

**Spring Garden Academy Elementary School
CURRICULUM STATEMENT
September 2015- June 2016**



Overview

Spring Garden Academy serves families who work or live in Philadelphia, with a particular emphasis on the Spring Garden and Nicetown/Tioga neighborhoods. Our families represent the economic and social diversity of our community and parent churches, Highway Tabernacle and Resurrection Life. While enrollment is open to all families, the school is committed to a Christian world view in practice and its curriculum. We ask parents to support us in our direction.

Through our curriculum, Spring Garden Academy endeavors 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 best learn by guided exploration with some direct instruction. Therefore, our schedule reflects a balance of exploratory learning, small group work, and some large group sessions. We also believe that children use multiple intelligences (based on the work of Howard Gardner) as they learn and that each child has preferences in learning styles. Therefore, we teach children to become aware of their own intelligence and learning style preferences so they become empowered learners. We also teach basics about their brain development in the learning process. In response, teachers design lessons and learning activities that address the learning styles of the children in the room,

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.

Curriculum Resources and Content

The early elementary program uses *Words Their Way* to teach reading, including phonological and phonemic awareness. For math, we use *Touch Math* and *Math Their Way*. Social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and Bible are built around thematic units that address the learning standards as is art and music instruction. We use *Conscious Discipline* as a framework for classroom management and the teaching of social-emotional skills. Other curriculum resources are used to ensure that Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards have been met for each grade level.

Teaching Strategies

Spring Garden Academy supports a Differentiated Instruction model for classroom learning. Specific articles and information about Differentiated Instruction are distributed at Parent Orientation and throughout the year. We encourage parents to speak to the director and teachers about our approach.

Differentiated instruction involves variations of small group, individual exploration, and large group instruction. Instructional strategies vary and are dependent upon the learning goals for the child and class.

At times, teachers help the children learn through discovery centers, defined in the curriculum and through best practices in the field. Each classroom has at least eight centers with enough materials for all children to actively engage in their environment. Materials and some defined activities are added to centers on a regular basis. Teachers also prepare small group instruction, particularly around language, math, and Bible. Large group activities primarily happen during a short morning circle time, weekly music, chapel, and in unit introductions.

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 exploration.

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, Second, and Third Grades. To ensure that the curriculum is properly used to reflect learning from across the standards, teachers are required to indicate the learning standards during the lesson plan process.

Teacher's 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, coaching, and mentoring.

Parent's Role

We encourage parents to become part of the classroom, 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 to their own life learning. We ask for feedback on the learning that takes place at home and in the classroom.

We also document the child and group learning so that parents have evidence of what happens in the classroom when they cannot be present.

We ask each parent to take time to review a child's homework folder and read with or his or her child each day. Family projects also support the child's learning.

Assessment

Teachers assess and document children's learning by observing them during exploratory play and small group activities using a variety of methods (photographs, running records, work samples, rubrics, and checklists). Teachers use the assessment information to plan learning activities and to share information with parents informally and at formal conferences. Report cards are issued in January and June and are focused around the learning standards.

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. The child will present his or her portfolio work at student-led conferences.

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