

K5 & 1st Grade at Prince of Peace Catholic School

At Prince of Peace Catholic School, we strive for excellence, so we aim high for our goals right from the beginning -- starting in K4 and continuing in Kindergarten and First Grade. At the same time, we work closely with children and parents to mitigate potential difficulties and disappointments along the way!

This is not an unimportant task! In 2006, Newsweek Magazine published a story signifying an interest in re-evaluating the goals of early childhood education. Entitled "[The New First Grade](#)" it asked: "do we push kids too fast?" At Prince of Peace, we've thought about this too, but we ask the question differently. How do children in Kindergarten and First Grade meet high academic expectations on the one hand, WHILE experiencing the joy of learning, friendships, and play that we wish for all children on the other? Our answer: At Prince of Peace Catholic School, K5 and first grade are part of a three-year program (beginning in [our K4](#)) rooted in five core commitments:

1. Start with and aim for high learning goals.
2. Give the child personal attention in small classes and even smaller groups.
3. Employ hands-on and activity-based lessons.
4. Encourage parent involvement.
5. Take a break & know when to have fun!

1. Start with and aim for high learning goals.

Most students enroll in Kindergarten with the kind of [K4 experience children receive at Prince of Peace Catholic School](#). We teach Kindergarten children with two academic goals in mind: the introduction of and mastery of age-appropriate reading and math skills AND preparation of children for learning success in our first grade. These goals are not the same. Kindergarten-level skills can usually be mastered by the end of March in the Kindergarten year. At this point in our second semester and in April and May, we slowly introduce first grade skills so that children gain confidence and familiarity in preparing for first grade expectations without the pressure of grades and timed tests. When children reach first grade, they're not facing "the wall" but rather the tasks of reading and doing math with enthusiasm!

2. Give the child personal attention in small classes and even smaller groups.

Since our founding in 2003, both Kindergarten and First grade class sizes have remained consistently below the Greenville county schools' average class sizes. Each of our two Kindergarten classes also employs a full time teacher's aide. When Kindergarten students break into three groups of six students for classroom learning, they receive the attention they need to focus on tasks for achievement.

3. Employ hands-on and activity-based lessons.

In small groups (made possible by small classes) with a teacher and an aide in Kindergarten, students listen to stories, work on handwriting or crafts, practice counting or identifying sounds and words, or doing a science or math activity. They work on fine motor control using scissors, play-dough, and buttoning and zipper manipulatives. They transfer poems from the board to lined paper and identify and correct punctuation and capitalization errors in a paragraph. Such focused and hands-on activities enhance the learning experience and encourage greater concept apprehension and mastery.

4. Encourage parent involvement.

We invite parents to be involved in two ways. Communication: you will receive weekly student work, teacher and Principal newsletter, reports through our on-line student information management tool [Option C](#), and other messages by e-mail or note as needed to involve you in your child's learning success. Presence: Kindergarten parents are part of school field trips, reading buddies, lunch buddies, birthday or liturgical calendar celebrations, or other activities for the children coordinated by the class "Room Mom".

5. Take a break & know when to have fun!

A small class size means children can play more learning games, move around the classroom, or sit for story time and get more out of the story with oral discussion or Q&A when there are fewer distractions than one might see in a class of 25 or 35. First grade students have recess 30 minutes every day. Kindergartners have a morning and afternoon recess compensating for a school day which is a little longer because of our middle school students' schedule (8:15 to 3:15 daily). Children play games, sing songs, make crafts and integrate the fun into the learning.

With these "five core commitments" in Kindergarten and First Grade, we achieve the level of excellence that parents seek without the difficulties and disappointments.

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Kindergarten and First Grade goals . . .

. . . designed for your child to experience success in Kindergarten and again in first grade at Prince of Peace Catholic School:

Kindergarten:

- Students will recognize various types of end marks used in sentences.
- Students will use capitalization and end marks when writing a sentence.
- Students will read a select [set of 104 high frequency words](#) and be able to spell them.
- Test taking skills will be introduced to students in the second semester
- Students will take 5-word spelling tests in the second semester (with much preparation and usually with word families like “mug – rug – bug – jug”).
- Students will take timed (non graded) math tests in the second semester
- Students will read pre-decodable and decodable books in Kindergarten
- Students will be expected to be able to read a brief paragraph (3 sentences) and answer questions on what they read before the end of the school year. [\[Read More About This . . .\]](#)

First Grade:

- First two weeks of the school year students will review test-taking skills introduced in Kindergarten.
- Spelling tests will be like Kindergarten Spelling tests – 5 words, and graded using “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory.” After three weeks, students graduate to 10-word lists teacher graded from A to F.
- Spelling words will be review of K-4 & K-5 words first, before new words are introduced. Effort to match spelling words to Open Court Reading classroom instruction. Focus on sound-spelling recognition.
- Handwriting will begin in the first quarter and graded using “Excellent” “Satisfactory” “Unsatisfactory” and “Needs Improvement.” Teachers will indicate where improvements need to be made with red pens, and if the teacher thinks it necessary the student will re-do the work.
- Timed math tests. During the first two weeks of the school year, children review and practice timed math tests (math facts) beginning with 24 facts; these are ungraded. After that, teachers grade math facts as students build up to 56 facts in five minutes; tests are graded with a “%” of correct answers noted on the test.