



Lower School - Junior Kindergarten Overview

Junior kindergarten is committed to the spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of each child. We focus on the whole child and incorporate a wide variety of learning activities to develop sensory perception, fine and gross motor skills, listening and language skills, readiness for reading and math, self-confidence and social adjustment.

Language Development: Junior kindergarteners are introduced to the alphabet (upper and lowercase) and to the concept that print has meaning. Students learn to identify beginning, middle, and ending sounds in words and begin to orally read simple CVC (Consonant Vowel Consonant) words. The students learn to recognize high frequency words after experience in shared and interactive writing. The explicit phonics approach teaches students to organize letter-sound relationships into a logical instructional sequence that is both fun and engaging. Our phonemic awareness program consists of rhyming, syllabication, and counting sounds using a variety of songs, dances, and games. Students learn to engage in conversation, speak in complete sentences, develop listening and social skills, follow simple oral instructions, build vocabulary, and participate in storytelling.

Math: Our junior kindergarten program uses the *Bridges in Mathematics* and *Number Corner* curriculum. The program is designed to engage children through the use of contextual themes, games, stories, mysteries and intriguing problems, manipulatives and visual models. The curriculum provides instruction in number operations, geometry, patterning, measurement, and data analysis. The junior kindergarten students are taught to recognize and reproduce simple patterns, be familiar with the days of the week and months of the year, recognize numerals 0-10, count concrete objects using one-to-one correspondence, and understand the concept of zero. Students are taught to compare groups using mathematical terms, use positional terms, and recognize, describe, and name shapes. The math curriculum provides a strong foundation as students begin to engage with numbers.

Science: The curiosity and sense of wonder of young children lead them to observe, question, investigate, and interpret the world around them. The junior kindergarten science program takes advantage of this innate curiosity and encourages children to see, appreciate, and respect the interconnectedness of the universe. Children are inspired to become responsible citizens of the Earth. In the St. George science lab, students participate in hands-on learning and exploration of the topics being taught in class.

Social Studies: The social studies curriculum focuses on the development and reinforcement of positive social skills, peer relationships, and the establishment of a safe and caring environment. When children play pretend games, build with blocks, or work together on class projects, they learn to accept differences, deal with their emotions, and practice resolving conflicts. Students gain confidence as their social skills develop, and they learn to share, take turns, and practice being both leaders and followers. Junior kindergarteners develop a sense of personal responsibility by performing a variety of jobs in the classroom. The students are taught about family histories and made aware of different cultural traditions.

Social and Emotional Development: Learning to form and value a friendship is a key part of social development. The children learn to understand their feelings about themselves, the people in their lives, and the environment in which they live. The emotional well-being of children is paramount to ensure that children reach their overall potential. The junior kindergarten program uses *Responsive Classroom* strategies as a resource to create a positive, loving, and caring classroom environment that ensures social and emotional skills are emphasized throughout the day.

Discovery Area: Junior kindergarten students visit an outdoor discovery area daily where they are able to engage in a variety of sensory-based learning and play activities. Sensory play builds nerve connections within the developing brain's neural pathways. This, in turn, triggers a child's inclination for and ability to complete more complex learning tasks. Sensory play also supports language development, cognitive growth, motor skills, problem solving skills, and social interaction.

Co-Curricular Classes: Students attend the following co-curricular classes: physical education three times a week; art and STEAM twice a week; library, Spanish, music, and science lab once a week; recess and Discovery Area daily. Students also attend a developmentally appropriate chapel daily.