

SPRING GARDEN ACADEMY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM (K-8)

CURRICULUM STATEMENT

Overview

Spring Garden Academy serves families who work or live in the Spring Garden neighborhood. Our families represent the economic and social diversity of our community and parent church, Highway Tabernacle. While enrollment is open to all families, the school is committed to a Christian world view in practice and its curriculum and asks that parents support us in our direction.

Through our After School curriculum, Spring Garden Academy endeavors to enrich the child's experience in the arts, Biblical literacy, and exploratory learning. We also strive to teach character traits and equip children with the developmental skills necessary to build the total child – physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually – in order to become a productive and contributing member of society. We ask parents to partner with us in this process.

Children as Learners

We believe that children in after school should be involved in enrichment activities that complement academic learning. For this reason, children must be allowed to explore through play and participate and lead activity clubs that are built on their interests. Our schedule reflects a balance of exploratory learning, small group activity clubs, and a few large group chapel sessions. Teachers also ask for the children's input in the selection of themes and activities and build off of their interests in planning program activities. We believe children should be encouraged to give attention to spiritual questions and participate in and lead Bible and worship activities as they mature.

Goals for individual children are defined throughout the year. The teachers begin by observing and assessing each child's development and then include targets and activities for the individuals in their lesson plans. This happens on a regular basis and is reported to parents at least three times a year.

Curriculum Resources and Content

We use a variety of enrichment resources and curricula to plan our activity clubs and chapel programs. We use *Conscious Discipline* as a framework for classroom management and the teaching of social-emotional skills. Curriculum is chosen to meet one area of the learning standards for a club. For example, a praise dance club curriculum will focus on performance and dance learning standards appropriate to the children's grades). When planning clubs and chapel, the teachers ensure that all activities are aligned to learning standards.

When children engage in free play activities, the teachers ask open-ended questions and observe the children to help plan additional activities and plan clubs that will meet the needs and interests of the children.

Teaching Strategies

Teachers help the children learn by using discovery centers that are designed to allow children to learn while they play and explore. Each classroom (primary and upper elementary) has at least eight centers with enough materials for all children to actively engage in their environment. These materials are selected to meet quality standards for school age programs. Materials and some defined activities are added to centers on a regular basis. While children explore, the teachers guide the learning through questions and extension activities. We invite parents to become part of this process by volunteering in our classrooms during exploratory play time.

Teachers also prepare some small group instruction for the activity clubs. However, the clubs are structured to encourage interaction and activity. Children are also encouraged to take leadership positions or roles in the clubs as they are able. Large group activities primarily happen during chapel. In this setting, teachers may take a more direct approach but still encourage interaction, especially through music, and student leadership.

Finally, learning takes place during classroom routines as children learn self-regulatory and social skills. This is an important part of our program that derives from the *Conscious Discipline* program.

Learning Standards

We have aligned our curriculum to Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade as well as Academic Standards for upper grades. To ensure that the various curricula are properly used to reflect learning from across the standards, teachers are required to indicate the learning standards during the lesson plan process.

Teachers' Role

The teacher is the primary person responsible for delivering curriculum that meets the needs of the individual children in her classroom. To ensure that each teacher is properly supported in this critical role, Spring Garden Academy is committed to providing ongoing professional development through college course work, workshops, teacher meetings, and ongoing coaching and mentoring. We strongly encourage professional development that is specific to school age programs.

Parents' Role

We encourage parents to become part of the after school, not just as volunteers, but as active participants in their children's learning. We invite parents to work alongside teachers to learn new skills and contribute their own life learning. We ask for feedback on the learning that takes place at home and in the classroom. The after school children perform during the year, and we love to have parents there as support and participants!

We also document the child and group learning so that parents have evidence of what happens in the classroom when they cannot be present. Teachers are available for conferences at least three times during the year.

Assessment

Teachers assess and document children's learning by observing them during exploratory play and small group activities using a variety of methods. Teachers use the assessment information to plan learning activities and to share information with parents informally and at formal conferences twice a year. We currently use the Child Service Report to give parents specific information. . We are also moving toward the implementation of a more formal portfolio process for each child. This portfolio will move with the child as he or she progresses through our programs and, in time, will be electronically stored.

Spring Garden Academy also assesses the curriculum and teacher implementation of the curriculum on a regular basis to ensure the best quality for our children.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Before school care consists of breakfast and relaxing activities. After School consists of four components:

- Snack
- Bible Clubs or Chapel
- Activity Clubs or Exploratory Free Time
- Homework

Each day's schedule is posted in the classroom. We will also send home a monthly newsletter with some schedule information.

HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE

Homework is done the last hour of each day (5-6 pm), Monday-Thursday. If your child needs more time, please discuss this with the director. We typically do not allow children additional time unless they are older and we can accommodate this with our staff. While we assist with homework, that is not our sole focus nor our primary responsibility.