OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Villa Academy Preschool program may look like play from the outside, but it is a thoughtful, creative, research-based curriculum at work.

We recognize that each child is a unique gift from God. Our focus is placed on meeting the needs of the whole child by encouraging physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional, and artistic growth.

We invite you to review each lead teacher’s website for a class schedule, calendar, and the latest happenings. Find our teacher websites via our website, www.thevilla.org, under About and then Faculty and Staff.

We believe that:

• Children learn through play as well as actively participating in directed-learning experiences.
• Our small class size allows our faculty to get to know their students and thus provides a more personal approach to learning.
• Providing a creative, nurturing, and enriched environment will assist a child in growing to his/her full potential.
• Making mistakes is an integral part of learning and life.
• A collaborative partnership with families built through mutual respect and understanding builds a solid foundation for all children.

“THE WHY BEHIND THE WHAT”

Our curriculum is first and foremost child centered. Teachers use the interests and enthusiasm of their students to make the learning relevant and exciting. Our highly-experienced teachers and instructional assistants encourage children to learn by doing through experimentation, exploration, and discovery while building self-regulation skills and a positive self-image. Our faculty invites creativity by providing opportunities for unevaluated discovery and activity while promoting tolerance and respect for each other’s creation.

We teach all curricular areas within a problem-solving context. Children are encouraged to interact as they work and enjoy explaining their thinking to classmates and their teachers. In every curricular area, we offer children a chance to participate in a direct, hands-on way. The preschool curriculum is coordinated with our Lower School curricula (K-5) to allow for a smooth transition into Kindergarten.
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW BY CLASS

P3 – PRESCHOOL CLASS FOR THREE-YEAR-OLDS

The first year of school is so exciting for children as well as parents. Seeds of learning in all areas of life will be planted this year. Children will grow in faith and understanding of God, themselves, others, and the world around them. They will begin to develop into young students, and become familiar with abstract concepts and symbols. Their growth this year will be spectacular!

The fundamental goal for the P3 year is for each person in the classroom to know that he/she is special, unique, and valued. Children learn to appreciate one another’s gifts and talents as they begin to build a learning community. Lastly, students learn to be responsible community members, capable of taking care of themselves, others, and even the P3 world around them.

Throughout the school year, children learn through exploration and discovery. The curriculum is centered on active-participatory learning. Students experience literacy, math, writing, science, social studies, and religion by drawing, gluing, painting, singing, acting, dancing, playing, talking, listening, experimenting, digging, asking questions, solving problems, and building. Young learners begin to draw connections and expand thinking to include new ideas and concepts. P3 is a year of tremendous growth and change as students enter the world of school!

P3 students use various parts of the Villa campus including the gym, library, chapels, playgrounds, gardens, trails, orchards, grotto, and more.

P3 children play outside daily, rain or shine. They run, play, plant, garden, dig in the dirt, play in the water, ride trikes and bikes, have conflicts, solve problems, imagine, create, and have fun outside!
PRESCHOOL CLASS FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

In order for children to reach their full potential, they need to be exposed to the joy of learning, a fulfillment of their curiosity, and a warm, structured atmosphere where they feel listened to and nurtured. Repetition is often the basis of successful learning and being able to commit new information to long-term memory. The P4 schedule allows children enough time to explore materials several times. Children build on their success and feel confident to take risks and try new activities that often have added complexities and demands.

P4 includes the following areas of study, often integrated, over the course of a week:

Art is about exploration, discovery, and process. The process is more important than the product. We always encourage creativity and provide materials to help the kids develop their creations. Students are invited to participate in art activities.

Math in preschool is counting, measuring, comparing, contrasting, estimating, working on patterns, sorting, and experimenting with geometric shapes, as well as comparing and ordering numbers. Students learn that numbers represent quantities. Preschoolers even begin to experience Algebra! We use the Everyday Math Pre-K curriculum in addition to many teacher-created lessons and activities to encourage a love of mathematics.

Science in preschool is centered around using all of our senses to help us learn and explore our lovely campus, observe and predict changes such as the weather, as well as the life cycles of plants, butterflies, and ladybugs. The seasonal changes all around our preschool garden provide continual, hands-on lessons. Students also design and carry out their own experiments.

The Outdoor Classroom is located in our preschool playground. Students are able to truly experience God’s creation in this space. Every child participates in planting, cultivating, and sustaining the preschool garden throughout the year. Students are able to use their senses again here to explore and learn about nature in this special space.

Religion in preschool utilizes the curriculum called I am Special. Students learn about God through the main character Kelly, her family, and friends. At the end of each story, we answer thoughtful questions that help us to make connections between Kelly’s experiences and our own. We learn new prayers each month which we sing during lunch and snack each day. Students celebrate the various seasons and rituals of the liturgical year through child-centered experiences and lessons. Lastly, students reach out to other children in need by supporting First Place School, Children’s Hospital, and a young child in Central America as the Preschool Community Service focus. These young children in need are also remembered in student prayers and intentions each day.
Social/Emotional Skills in preschool are learned through play. Children in P4 also learn through a curriculum called Second Step, taught and practiced daily. This program teaches skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and friendship utilizing puppets, songs, games, role-playing, books, and photo cards. It also includes excellent online parent tools (e.g., letters, additional background information, and replicas of the cards that we use each week in class) so that skills learned at school can be strengthened at home.

P.E. involves a wide variety of gross motor games and skills. This class takes place in our school gym where students move, create, and pretend.

Music in preschool happens every day. Students sing songs to welcome each other and say goodbye, songs to help in learning (such as letter songs and handwriting songs), movement songs, and silly songs that are just for fun!

Social Studies in preschool is exploring our immediate communities, families, and cultures. Students begin to learn about their community, city, country, and even the world. We explore current and historical events through books, stories, art, and drama.

Handwriting without Tears is a curriculum that provides useful and fun tools to help students build a strong foundation for writing. Emphasis is on developing strong fine motor skills, in addition to learning to form and then write capital letters. Teachers and students also utilize an online tool with the Preschool Smartboard which assists students in learning letter formation.

Literacy in P4 begins with stories every day! Children listen, repeat, act out, discuss, analyze, and retell. Through these experiences, students learn many of the conventions of both oral and written language, as well as literal and inferential comprehension skills. They learn left to right, top and bottom, directionality, using picture clues, logical predictions, and the sounds of language. Teachers also provide a myriad of active alphabet and oral language activities throughout the year. This establishes the foundation for early literacy skills and allows the children to experiment with phonemic awareness.

In addition to literacy activities in the classroom, students visit the library once a week for stories and book check-out.

P4 students are partnered with an older buddy class. Together, they work on projects both inside and outside of the classroom, explore games and toys (including recess fun), and experience the joy of books. These buddy relationships build friendships, compassion, and social skills across different grade levels.

In addition to the preschool classrooms, P4 students use various parts of the Villa campus including the gym, library, chapels, playgrounds, gardens, trails, orchards, grotto, and more.

Children also play outside daily, rain or shine. They run, play, plant, garden, dig in the dirt, play in the water, ride trikes and bikes, have conflicts, solve problems, imagine, create, and have fun outside!
P5 – PRESCHOOL CLASS FOR FIVE-YEAR-OLDS

Children learn through different modalities. Your child learns through music, math, his/her body, emotions, language, art, interpersonally, or through nature. The P5 faculty is adept at differentiating instruction based on each child’s needs. We teach to the whole child in developmentally-appropriate ways. Students are nurtured to be the best self they can be. The P5 schedule allows the children enough time to explore materials again and again. It is through this repetition that children find success, and in turn develop the confidence to take risks and try new activities with more complexity and demands. We plan all activities to create opportunities for children to develop responsibility. Competence with these self-help skills builds confidence and resilience!

P5 includes the following areas of study, often integrated, over the course of a week:

Art is more about process than product. Children are constantly learning by doing or exploring. The creativity of each child is always encouraged.

Math in preschool is counting, measuring, comparing, contrasting, estimating, working on patterns, sorting, and experimenting with geometric shapes, as well as comparing and ordering numbers as they learn that numbers represent quantities. Preschoolers even begin to experience Algebra! We utilize the Everyday Math Pre-K curriculum, in addition to many teacher-created lessons and activities.

Science in preschool is centered around using all of our senses to help us learn and explore our lovely campus, observe and predict changes such as the weather, as well as the life cycles of plants, butterflies and ladybugs. The seasonal changes all around our preschool garden provide continual, hands-on lessons. P5 students also cook as part of their science experiences.

The Outdoor Classroom is located in our preschool playground. Students are able to truly experience God’s creation in this space. Every child participates in planting, cultivating, and sustaining the preschool garden throughout the year. Students are able to use their senses again here to explore and learn about nature in this special space.

In Religion, through the stories in the I Am Special curriculum, we follow the lives of a boy and his family. Students have very meaningful class discussions during these lessons where everyone is encouraged to share his/her own thoughts and opinions. We also learn how to thank God through prayer. Students celebrate the various seasons and rituals of the liturgical year through child-centered experiences and lessons. Lastly, students reach out to other children in need by supporting First Place School, Children’s Hospital, and a young child in Central America as the Preschool Community Service focus. These young children in need are also remembered in student prayers and intentions each day.
Social/Emotional Skills in preschool are learned through play. Children in P5 also learn through a curriculum called Second Step, taught and practiced daily. This program teaches skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and friendships utilizing puppets, songs, games, role-playing, books, and photo cards. Parents will hear about “Impulsive Puppy”, “Slow Down Snail”, and “Be Calm Bunny” as well as our new Second Step friends, Daniel and Rose. The program also includes excellent online parent tools (e.g., letters, additional background information, and replicas of the cards that we use each week in class) so that skills learned at school can be strengthened at home. The Second Step curriculum is also used in our Lower School.

P.E. involves a wide variety of gross motor games and skills. This class takes place in the main gym at Villa where students move, create, and pretend.

Music in preschool happens every day. Students sing songs to welcome each other and say goodbye, songs to help in learning (such as letter songs and handwriting songs), movement songs, and silly songs just for fun!

In Social Studies, students delve into the concepts of community, family life, and a study of people around the world, including various cultural celebrations.

P5 continues the use of the Handwriting without Tears curriculum. This developmentally-appropriate program provides useful and engaging activities, songs, stories, and tools to help students continue to build a strong foundation for writing. In P5, the emphasis is on developing strong fine motor skills, in addition to learning to identify, form, and then write capital letters in isolation and then words.

Literacy in P5 begins with stories every day! Children listen, repeat, act out, discuss, analyze, and retell. Through these experiences, students learn many of the conventions of both oral and written language, as well as literal and inferential comprehension skills. They learn left to right, top and bottom, directionality, using picture clues, logical predictions, and the sounds of language. Teachers also provide a myriad of active alphabet and oral language activities throughout the year, based on the “letter of the week”. These lessons and experiences establish the foundation for early literacy and allow the children to experiment with phonemic awareness.

In addition, students visit the library once a week for stories and book check-out.

P5 students are partnered with a buddy class. Together, they work on projects both inside and outside of the classroom, explore games and toys (including recess fun), and experience the joy of books. These relationships build friendships, compassion, and social skills across grade levels.

In addition to the preschool classrooms, P5 students use various parts of the Villa campus including the gym, library, chapels, playgrounds, gardens, trails, orchards, grotto, and more.

Children also play outside daily, rain or shine. They run, play, plant, garden, dig in the dirt, play in the water, ride trikes and bikes, have conflicts, solve problems, imagine, create, and have fun outside!