

K4 at Prince of Peace Catholic School

In our K-4 classroom at Prince of Peace Catholic School, we value our partnership with parents in building a foundation for their child's successful entry into full-day Kindergarten the following year.

K-4 students attend class only 4 hours per day, four days per week (20 hours per week). Instruction is guided by a teacher and a teacher's aide with a class size of no larger than 18 children. Families generally choose our program because it offers a modest but rich introduction to academic instruction and skill development for 4-year olds.

Our curriculum offers children a healthy environment balanced between structure and play. The children experience the "structure of school" when they learn, for example, how to stand in line, respond to and follow instructions, work in small groups, sit in circle time, and follow simple classroom rules like raising a hand to speak or waiting patiently for a turn at a task. Throughout, they learn and practice positive social skills with other children in a classroom where courtesy and kindness are modeled.

Such cognitive and social skills are also learned through structured and free (but supervised) play time in the classroom, at recess, while participating in group games, or while working cooperatively in small groups.

From the outset of our school year, we focus on handwriting, letter and letter sound identification, number recognition, colors, shapes, and counting from 1 to 20. We use hands-on activities, music, and learning games to introduce the basic skills children need to prepare for Kindergarten. We also use the Open Court K-4 phonics program to better prepare our 4-year olds for acquiring age-appropriate language skills that Open Court's K to 3rd Grade phonics and early childhood reading program offers our students in following years.

Circle time offers the children an opportunity think about and organize their thoughts concerning the world around them. For example, we draw on the calendar or recount the days of the week. We learn about seasons and patterns, or focus on early math skills – all rooted in their day-to-day real life experiences in school or at home.

It is important that our students grow spiritually as well as socially and academically. Students are introduced to prayers and major holy days of our Catholic faith, as well as basic lives of better-known saints or simple stories from Sacred Scripture.

At Prince of Peace Catholic School, our K-4 early childhood education jump starts your child's learning, so that Kindergarten and after that first grade become positive growth experiences where the joy of learning (rather than anxiety and trepidation) becomes the norm.

"Writing is a complex act . . . [but] the hand of a child of six or seven has lost its precious period of sensitivity to movement. . . . We must therefore go back and find that pliable hand . . . of a child of four who strives to touch everything about him in his irresistible attempt to stabilize his various movements."

-- Maria Montessori on "The Mechanism of Writing" in *The Discovery of the Child*