

Early Childhood Education at Grace Lutheran School



Programs for children 3, 4 and 5 years old

Experienced teachers

Modern classrooms

Stimulating environment

Partnership with the elementary school

Quality Christian education

Grace offers developmentally appropriate programs for early learners in which children develop self awareness and self confidence as they grow in their understanding and appreciation of God's creation and the people in it. We teach children to know the love of Jesus and to be glad they're alive!

In early childhood classrooms at Grace School children learn *how* to learn, not *what* to learn. Learning and play are integrated, and subject boundaries are not distinct. Activities are organized around broad, unified themes, encompassing many subjects.

At the heart of the early childhood curriculum lies social play, which is the business of childhood. Learning through play involves creative and scientific thinking. It calls on children to use all of their capacities. It asks them to pay attention, use their imaginations and understand and deal with changing reality. Organizing ideas, talking things over, solving problems, trying new ways, setting tasks for themselves, repeating what works and challenging themselves--this is how we become lifelong learners!

Class	Time	Days
Preschool (age 3 by Sept. 1)	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	M-W-F, T-Th, or M-F
Junior Kindergarten (age 4 by Sept. 1)	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	M-F
Senior Kindergarten (age 5 by Sept. 1)	8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	M-F
JK and SK afternoon program	11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	1 to 5 days per week

Age three: We grow and grow!

Coming to school is a big step in development for three-to-four-year-olds. For many children it is the first opportunity to spend significant time in a structured setting outside the home or the presence of a known caregiver.

Grace's preschool program offers children a warm, welcoming environment as they transition into life at school. It's a joy to see children's confidence grow as the year progresses.

Our goal in preschool is to build a community of learners who explore many aspects of life using a variety of learning styles. Children build, touch, count, sing, and converse. There are times for free-choice play, small group activities, whole group listening, eating together, and gross motor play.

Cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual development are all part of the program at Grace. Children refine their abilities in academic areas such as counting, writing, and recognizing letters. They also gain increased motor control and become more independent in self-care activities such as getting dressed and helping with clean-up.

Preschool at Grace also focuses on developing solid social skills and a foundation for future spiritual growth. Children learn how to be a friend and how to make friends. Of even greater importance is learning that God loves and cares for each of us and discovering ways to praise and worship God.

Ramona Koetke, Preschool Teacher

Age four: Junior Kindergarten friends

In junior kindergarten we work on things like letters, science, art, music, counting, patterns, storytelling, and writing, and we also learn how to be good friends, how to solve conflicts, and how to practice good manners.

We pray together, and we learn about Jesus and about God's unconditional love. There is a lot of singing, and snack and recess, too.

The fifth year of life is an important period of growth—physically, academically, socially and spiritually, so in Grace's junior kindergarten we provide a safe and comfortable Christian environment that enriches children's experience of



life, nurtures them, and stimulates minds and spirits. The JK learning environment is full of opportunities for exploration, self-expression, and interaction with peers and teachers. There are places to play, create and solve problems, and time to just think about things. We show children that the world has meaning, and we strive to instill courage and confidence along with the skills needed to surmount the world's challenges.

The children's and teacher's interests are the inspiration for classroom activities. Each child has the freedom to discover his or her own voice, to make choices, and to be independent, with the teacher there to

guide students in the direction they need to grow. Most importantly, JK students discover their place in creation as one of God's beloved children.

Kathy Brooks, Julia Nelson,
JK teachers

Age five: Learning "everything"

Since kindergartners are curious by nature, energetic beyond belief, and eager to learn everything, the senior kindergarten classroom allows for hands-on discovery, free-choice interaction with peers and with the environment, and guided instruction from teachers.

The classroom atmosphere encourages movement, investigation, observation, and interaction between students and teacher. The free-choice activities that begin each day allow the teacher to spend individual time with each child during the week. This one-on-one time allows the teacher to understand the academic and social needs of each child and to adapt the kindergarten program to accommodate children's specific needs and strengths.

Through social interactions, children acquire vital problem-solving skills as they make choices, plan activities, and experience cause-and-effect happenings. Most importantly, senior kindergartners know and learn that they are uniquely created children of God and that Jesus' love for them is constant and never-ending. These are the very skills necessary for life, and we practice them every day in senior kindergarten!

Ellie Schnack, SK teacher