

## SAINT AGNES CATHOLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Saint Agnes Catholic School instruction builds on the comprehensive curriculum guidelines of the Diocese of Arlington. Students are challenged toward autonomy in critical, analytic, and creative thinking. Academics are presented in all modalities enabling inclusion of students with various learning styles and capabilities to succeed within the classroom.

**Religion:** Taught daily as a subject in all grades, religion is the foundation for all learning at Saint Agnes. Students participate in weekly liturgies, prepare intensively for sacraments, and discuss and relate the lessons of Scripture across the curriculum. The social justice class in 8th grade and prayer partner and virtue programs call students to faith in action. A day at Saint Agnes begins and ends with student led prayer and meditation.

**Reading and Language Arts:** Reading and writing are taught through a model of balanced literacy. Finding one's voice, as a writer, incorporating a strong vocabulary, and achieving sound comprehension and analysis are key elements in the balanced literacy program. Guided reading groups, literacy centers, focus lessons, assessments such as the DRA2 and running records, and 6+1 Writing Traits curriculum provide reinforcement and challenge in both primary and upper schools. Essay writing, research papers, drama and Reader's Theatre performances, the on-line newspaper, and literary podcasts challenge upper level students. The computer and library resource team assist in inquiry based learning components, creative writing and appreciation of literary genres.

**Mathematics:** The concepts of computation, logic and problem solving are fundamental to the Saint Agnes math curriculum. Differentiated lessons are integral to student progress and mastery. Manipulatives and cooperative learning allow students to apply problem-solving skills and explore new mathematical concepts. Students progress through basic number facts, measurement, fractions, pattern recognition, decimals, and algebra while focusing on real world application. Seventh grade students test for high school Algebra 1. If criteria are met students complete the course in 8th grade. Additional projects such as Pi Day, checkbook challenges, and the study of local businesses and stocks reinforce curriculum.

**Science:** The scientific method is the cornerstone to the Saint Agnes science curriculum. Students across grade levels utilize science and computer labs, where students explore the many facets of physical, earth, life and environmental sciences. Cultivating a working green house and participating in electives like Go Green Club promote environmental stewardship. Students in grades 7 and 8 participate in the Saint Agnes Science Fair, and winners advance to the diocesan competition.

**Social Studies:** Students connect local, state and U.S. history to the global community as well as past to present. The five themes of geography and current events are integrated across the social studies curriculum. Cornell outlines, foldable study guides, History Fair, Veteran's Day Assembly, a Roaring Twenties Banquet, Geography Bee, scrapbooking, field trips to our nation's Capitol, and political debates are all part of studying history at Saint Agnes.

**Spanish:** Spanish is a core subject taught twice a week in grades 1-6 and 3 times weekly in grades 7-8. Two native speaking instructors teach dialogue, grammar, culture, and projects. Eighth graders take a placement test for Spanish high school credit, with approximately one-third placing in second year high school Spanish.

**Computer:** Weekly technology classes enable all students to advance in computer literacy, research, and application skills. Computer and classroom teachers work on interdisciplinary projects utilizing technology.

**Fine Arts:** Students are exposed to a variety of techniques and history of the arts in art and music classes. The Christmas Prayer, Spring Musical, Lenten Living Stations, band concerts and fine arts displays showcase their talent.

**Health and PE:** Teamwork, wellness, and exercise are emphasized in weekly instruction. Extracurricular sports, Girls on the Run and the national Presidential Physical Fitness Awards challenge and reinforce instruction.

### **(Elementary Schools) Reading:**

At Saint Agnes Catholic School, reading and writing are taught in a model of balanced literacy. This model provides the framework for explicit instruction using a variety of methods. Students are taught meaningful decoding skills and strategies through focus lessons. Small guided reading groups are determined by teacher observation and assessment. Students in grades K-4 are assessed using the DRA2 tracking fluency and comprehension throughout the year. Through this assessment teachers identify struggling students. Guided by the resource teacher, these students receive additional instruction using the Great Leaps reading program and Lexia computer software. In the Upper School the DRA2 builds fluency and identifies struggling readers. The Lexia Strategies for Older Students software is available to reinforce skills.

Proficient readers construct meaning by following comprehension strategies, such as making connections, inferring, and visualizing as found in the Comprehension Tool Box (Heinemann). An instructional scope has been created to determine when appropriate reading strategies are taught. These modeled strategies teach students to construct meaning when reading and provide them with a variety of approaches to reading regardless of text or genre. Literacy centers, literature circles and exposure to different authors and genres enhance the balanced literacy model. An annual Literacy Night, drama presentations, poetry readings, literacy podcasts, Readers' Theatre and participation in the Diocesan Shakespeare Festival are highlights of this program.

Word study, grammar, and reading response notebooks are the basis of Writers Workshop. Using the 6 +1 Traits writing process, students produce a wide range of samples from poetry to research papers. Building on the model of balanced literacy, the Upper School students acquire skills such as finding one's voice as a writer and building a strong vocabulary. AlphaSmarts and Dragon Naturally Speaking software program enable all students to find success in writing.

### **Additional Curriculum Areas:**

Educating the whole child, Saint Agnes Catholic School emphasizes instruction in the use of technology as a medium for the student to embrace challenges of life-long learning. In addition to a 30-station computer lab, computers in each classroom enable teachers and students to access the full range of educational websites, including Discovery Education Streaming, Edhelper, and BrainPop. Saint Agnes teachers and students become skilled in technology that is integral to everyday life by combining traditional media with LCD projectors, video and audio podcasting,

digital streaming videos, Interwrite Schoolpads and handheld response clickers.

Lead by the technology coordinator, teachers use the computer lab for weekly instruction, across all grades, in keyboarding, Internet access, and online safety. Classroom teaching is supported in the lab with instruction in word processing and editing, spreadsheets, and databases. The computer instructors collaborate with teachers to integrate the academic content into the technology curriculum. Younger students use the Internet to report the total of birds observed for the Great Bird Count. Upper School students research topics for the History and Science Fairs. Students use PowerPoint and digital video cameras to create and record skits, interviews, and dramatizations of literature, such as the seventh grade video podcast of the novel *The Outsiders*. Classroom computers link students to websites provided by their textbooks for additional skill practice. Special needs students have access to DragonNaturally Speaking software and Lexia reading strategy software in the resource room and several classrooms.

The computer lab hosts the weekly ThinkQuest Club enabling students in grades 5-8 to participate in the worldwide learning communities provided by ThinkQuest.com. A web-based school newspaper, *The Lion's Roar*, and a digital photography club encourage students to develop personal interests and skills in these areas. Technology instruction at SAS puts the student on a path toward achieving personal excellence.

### **Instructional Methods:**

Instruction at Saint Agnes Catholic School is presented in all learning modalities enabling students with various learning styles and capabilities to achieve success within the classroom. The academic abilities of the students at SAS are broad.

Classroom teachers differentiate instruction by use of, but not limited to, flexible grouping, guided reading groups, discussion, cooperative learning centers, role playing, music, word study, audio-visual aids, graphing, logic puzzles, audio books, and hands-on math and science. Writing, electronic and oral presentations, drama, and artwork are other avenues provided for student self-expression. Teachers assign projects with choices for the mode of presentation to encourage students to analyze information and present their learning in the style most suited to their individual strengths and abilities. Choices include the making of scrapbooks and models, maps, artifacts, and written essays and reports. Inter-disciplinary projects such as the fifth grade Day of the Dead Celebration, the fourth grade Veteran's Day Assembly, and the eighth grade Lenten Living Stations, provide opportunities for the teachers and students to collaborate across subjects and grade levels.

Saint Agnes has a resource program directed by a full-time resource teacher. The program offers individual and group academic remediation, in-classroom assistance and accommodations, standardized testing accommodations, teacher and parent consultation, and information and referral services to both public school and private evaluators. Technology in the form of reading and writing software programs, such as Kidspiration and Inspiration, are provided to assist students. Some children may receive equipment such as pencil grips, colored overlays, extra textbooks to use at home, timers, chair (sensory balance) cushions, and AlphaSmarts. Teachers

use Interwrite Schoolpads, PowerPoint, LCD projectors, remote audience response systems, and direct instruction to present learning.