

Philosophy and Curriculum

"where a child's work is play"

St. David's Episcopal Preschool's mission is:

to provide a Christian environment that encourages children to become good citizens and life-long learners through play, exploration, invention, problem-solving and critical thinking.

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

The St. David's Episcopal Preschool play-based curriculum is constructed from three respected and established models and standards in the field of early childhood education: the NAEYC developmentally appropriate guidelines, the High/Scope Curriculum, and The Creative Curriculum. In addition, we encourage each staff member to use his or her own expertise in lesson planning and classroom management. Most importantly, we are a Christian school and these values guide our daily activities and learning.

Our extraordinary property is the backdrop for unmatched outdoor education opportunities. In addition to our playground, we have several unique outdoor classroom spaces designed for children to explore and learn in nature. Our outdoor learning is influenced by the Forest School model that began in Europe and has become popular in the United States.

- **NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Guidelines** - The National Association for the Education of Young Children is the largest professional organization of early childhood educators. NAEYC guidelines emphasize the roles of the teacher in supporting children's development and learning; the importance of meaningful and contextually relevant curriculum; and the significant role of families in early childhood education. www.naeyc.org
- **High/Scope Curriculum** - High/Scope Curriculum was established in 1961 in Ypsilanti, Michigan and its evolution was influenced by the child development theories of Jean Piaget. This curriculum is founded on the belief that young children learn best through active learning. <https://highscope.org/our-practice/curriculum/>.
- **The Creative Curriculum** - The Creative Curriculum is based on the idea of organizing the classroom into interest areas or centers. The strength of this curriculum lies in its emphasis on the teacher's role in creating and maintaining these areas to facilitate preschoolers' learning. <https://teachingstrategies.com/solutions/teach/preschool>.
- **Forest School** - Forest School is an outdoor education model. Regardless of the weather, children are engaged in the outdoor environment learning, exploring, and playing. This type of "classroom without walls" allows children the freedom to navigate their world and embrace the idea that learning can take place anywhere. <https://www.forestschools.com/pages/what-is-forest-school-an-introduction>

How does the curriculum differ from age to age?

The programs for the 3's, 4's, and 5's are similar in that the same curriculum content areas and *Key Developmental Indicators from the High/Scope curriculum* are addressed at each level. However, the attention span of these different aged children can be quite varied. For the younger child, structured activities might be shorter and the day might include fewer activities. Older students have more developed fine motor skills and can begin working on more elaborate projects or drawings. In addition, their expressive skills are more advanced and they can begin to use longer sentences and more complex sentence structures to express ideas, thoughts, concerns, etc. For example, while engaged in pre-writing

activities, some children may be dictating their ideas to teachers when working in journals, while others might be writing with support or independently using invented spelling.

We recognize that children learn through repetition and that some repetition is important. Each time an activity is repeated, a child gains new insight and is able to internalize his/her learning. We also know that a child's age is not the only indicator for what is developmentally appropriate. We look at the whole child to determine appropriate activities.

What does a typical class day look like for a student at St. David's Preschool?

Classes follow a daily schedule, which may include the following activities:

- **Welcome Time** - Students arrive and are greeted by their teachers. They take care of their belongings and get settled into the class routine for the day.
- **Circle/Greeting Time** - Teachers and students gather together in a circle to begin the day. They find out who is in class for the day, take care of "housekeeping activities" such as calendar, daily message, and jobs. They also discuss what the plans are for the day.
- **Work Time - "Plan-Do-Review"** – This part of the day follows the High/Scope Curriculum. The children plan where they are going to play, act upon that plan and then at the end of the time they review with the class what happened during work time.
- **Small Group Time** - The class is divided into small groups that may be instructed by the lead teacher, the assistant teacher, or a parent volunteer. The groups may work on the same activity, such as an art activity or science project, or on different activities. More individualized attention can be given to a child in a smaller setting and individual needs can be met.
- **Journal Time** - Children practice their writing skills. A variety of writing opportunities are provided for the children based on skill level. Teachers may use story or sentence starters, drawing, or *Learning Without Tears* activities. www.lwtears.com
- **Snack Time** - Students socialize and talk with friends and teachers. They enjoy "chatting" over a good snack and sharing information about themselves.
- **Movement Time** - Children are active in gross motor play. It is a combination of both free exploration movement and more structured activities such as playing games or playing with the parachute. Weather permitting, the children play outside on the playground and in our outdoor classroom spaces. During inclement weather, the children use a variety of toys in the Rainy Day Room.
- **Story Time** - Each day teachers read books that expand on the themes or units that their classes are studying.
- **Music & Movement Classes** - Music classes taught by a dedicated music teacher. In addition, teachers use a variety of music in the classroom to promote learning and encourage movement.
- **Children's Chapel** - Each month the children gather in the Sanctuary to participate in a special worship time. Through music, stories, and song the children make a joyful noise to the Lord.

Enrichment opportunities for our young learners to continue developing through PLAY!

- **K-WILD** – This unique outdoor enrichment program enables students to spend more days at St. David's to experience learning in nature. K-WILD's mission is to allow children the opportunity to learn about all of God's creation. *Kids Wonder, Investigate, Learn and Discover* the world around them while developing a love and respect for the great outdoors. This type of "classroom without walls" allows children the freedom to navigate their world and embrace the idea that learning can take place anywhere!
- **Lunch Bunch** – This extended day opportunity offers our preschoolers the chance to have more time to **PLAY!** Play is an important part of early childhood and the basis of all skill-learning for children. It's their chance to practice and engage in skills that develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Lunch Bunch students will bring lunch to school and stay after their regular preschool class, extending their day. They will eat, socialize, and play with their peers in both our indoor and outdoor learning spaces.