



# Kindergarten Program

## Overview

The mission of St. Ignatius School is to provide spiritual and academic growth based on the principle that every child is created in the image of God.

## Theological Orientation

At one time Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14). Our religion program, *In God’s Image*, nurtures children as they discover who they are in the manifold traces of God’s presence in and around them.

The Earth, the sun and the moon, the change of the seasons, the growth of plants, animals, insects, fish and birds, all bear God’s traces. Children, in their uninhabited excitement and wonderment, feel these traces of God. They experience the world with an innate sense that it is all there as a gift to be touched, smelled, tasted, seen and heard. In this unique way, the child responds to the gift of God’s creation.

*In God’s Image* invites the children to see the earth and all it contains as a display of the glory of God. The wonderment and awe are kept alive in children, leading them into wisdom and allowing them to experience life as a trace of God. To help children recognize the many traces of God around them is to lead them into God’s presence and to make them friends of God. This is what *In God’s Image* celebrates!

The major faith development themes in kindergarten are as follows:

- Me
- Earth Times
- Church Times (The Christian story)
- Special Days
- Community
- Plants
- Animals
- Changes

Each of the themes involves stories from the bible, songs, and activities to help the children learn about themselves and God’s creation. Each child needs to feel that they belong to God’s family and that they are unique and gifted.

## The Importance of Play

**Play** is an essential part of learning and is seen as the basic ingredient for development in the kindergarten classroom. Play affects a child’s self-concept as well as all aspects of a his/her development: social, emotional, intellectual, creative, language, moral and physical.

So, what exactly is play? Play, for the child, is like thought or work for the adult. Through play, children are able to express their thoughts and needs as they explore, experiment, plan, pretend, practice skills, imitate, think, solve problems and use language. Other terms for *play* which are more descriptive such as: *learning through direct experience; symbolic process; investigation; exploration; and manipulation of the environment*. It becomes clear that, for the child, learning and play are synonymous.

Play has been the primary learning vehicle for children before entering school. Parents know that a baby can spend hours studying his hands and a toddler can be fascinated by watching sand pour through a sieve. Play is the work of childhood, where children develop an understanding of the world. Studies show that the most effective way to teach young children is to capitalize on their natural inclination to learn through play. Their natural curiosity and their need to be active and social make play an excellent vehicle for their learning.

Play requires participants to be actively involved in an activity. Therefore, play in the classroom is self-rewarding and self-governing for the children. Through play, the process of creating, building, or role playing far outweighs the final products that may result. Play encourages children to plan and to organize, thus making their world increasingly predictable.

“Man does not cease to play because he grows old; he grows old because he ceases to play.”

**G.B. Shaw**

## Child-Centred Learning Centres

Early childhood teachers have found that the use of learning centers is an effective learning methodology for young students. A learning center approach provides the children with the opportunities for experience-based learning, active manipulation and self-discovery. For the teacher, it provides a means of meeting the individualized needs of the children and of recognizing their varied abilities and learning styles. With the use of learning centers, the learning environment is structured by arranging space, equipment, and materials, which the children are free to choose and manipulate. The centers are based on the curriculum but each center is integrated, providing multiple learning experiences and are not restricted to a narrow train of thought or discipline. Centers are supplied with a variety of materials serving different purposes and within different levels of development. They are designed and changed to promote independence, communication, experimentation, self-discovery, physical (basic and fine motor) coordination, peer interaction, and language development. Learning centers allow the classroom to be child-centered rather than teacher-centered. Play materials found at the centers may be self-directing, allowing for a variety of learning outcomes or more directed, providing opportunities for children to develop specific concepts and skills. Each center is designed to encourage children to cooperate with each other and to work independently.

## Overview of the English Language Arts Curriculum

The Language Arts curriculum is organized into five general learning outcomes. Within these general outcomes, there are fifty-six specific learning goals. The five general outcomes are as follows:

1. Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences
2. Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, literary, and media texts
3. Manage ideas and information
4. Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication
5. Celebrate and build community.

**Exploratory language** enables students to organize and give meaning to experiences. It enables the kindergarten child to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences, and to express and acknowledge emotions. Examples of learning activities in which kindergarten students use exploratory language are: class meetings; show and tell; journals; learning centers; and shared reading and writing.

**Comprehending and responding** are both acts of constructing meaning from texts. Kindergarten children access prior knowledge, preview, ask questions, make predictions and set purposes. Comprehension is a complex and dynamic process that is learned and practiced in meaningful contexts such as: responding to books, storytelling, retelling activities, reading rhymes, and responding to the rhythm of language by marching, dancing and using musical instruments. Kindergarten children develop an understanding of print as they experiment with letter sounds and word patterns.

**Managing ideas and information** means that kindergarten children are encouraged to question, and will have modeled for them the use of questions, in order to satisfy their curiosity and information needs. Visual organizers such as graphs, checklists, webs, and charts are used to help students organize

their knowledge and make sense of information. They are encouraged to represent their knowledge in writing and to share it with others. Their representations will grow in complexity and clarity as they share new understandings with others.

Kindergarten students are expected **to communicate ideas** and information using well-organized, clear and increasingly more precise language.

Kindergarten students use language to **build community** within the home, school, and wider community. Kindergarten students learn that language is important for **celebrating** events of a personal nature, and for celebrating with the wider community. They share their learning by writing, singing, drawing, reading, acting and speaking about what they have learned.

## Overview of the Math Curriculum

**The main goals of mathematics education are to prepare students to:**

- use mathematics confidently to solve problems
- communicate and reason mathematically
- appreciate and value mathematics
- make connections between mathematics and its applications
- commit themselves to lifelong learning
- become mathematically literate adults, using mathematics to contribute to society

**Students who have met these goals will:**

- gain understanding and appreciation of the contributions of mathematics as a science, as philosophy, and as an art
- exhibit a positive attitude toward mathematics
- engage and persevere in mathematical tasks and projects
- contribute to mathematical discussions
- take risks in performing mathematical tasks
- exhibit curiosity

The four major units of the kindergarten math curriculum are:

### **Unit 1: Numbers**

**General Outcome:**

Develop number sense

### **Unit 2: Patterns and Relations (Patterns)**

**General Outcome:**

Use patterns to describe the world and solve problems.

### **Unit 3: Shape and Space (Measurement)**

**General Outcome:**

Use direct or indirect measurement to solve problems.

### **Unit 4: Shape and Space (3-D Objects and 2-D Shapes)**

**General Outcome:**

Describe the characteristics of 3-D objects and 2-D shapes, and analyze the relationships among them.

<b>Overview of the Science Curriculum</b>
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The science curriculum consists of three units of study.

**Unit 1: Trees**

In Kindergarten, an investigation of trees capitalizes on students' curiosity about the world around them. Students' observations of trees, including their seasonal changes, are complemented by a study of basic parts and uses of trees.

**Unit 2: Colours**

Colour is an important part of the world around us. Through observations and the use of specific vocabulary, students develop their ability to describe their world in terms of colour. They also explore how to create colours by mixing them, and they look at colours found in the environment.

**Unit 3: Paper**

By identifying, describing, and manipulating different kinds of paper and paper products found in the classroom, students are introduced to the concept of characteristics of materials. Hands-on investigations allow students to determine how well different types of paper can be cut, torn, and folded, and how these characteristics help to determine the best uses for each type. This study of paper culminates in students' developing their design-process skills by constructing a paper product for a particular use.

**Overview of the Social Studies Curriculum**

Social Studies enables students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to understand the world in which they live, to engage in active democratic citizenship, and to contribute to the betterment of society. The Social Studies curriculum consists of three units of study.

**Unit 1: Me**

Students explore what makes them unique, considering their abilities and interests, and they identify groups and places that are important to them. They also examine rules and responsibilities and study basic needs.

**Unit 2: The People Around Me**

Students identify the people who care for them and influence their lives. They explore different ways of cooperating, communicating, and solving problems in order to live and work together with others. Students also begin to examine the concept of time by investigating recurring events in their lives.

**Unit 3: The World Around Me**

Students study the world around them, exploring the physical environment of their local neighbourhood and learning that they live in a country called Canada. They learn that although all people have the same basic needs, they may have different ways of meeting those needs.