of on-level books and provides comprehension quizzes as well. Osmo is an interactive word-building game to strengthen spelling and phonics. As the students continually gain phonics knowledge, they use it to become writers. Students use the Being a Writer program to generate ideas for writing, learn how to write for various purposes and audiences, and learn how to reread writing for sense, all while using learned sight words and phonics to work on proper spelling, capitalization, spacing, and periods.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum in kindergarten follows the Singapore method as presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. In the kindergarten classroom, students work through pictorial representations and concrete examples that prepare them for addition and subtraction work in first grade. The focus of the kindergarten curriculum is on understanding the numbers from 0 to 100. To that end, they first focus on the numbers between 1 and 10; comparing and ordering, composing and decomposing, and ordering. Kindergarten students then learn to do the same with increasingly large numbers, first focusing on comparing and ordering numbers 0 – 20, then learning to count to 100 by 2s, by 5s, and by 10s. Throughout, the focus is on comparing, ordering, classifying, and sorting numbers, so students have a better grasp of their numeric relationships before learning more concrete mathematical concepts in later grades. Within their mathematics studies, kindergarten students also have access to DreamBox, an interactive math app that allows students to progress through various problem-solving activities that both support and enrich their mathematical understanding. Likewise, kindergarten uses a daily calendar math program that provides for further enrichment every day.

RELIGION

Kindergarten students experience religious formation centering on the knowledge and experience of God's love in their lives and how to share this love with others. Kindergarten students can be found studying Saints' feast days, reading weekly publications, and engaging in other dynamic learning activities and projects. In addition, students use daily prayer and other liturgical and ceremonial experiences to deepen their relationship with God.

SCIENCE

STEMscopes is our science curriculum, which incorporates hands-on activities, text sources, and videos to build connections between learned concepts and everyday life. There is a strong emphasis on real-world application, including how concepts apply to careers in science. Through this curriculum, kindergarten students work in the science lab, make predictions and observations, and then develop an ability to plan and conduct experiments. Hands-on, inquiry-based strategies help kindergarteners develop an understanding of how science impacts their daily lives. Kindergarten students study humans and the needs of organisms, weather, living things and their habitats, and how force can change motion. This helps generate their scientific understanding and natural curiosity in the classroom, science lab, and outdoors. Students in the kindergarten classroom also have the opportunity to learn coding using classroom robots and OSMO coding.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Through the social studies curriculum, kindergarten students develop an ability to process and apply new knowledge and make connections to learning in other curricular areas. Using a variety of learning tools – books, magazines, projects, and online interaction – kindergarten students study the world around them, learn to share information about themselves, and listen to the backgrounds of their peers. This helps generate their language development and listening skills while broadening their knowledge of each other.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

To continue students' understanding of the world around them, the kindergarten classroom is an active part of the Lower School's International Festival. Kindergarten students have the opportunity to study a country to introduce the idea of other cultures and the wider world around them. These lessons are cross-curricular, as the students utilize other courses, like the SparkLab, to learn more about their country and develop an understanding of others. Students also have the opportunity to learn about the world around them through a number of outdoor opportunities. Kindergarten students learn about gardening through planting and harvesting in the school garden. They take a trip to the apple orchard after learning about apples' life cycles and perform a variety of related experiments. They use sun ovens in the spring semester that tie in their understanding of math and science through measurement, baking, the sun, and more.

FIRST GRADE

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

Each year, our Lower School experience provides a huge year of growth for students. Like in kindergarten, students in the first grade have some choices in the learning activities they do throughout the day, and the classroom is full of movement. In addition to the many other things accomplished in first grade, one of the overarching goals is to focus on personal growth and learn skills designed to improve independence. One way that the first-grade class does this is to improve upon existing organizational and study skills. To that end, first grade is the first year that all students are expected to complete nightly homework and prepare for weekly spelling tests.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In the first-grade classroom, the Benchmark phonics program and weekly phonics patterns are used to introduce spelling. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment is used to assess the students each quarter, allowing the teacher to individualize the reading that students are doing. With a focus on daily utilization of phonics, first-grade students have access to individualized and whole-group reading instruction. The use of Benchmark leveled readers gives students access to ability-appropriate guided reading groups. Likewise, first-grade students improve their reading through the use of the Daily Five, a series of reading rotations that include reading to themselves, reading to someone else, working on writing, working on words, and listening to reading. Technology is also an important part of the first-grade program. Students use iPad apps and the program Reading A-Z to gain access to thousands of on-level books and comprehension quizzes. Their experience in reading allows the first-grade students to be introduced to the idea of expressing themselves through writing. Through the Being a Writer program, students learn to generate writing topics, use peer conferencing to elaborate on their ideas, and practice writing their ideas in an organized manner, all while working on proper spelling, spacing, capitalization, and punctuation.

MATHEMATICS

Like in the kindergarten class, the mathematics curriculum in first grade follows the Singapore method as presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. The pictorial representations and concrete examples in kindergarten continue throughout first grade, while the first-grade curriculum also introduces more abstract work. The focus of the first-grade curriculum is on addition and subtraction. After reviewing numbers and number facts, both addition and subtraction are taught in parts, starting with numbers up to 10, building to 20, and attempting to work up to 100 by the end of the year. Throughout, first-grade students apply their new understanding to things like length and weight measurements, shapes and patterns, and monetary values. The main focus is to introduce the topics of addition and subtraction through tangible and pictorial examples, allowing students to both understand how to add and subtract as well as to actually apply their new understanding. Within their mathematics studies, first-grade students also have access to DreamBox, an interactive math app that allows students to progress through various problem-solving activities that both support and enrich their mathematical understanding. Likewise, the first grade uses a daily calendar math program that provides for further enrichment every day.

RELIGION

First-grade students use daily prayer and other liturgical and ceremonial experiences to comprehend and appreciate the love of God. In their religion curriculum, first-grade students develop their conceptual knowledge by using weekly publications and other activities and projects. Students learn about the Blessed Trinity; Jesus's life, death, and resurrection; the Liturgical year and parts of the Mass; Jesus's followers, saints, and Church leaders; and how the Church can be part of their lives. The first grade promotes faith in action by collecting new and gently used items as part of their apostolic works and community service.

SCIENCE

Our science curriculum, STEMscopes, incorporates hands-on activities, text sources, and videos to build connections between learned concepts and everyday life. There is a strong emphasis on real-world application, including how concepts apply to careers in science. Through the science curriculum, first-grade students develop an ability to plan, observe, and conduct experiments. Through hands-on, inquiry-based strategies, first graders will develop an understanding of how science impacts their daily lives. First-grade students study plant and animal parts, relationships between animals and their offspring, light and sound, and patterns in the sky. This helps generate their scientific understanding and natural curiosity in the classroom, science lab, and outdoors.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Within their social studies class, first-grade students study families, communities that we belong to such as our city, state, country, and continent, and examples of what it means to be a good citizen. This unit of study is multidimensional as students use text sources, videos, and an individual research project to learn how the world is made up of many communities with differences and many similarities. Students read, write, speak, listen, discuss, research, and utilize higher-level thinking skills. In addition to the base curriculum, first graders examine one country of study each year and use their understanding of geography and culture to create maps and highlight common customs, clothing, and food.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In the first grade, students have the opportunity to think creatively and explore in the SparkLab. First graders will visit the SparkLab frequently to complete two main projects, one each semester. In the spring, students research a great American of their choosing and give an oral report to the class, helping them to learn about research, organization of thoughts, and public speaking. Like the other grades, the first grade also participates in the International Festival, learning about another country, its culture, food, geography, and more. Using Skype and guest speakers, the goal of the first-grade curriculum is to bring these other cultures to life for the students.

FIELD TRIPS

Each year, the first grade visits the Florissant Civic Center to see a literature-based play that coincides with a literature unit in school. In addition, the first graders explore the day and night sky and space technology through a field trip each spring.

SECOND GRADE

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

The second-grade classroom expands many of the skills learned in first grade. Similar to first grade, there is a large focus on personal growth, independence, organization, and study skills, as students work to improve their academic abilities, while also using academic skills to boost the soft skills they will benefit from for years to come. In the second grade, students learn to keep track of their homework on a homework chart that they then take home. This, like many other second-grade activities, is designed to help students keep track of and complete homework, organize the work that needs to be completed, and build their sense of independence.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In the second grade, the phonics program teaches students to analyze words. Specifically, they are learning about short and long vowels, consonant clusters, word endings, compound words, contractions, and even prefixes and suffixes. This understanding of the composition of words lends itself to the study of writing, in which the students learn to write for a specific purpose and audience, to analyze their work, and make revisions. As they do in first grade, second-grade students also use Being a Writer. The Being a Writer program combines a writing process approach with guided instruction to ensure students learn and practice the craft and conventions of writing. All of these skills, as they develop, help students to become better readers. Along with word structure, second-grade students are learning more about comprehension strategies, making predictions, recognizing cause and effect, comparing and contrasting, and even making and explaining inferences through their reading program. Also, as they do in the first grade, students use the Daily Five, a series of reading rotations. Using this method, teachers are able to differentiate reading groups to meet each student's individual needs and best help them to reach their full potential. Second-grade students also learn to use the library and iPads for research, as well as to do both partner and individual presentations on individually chosen topics. These activities, and the many others within the second-grade curriculum, help to bolster students' understanding of language, interpretation, comprehension, public speaking, group work, and more.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum in second grade, as in other grades, follows the Singapore method presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. The work done on addition and subtraction in the first grade continues, as students in the second grade develop their number sense with numbers up to 1,000. Second-grade students learn place value and continue developing their ability to compare large numbers before moving on to addition and subtraction, both with and without regrouping strategies. Much of the work done stems from the core of the Singapore method in that students spend time using manipulatives and pictorial representations before moving into any abstraction of their mathematical skills. Second-grade students then use their more abstract understanding of addition and subtraction to introduce the ideas of multiplication and division. Throughout these lessons, students learn to estimate and to apply their learning to topics such as money, measurements, time, and patterns. As in the lower grades, second-grade students have access to DreamBox, an interactive math app that allows students to progress through various problem-solving activities that both support and

enrich their mathematical understanding. Likewise, the second grade uses a calendar math program that provides for further enrichment throughout the week.

RELIGION

Second-grade students build on their knowledge by learning about the sacraments, the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Trinity, and the Paschal Mystery. In their study of religion, second-grade students have the opportunity to work toward celebrating the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. Alongside these sacraments, students celebrate Mass and other liturgical ceremonies, nurturing a deeper relationship with God. The second grade embraces an active faith by hosting a schoolwide service project raising donations for our Sacred Heart school in Uganda.

SCIENCE

STEMscopes is our science curriculum, which allows second-grade students to develop the ability to engage, explore, and explain. Using a variety of learning strategies through hands-on exploration and inquiry, second-grade students study how organisms interact, how Earth changes, and how to map the land and water of our amazing world. This helps generate their scientific understanding of everyday phenomena while learning by doing.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Within their social studies class, second-grade students study concepts of history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, culture, science, technology, and society. This unit of study addresses how to become an active citizen. Second graders engage in an in-depth study of United States Presidents and are introduced to the concept of social science by thinking, reading, writing, speaking, listening, discussing, researching, and utilizing technological skills.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

To build on the outdoor education program on the Villa Duchesne campus, the second grade has partnered with the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center to build a native plant garden. Students have the opportunity to research the birds that they already see, as well as the birds they would like to attract. In coordination with the Ecology Center, second-grade students grow plants that will attract their chosen species. In the second semester, the students track the birds that come to their feeders and have the opportunity to submit their data to the Cornell laboratory database. In addition to both of these projects, the students use the many outdoor education opportunities on campus for a variety of activities. The second grade uses activities as simple as exploring the woods to find sticks for a construction project to collecting seeds to learn more about how they travel as a part of their curriculum. Like the other grades, the second grade also participates in the International Festival; learning about another country, some of the language, the culture, the food, and more.

❖ SECOND GRADE ❖

FIELD TRIPS

To tie into the second grade's focus on bird studies, students take field trips to the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center. The class also takes a field trip to the Creative Convention through the Gifted Resource Council. Through partnership with this organization, students participate in outside classes throughout the year. This particular field trip is an academic competition that has students using their problem-solving skills to create something, like building a sustainable grocery store. Students are then scored on the process of the activity, the variation in their ideas, the ability to work as a group, their presentation skills, and more. This is a great opportunity for students to take the academic skills they are learning to another level, using their skills to learn about and creatively solve real-world issues.

THIRD GRADE

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

In the third-grade classroom, students continue to build on skills learned in second grade but also work toward becoming more independent and mature learners. In the third-grade classroom, students learn to search for why things happen, rather than focusing on what is happening. They learn to utilize practice and self-management for skills they want to master, to recognize connections between previously learned material and newer content, to set goals, to understand the differences in completing short- and long-term assignments, and to become more responsible for themselves both at school and at home. In the third grade, students learn more about the learning process and how independent work can lead to learning, much like guided teaching can.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In the third grade, a large focus of the reading program is on novel units. Students read books at their own reading level and are assessed using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment. Reading at their own level creates a learning experience that helps them grow as a learner by developing both word attack and comprehension skills. Within their reading curriculum, third-grade students learn to pull information from texts. From reiterating fine details to discussing some of the context behind what they have read, this focus on comprehension allows the students to both think and talk about what has been read in a developmentally appropriate way. With more advanced reading and a higher level of thinking about their texts, third-grade students are able to translate this learning into their own writing. Third-grade students learn to compose sentences. Throughout the year, students advance their writing by learning about the benefits of descriptive words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Third graders also learn about the editing and proofreading process through researching and writing creative stories. While improving upon the third-grade students' reading and writing skills, these activities also build on their ability to analyze, clarify their thoughts, and present their thoughts confidently.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum in third grade, as in other grades, follows the Singapore method presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. The work done on addition and subtraction in the third grade, as well as the introduction to multiplication and division, is both continued and built upon within the third-grade curriculum. Third-grade students start by developing their understanding of larger numbers up to 10,000, based on their previous understanding of numbers up to 1,000. Likewise, the third grade learns to use their prior understanding of addition and subtraction and to apply it to values up to 10,000. With further understanding of addition and subtraction, both with and without regrouping, students are then able to develop a basic understanding of multiplication and division by first using manipulatives and pictorial representations to explain how multiplication and division work. This understanding is developed using bar modeling, real-world problems, and multi-step problems in relation to money, measurement, time, and more. Students in the third grade are also introduced to the idea of fractions through their introduction to division. Outside of the Math in Focus curriculum, the third grade uses a calendar math program that provides for further enrichment throughout the week.

❖ THIRD GRADE ❖

RELIGION

Third-grade students experience a deepening of their content knowledge and their personal faith in God. Third-grade religion includes learning about the early Church, worshipping at Mass and through the sacraments, and acting as a disciple. In addition, students use daily prayer and other liturgical experiences to comprehend and appreciate the love of God. Third-grade students raise social awareness and effect change by hosting a market day, collecting funds to support Tiny Superheroes, an organization that empowers kids who are overcoming illnesses and disabilities.

SCIENCE

Through the STEMscopes science curriculum, third-grade students develop an ability to engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Discovering through hands-on STEM activities helps students learn to see connections in new concepts and content. Third-grade students study animal development and survival, environments and the traits of organisms, how organisms change over time, the effects of hazardous weather, and the power of magnetic forces. Throughout the year, students build a strong scientific understanding of the world around them.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Within their social studies class, third-grade students focus on the geography of communities and the cultural development of the people who inhabit them. Students study relationships between natural resources and other geographic characteristics in a community. Studies also include how the unique characteristics of an area influence where and how communities develop and how they adapt to change.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Many of the third-grade special projects are tied into their focus on using their reading, their writing, and various experiences inside the classroom, as well as at home. Within their language arts curriculum, students learn to write reports. Students in the third grade read a biography and bring their book report to life by writing a report, creating a timeline of events, and even dressing up as the person for their class presentation. Outside of the language arts curriculum, third-grade students are learning about the world around them and utilizing their new skills. Students in the third grade research a Native American tribe. They write a paper about what they have learned, create a banner symbolizing their chosen tribe, and make a storyteller from model magic clay to better understand the importance of storytelling to Native American culture. The third-grade classroom capitalizes on their understanding of birds from the second grade and expands on their learning as they individually research birds and create a presentation around what they have learned. At the same time, they have the opportunity to use the SparkLab to build bird feeders and design their outdoor learning space. While they have a lot of focus on research and presentations, the opportunities to learn stretch far beyond the actual presentation, as students learn about description, analysis, editing, and overall organization of their ideas. Like the other lower school classes, the third grade also participates in the International Festival each year.

FIELD TRIPS

Adding to the third grade's goal of making connections between material, understanding more about why things happen, and utilizing tangible experiences to learn, the class takes field trips to both the Saint Louis Zoo and Daniel Boone's home. At the Saint Louis Zoo, students expand their animal unit by going on a Web of Life tour and learning about animal adaptation. At Daniel Boone's home, the social studies curriculum comes to life as the students experience what it would be like to be a pioneer.

FOURTH GRADE

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

Fourth-grade students build on many of the skills developed in earlier grades. Like in the third grade, students are working on their independence. Through nightly spelling and mathematics homework, fourth-grade students learn skills like accountability and organization. The material taught in each class is designed to help students see the big picture, rather than focusing solely on skill-based content. To help accomplish this focus on the big picture, the fourth grade includes more long-term projects, book reports, and writing assignments; each with the goal of both helping students with related class material and teaching softer skills, like time management. With more exposure to presenting to their peers, students build on their public speaking and listening skills. In the fourth grade, students begin to learn some of the more challenging material that they will build on in middle school and beyond.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The fourth-grade language arts curriculum capitalizes and builds on the work done in earlier grades. Students continue to learn about word composition through lessons on multi-syllable words, silent consonants, and unusual spellings. Likewise, within the spelling and grammar curriculum, the students take weekly tests to assess their understanding and application of learned skills. Having been introduced to descriptive words and other such writing topics in earlier grades, fourth-grade students are forming their understanding of the parts of speech, as well as further developing appropriate uses of punctuation. Fourth-grade students are also introduced to a vocabulary curriculum that will continue through the fifth grade, increasing in rigor as they progress. Through this curriculum, students are learning about the meaning of vocabulary words and also learning both to use them in context and to recognize both synonyms and antonyms. All of this writing culminates in learning to write personal narratives, instructions, research reports, and persuasive pieces. Students in the fourth grade also read a number of novels as a class, which ties into other curriculum items as they each cover different time periods, utilize new vocabulary, and allow more comprehension-based writing and discussion.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum in fourth grade, as in other grades, follows the Singapore method presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. Fourth-grade students start by developing their understanding of larger numbers up to 100,000, based on their previous understanding of numbers up to 10,000. While they add to their understanding of addition and subtraction of large numbers, the primary focus in the fourth grade is on developing an understanding of multiplication and division. Starting with estimation, the fourth-grade curriculum has students using learning around factors and multiples to lead into the abstraction of the multiplication and division that was introduced in the third grade. In learning to multiply and divide single- and double-digit numbers, the course naturally leads into basic data and probability, as they learn about calculating averages and fractional representations of probability. Having developed their understanding of division, the curriculum introduces concepts

like equivalent fractions, conversion between mixed numbers and improper fractions, and basic operations with fractions. Building on their understanding of a fraction representing a part of a whole, the class then introduces decimals, place value, and basic decimal operations. Throughout, students are applying their understanding to tables and graphs, angle measures, and measurement. Students in the fourth grade are also starting to check answers for reasonableness, a skill that helps them to recognize the bigger picture and to apply what they have been learning.

RELIGION

The fourth-grade religion curriculum covers the Beatitudes, Saints, and the Ten Commandments. Through learning, reflection, and dialogue, fourth-grade students research and write a report on a chosen Saint. They have the opportunity to present the information learned from the project to the larger community in a culminating experience. Fourth-grade students use daily prayer and other liturgical experiences to grow in their understanding and relationship with God. Fourth graders practice stewardship and social awareness by managing the recycling program on Villa's lower campus.

SCIENCE

Through the science curriculum, STEMscopes, fourth-grade students develop an ability to engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Science labs and hands-on STEM activities help fourth graders learn about the world around them. This approach to learning is attainable through our many outdoor classroom spaces as well as our science lab. Throughout the year, fourth-grade students will study physical science, life science, and Earth science. These units of study will help develop their scientific understanding of animal structures and how they use their adaptations to interact with each other and within our ecosystem. Learning the common processes of the Earth's systems, including weather and Earth's cycles and how energy is transferred through waves, is emphasized. Students will also develop questions that are fair and justifiable based on evidence. Fourth graders will learn more about the world in which they live while understanding how their interactions with the world can affect all organisms and structures in our ever-changing world.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Within their social studies class, fourth-grade students study geography and map skills, the regions of the United States, and an extensive study of the state of Missouri. In this unit of study, students will learn the historical and economic importance of each of the regions. Students will be able to name and identify all states and capitals and understand the history of our country from the discovery of the New World to the present day. Fourth graders will describe the relationships between the branches of government and focus on historical events and the economy specific to Missouri. The students will have an understanding of the rich history of each of the regions, major events, and economics of each state as well as the importance of Missouri in today's world.

❖ FOURTH GRADE ❖

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The larger projects in fourth grade are cross-curricular, bringing together multiple disciplines to teach about more than one topic. Through their study of theology, for example, fourth-grade students have the opportunity to choose a Saint to study. This project includes writing a paper that then goes through a number of drafts before being submitted both in both first and third person. In addition to writing a paper, the students then dress up as their chosen Saint and present to their families and peers at All-Saints Day Mass. Fourth-grade students also do book reports that include both verbal and visual presentations, building in more opportunities for skills related to drafting, creating, and presenting on learned material. The Explore block starts in the fourth grade and allows students to explore topics outside of traditional classroom material. Students rotate quarterly through the Explore block, learning study skills, having an introduction to Spanish, using their creativity in the SparkLab, and learning basic typing skills, research, Google products, and more within the technology section.

FIELD TRIPS

Within various units throughout the year, the fourth grade has the opportunity to go on field trips. To add to their study of plants, the fourth grade takes a trip to the Missouri Botanical Garden. On this trip, the students take a guided tour, participate in a discussion on climate, and have the opportunity to learn more about planting and plant care. To further extend their learning, fourth-grade students join the second grade on their field trip to the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center and work with high school students enrolled in an Eco Act course throughout the year. The fourth grade also takes a trip to Meramec Caverns, where they take a cave tour that ties into their rocks and minerals unit and teaches about the history behind cave structures.

FIFTH GRADE

ABOUT THE CLASSROOM

In the fifth-grade classroom, students utilize the skills they established in the fourth grade and develop them even further. Fifth-grade students see more long-term assignments in which they cover more material, like reading multiple chapters over the course of a week or learning more spelling words over a longer period of time. A large focus in the fifth grade is self-management, which presents itself in a variety of ways. Students in the fifth grade start to identify what works for their own individual learning style; whether it is breaking larger assignments into small and more manageable pieces or finishing them all at one time. These skills are truly cross-curricular, as they apply the ability to break down assignments to each of the areas of study throughout the year. This helps students continue to develop organizational skills and learn to be accountable for their learning outside of class time.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In the fifth grade, students read novels and lead their own book discussions in literacy circles. Through this, the students continue to develop their technical reading skills and build their ability to comprehend more rigorous texts. Students are also engaged in benchmark-level assessments, allowing them to work independently on individually appropriate skills and texts. Students are continuing to grow in their understanding of the parts of speech, their spelling abilities, and their vocabulary knowledge. Fifth-grade students grow significantly in their writing ability, as they further develop their abilities to write persuasive, personal, narrative, informational, and descriptive essays. Much of the writing process is connected to other curricular areas, helping students to further grow their ability to analyze and process what they are reading.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum in fifth grade, as in other grades, follows the Singapore method presented in the Math in Focus textbook series. Again, the students start by increasing their understanding of larger numbers up to 10,000,000, based on their previous understanding of numbers up to 100,000. After a review of multiplication and division up to numbers in the hundreds and thousands, fifth graders spend a significant amount of time on operations with improper fractions and mixed numbers. Having solidified their understanding of numeric operations, the fifth grade then moves on to pre-algebra skills, learning to apply the operations they have mastered as they introduce the ideas of variables, expressions, equations, and inequalities. This takes the fifth-grade students into a study of area and ratios. Throughout their studies, the focus of the fifth grade is on preparing students for further pre-algebra studies, with an emphasis on solving equations and developing the needed skills to move into algebraic classes in middle and high school. They also have a focus on note-taking skills and retention that help to further develop these valuable skills.

❖ FIFTH GRADE ❖

RELIGION

Fifth-grade students learn about each of the seven sacraments in depth. They study the origins and roots of each sacrament in Scripture, the early practice of these sacraments, and how each is celebrated in the Church today. Students use daily prayer, Catholic devotions, and other liturgical experiences to develop their personal and active relationship with God. The fifth grade promotes faith in action by communicating with and visiting elderly residents at Silver Creek, a local assisted living center.

SCIENCE

Through the science curriculum, STEMscopes, fifth-grade students are engaged in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities and instruction. Students develop an ability to engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate in each unit. Students use a variety of learning strategies that include observations, predictions, experiments, literacy components, and journaling. Fifth-grade students study the physical world and its interconnectedness. Students learn about photosynthesis, ecosystems, matter, energy transfer, Earth's rotation, the sky, the human impact on the Earth, earth science, and properties of matter while using scientific inquiry and problem-solving. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) projects throughout the curriculum to encourage collaboration, problem-solving skills, and whole-brain learning.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The fifth-grade Social Studies curriculum provides students with a foundational understanding of American history, beginning with the arrival of early peoples in the Americas and continuing through the American Revolution. Topics include the history of Native Americans, colonists settling in North America, the establishment of the 13 colonies, resources in the colonies, early government, causes of the American Revolution, the American Revolution, and the Declaration of Independence. Students will explore how geography, culture, resources, and government shaped the early history of the United States. Students use the text, novels, online sources, and reference materials to learn how to analyze history and its impact through time. Fifth graders engage in the process and ability to use knowledge about one's community, nation, and world; apply inquiry processes; and employ skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving. Likewise, students also focus on their note-taking skills and further learning to analyze the topics covered and find commonalities in their own experiences.

SPECIAL PROJECTS AND FIELD TRIPS

Fifth grade students have the opportunity to continue learning about the world around them through a special project related to Silver Creek, a local assisted living center. Students in the fifth grade correspond with the residents of Silver Creek throughout the year. The students then have the opportunity to visit their pen pals at Christmas and bring small gifts like toiletries and stationery to their new friends. Students also take a trip to the Abraham Lincoln Museum and to Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois, to connect with their study of the Civil War. This trip coincides with the study of the events leading up to the Civil War, the Civil War itself, and the resulting Reconstruction. As part of this unit, students also read a biography about a Civil War hero, presenting what they have learned to their classmates and even dressing up as the hero for a living museum experience. The Explore block continues in the fifth grade and allows students to explore topics outside of traditional classroom material. Students rotate quarterly through the Explore block, learning study skills, having an introduction to Spanish, using their creativity in the Spark Lab, and learning basic typing skills, research, Google products, and more within the technology section.

NSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST

To support students' reading and language arts abilities, an instructional specialist is available at the Lower School for a variety of skill-building opportunities. All students are tested by the learning specialist using the Fountas & Pinnell Program to determine their reading levels and find ways to appropriately grow their skills. The specialist then works with teachers to assist with classroom instruction and provide ways to meet a variety of needs within the same classroom, ensuring that all students are learning at their appropriate level. Similarly, the learning specialist prepares opportunities for small group reading and differentiated activities that support reading abilities and allow time for one-on-one reading-specific instruction.

SPECIALTY CLASSES

ART

Grades JK3-5

The art program is designed to be multifaceted with a holistic global perspective. As students rise through grades, they learn to focus their eyes on the aesthetics of art, their hearts on the warmth presented in other cultures, and their minds on the rich history to which so many outside of our community have contributed. During their experience at the Lower School, students learn how to make art a reflection of who and what they are in this world.

As part of the art program, students are involved in a number of different activities that help them learn to love and appreciate art, as well as help them to understand the world around them through art. Starting as early as kindergarten, students learn to associate art and literature, explore the art of other countries, and learn about a variety of techniques. As they rise through the grades, students learn about ceramic construction, architecture, printmaking, weaving, proportional drawing, and more. Throughout, students are learning about the history of art, discussing various art-related careers and techniques, and learning to make connections between the art that they are studying and other subject areas like music, math, and social studies.

❖ SPECIALTY CLASSES ❖

SPANISH

Grades 2-5

As students progress through the Spanish curriculum, they move from lessons on Spanish-speaking countries and the basics of the language to a more comprehensive and cross-curricular style of learning. Starting in the second grade, students start to learn phonetics, vowels, and basic vocabulary. As they progress through the grades, the students learn more of the Spanish language; learning to speak Spanish prayers, introducing common phrases and other key vocabulary, and emphasizing correct pronunciation throughout. Through Spanish, the students are also able to tie together various curricular items. Learning about butterflies in science leads to a lesson on butterfly sanctuaries near Mexico City. Learning about vocabulary and word roots in English leads to lessons on commonalities between French and Spanish, as well as words with Greek and Latin origins. Lessons in social studies lead to discussion on the development of the Spanish world and the Spanish Empire. Because Villa Duchesne is a part of a global network of Sacred Heart schools, the goal of the Spanish curriculum is to build cultural connections.

FRENCH

Grades JK3 -5

The lower school French program teaches students the French language, as well as French culture, French history, and our French heritage throughout the grades. All students start with the sign of the cross and a prayer spoken in French, with new prayers added as they progress through the program. Students are taught to hear and correctly reproduce the sounds of the French language as they focus on learning correct pronunciation. Through the years, students build upon their vocabulary in areas such as polite greetings, numbers, weather, sports, transportation, animals, and food, increasing their knowledge of the language and their skill levels for French conversation. Activities, songs, and games in each grade level, as well as cooking and sampling French food, make the French language come alive. Lower school students also learn about the rich French heritage present at Villa Duchesne, as well as in the St. Louis area. As Sacred Heart schools were begun by the Réligieuses de la Société du Sacré Cœur, founded in France, Villa Duchesne students are connected with French and other Sacred Heart schools around the world. Students also have the opportunity to learn about the history of St. Louis, giving them the opportunity to find a multitude of connections between their own experiences and those of the French.

MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

Grades JK3-5

Students in performing arts learn the elements of music and drama. Performing arts is used to enhance the curriculum further. In the early childhood and kindergarten classes, students use music, movement, and drama to learn how their voices and bodies can be used expressively. Through rhythm instruments and creative movement, the children begin to develop their internal sense of beat and rhythm. Throughout their experience in the elementary program, students have the opportunity to learn about different elements of music and drama, deepening their understanding and adding knowledge and skill as they mature.

As part of the music and performing arts program, the early childhood and kindergarten students participate in Thanksgiving and Christmas performances. Likewise, the elementary program includes individual class performances throughout the year, as well as shared performances for Advent (grades 4-5) and International Day (grades JK3-5). By the time a student leaves Villa Duchesne's Lower School, each will have a global perspective of music and dance. They will also have an exposure to performance skills that pave the way for confidence, whether on stage, in the classroom, or elsewhere.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Grades JK3-5

The physical education curriculum covers a wide variety of fundamental skills and abilities through daily PE class time and within each grade level. The objective is to not only teach sports and games, but also lifelong skills such as sportsmanship, teamwork, respect, goal setting, and much more. In the lower grades, students start by building basic skills such as skipping, galloping, and simple games. Over the course of the physical education program, students continue to expand on their complex sports abilities, learning to play volleyball, lacrosse, and field hockey in the later grades. In addition to learning about team sports, students learn gymnastics, swimming, archery, roller skating, yoga, self-defense, and overall fitness throughout their years at the Lower School.

Villa Duchesne is an independent, Catholic school in the Sacred Heart tradition for boys and girls age 3-grade 5 and young women grades 6-12.

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