OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Villa Academy Preschool program may look like play from the outside, but a thoughtful, creative, research-based curriculum is at work. Our focus is placed on meeting the needs of the whole child by encouraging physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional, and artistic growth.

We believe that:

- Children learn through play as well as actively participating in directed-learning experiences.
- Our small class sizes allow faculty to truly know their students, providing a more personal approach to learning.
- Incorporating a creative, nurturing, and enriched environment assists a child in growing to his/her full potential.
- Making mistakes is an integral part of learning and life.
- A collaborative partnership with families 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. Teachers invite creativity by providing opportunities for unevaluated discovery and activity. 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 Fives curriculum is coordinated with our Lower School curricula (K-5) to allow for a smooth transition into Kindergarten.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING & STEAM

Project based learning is an interdisciplinary style of teaching that seeks to blend academic and intellectual learning to create authentic learning. Science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) are not taught in silos, but blended together as students work on projects through a play-based approach. As they question, design, tinker, and build—often with the outdoors as a focal point—deep learning occurs as they make connections across subject areas.
VILLA’S FIVES PROGRAM

Children learn through different modalities: music, math, language, and art. And also through emotions, their physical selves, interpersonally, and through nature. Our faculty is adept at differentiating instruction based on each child’s needs and we teach to the whole child in developmentally-appropriate ways. We believe that strong executive function and social/emotional skills provide the strongest foundation as they progress to kindergarten and beyond. The daily schedule allows children enough time to explore materials repeatedly. It is through this repetition that children find success, and in turn develop the confidence and resilience to take risks and try increasingly complex activities. We plan all activities to create opportunities for children to develop responsibility.

Our Fives Program includes the following areas of study, often integrated, over the course of a week:

Art is more about process than product and is woven into all kinds of projects and lessons. Children are constantly learning by doing or exploring and we always encourage the creativity of each child.

Math is about counting, measuring, comparing, contrasting, estimating, working on patterns, sorting, and experimenting with geometric shapes, as well as comparing and ordering numbers to 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 is centered around using all of the senses to help children learn and explore our lovely campus, observe and predict changes such as the weather, and the life cycles of plants, butterflies and ladybugs. Every child participates in planting, cultivating, and sustaining the preschool garden situated within their own dedicated playground. Throughout the year seasonal changes in the garden provide continual, hands-on lessons.

Social/Emotional Skills in preschool are learned through daily play using the Second Step curriculum. Skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and friendships are practiced daily utilizing puppets, songs, games, role-playing, books, and photo cards. Parents will hear about “Impulsive Puppy”, “Slow Down Snail”, and “Be Calm Bunny”. The program also includes excellent online parent tools so that skills learned at school can be strengthened at home. Students' spiritual awareness grows as they follow the lives of a boy and his family through the I Am Special curriculum. They have meaningful class discussions and everyone is encouraged to share. Students learn the importance of community service as they reach out to children in need by supporting First Place School, Children’s Hospital, and a young child in Central America.

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

Music 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.

Handwriting without Tears is a developmentally appropriate program providing useful and engaging activities, songs, stories, and technology tools to help students continue to build a strong foundation for writing. The emphasis is on directionality, grip, and developing strong fine motor skills in learning how to identify, form, and write capital letters in isolation and then as words.

Literacy begins with stories each 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. Students also visit the library once a week for stories and book check-out.

Preschool Buddies Program partners preschool students with an older class. Together, buddies work on projects both inside and outside of the classroom, explore games and toys, and experience the joy of books. These relationships build friendships, compassion, and social skills across grade levels.

The Villa Campus takes children beyond the classroom where they explore the playgrounds, gardens, woodland trails, waterfront and orchards our 31 acres has to offer, and make regular visits to the gym, library, and chapel. Students 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!

A Typical Day’s Schedule

8:20-8:45  Table Time: Letter of the Week, Literacy, Math, Alphabet Under Construction, and Feelings Page
8:45-8:50  Transition Time: Clean Up
8:50-9:05  Circle Time, Calendar Count the Days
9:05-9:15  Transition Time: Putting On Coats/Boots & Bathroom
9:15-9:45  Morning Running Recess (*Gym on Tuesdays)
9:45-9:55  Transition Time: Taking Off Coats/Boots & Bathroom
10:00-10:15  Snack Time
10:15-10:30  Quiet Reading & Story Time
10:30-11:00  STEAM Projects — Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math Projects rotate throughout the week.
11:00-11:30  Share, Choice, Religion (*Library on Friday)
11:30-11:40  Transition Time: Bathroom & Clean Up
11:40-12:05  Lunch
12:05-12:10  Transition Time: Coats/Boots
12:10-12:40  Afternoon Recess
12:40-12:50  Transition Time: Coats/Boots & Bathroom
12:50-1:20  Choice Time
1:20-1:30  Goodbye for Today: Review & Reflect
1:30  Extended Day Program or Home