



Lower School

# CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

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# LOWER SCHOOL CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

## Kindergarten

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Kindergarten at SFC offers an environment in which children are encouraged to explore and discover the world God has created. The emotional growth of the child, including interactions with peers and adults, is central to the curriculum design. With class sizes of 20 students, the program fosters the recognition of the contributions of each child, the varied cognitive development level of each student and their spiritual growth as a child of God.

The curriculum includes Bible, science (labs), social studies, art, music, math, pre-reading and reading skill development, writing, Spanish, and physical education. All segments of the program emphasize teaching the whole child, learning through hands-on exploration, and developing independence within the classroom and school-wide community. SFC encourages a strong partnership between home and school and invites parent participation in each child's education.

## First Grade

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First Grade is filled with opportunities for students to appreciate and develop the many different talents God has given us. Students transition into formal instructions in music as they begin their Yamaha keyboarding program as part of their regular music class. The first grade faculty fosters within students an appreciation of literature and an interest in reading and writing for enjoyment. Working with two classes of approximately 20 students each, SFC's experienced team of first grade teachers and literacy specialists guides every child through the reading process at a pace that is both developmentally and academically appropriate. The school's mathematics program focuses on understanding the "how" "when" and "why" of mathematical applications as new concepts are presented. Students also learn about the community outside of SFC through various service projects and local field trips. The teachers use this focus on community to instill in students an understanding of who God is and live out His teachings by loving our neighbors and sharing with them the Good News.

## Second Grade

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Second Grade students grow in their independence and take responsibility for their learning through inquiry, discussion, and reflection. Students build on the literacy skills acquired in first grade in order to become fluent readers with strong comprehension skills. Students use graphic organizers to classify information and connect ideas as they develop three-part stories. Finished products at this grade level reflect an introductory emphasis on writing mechanics and conventions. Various teaching strategies are used in mathematics in order to help students move from the concrete and symbolic levels to abstract thoughts. Second grade students regularly take part in discussions and activities that focus on respect, making wise choices, relationships with others, and the importance of following God's commands. The second grade teachers foster an appreciation of traditions, history and customs that will help students understand similar cross-cultural experiences that unite all of God's people.

## Third Grade

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Third Grade is the entrance year to our intermediate grades at SFC. Our program is grounded in a firm understanding of the academic, social, and spiritual developmental needs of eight- to nine-year-old children. Students continue to work on comprehension skills through our reading program, which includes novel studies. Our skillful teachers emphasize critical thinking through in-depth literary character analysis, group discussions that focus on problem solving, and open-ended questions that require a deep understanding of text. Students develop both narrative and expository writing skills through a variety of formal and informal writing assignments, as well as oral presentations. All subjects are taught explicitly through a biblical lens and opportunities to share out their personal faith are provided in the classroom. Third graders also have opportunities to run for student council as classroom representatives and vote for school leadership positions.

## Fourth Grade

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Fourth Grade broadens students' view of the world through a year-long exploration of California history. The school year culminates with a trip to Sacramento, our state capitol. During fourth grade, students improve oral and written expression through activities that focus on vocabulary development as well as sharpen their grammar skills. They expand previously learned writing skills to include the development of expository reports. In math, students solve multi-stepped story problems as well as apply computation skills for accuracy. Students are encouraged to explore, discuss, question, and verify mathematical concepts. Emphasis is placed on problem solving, the development of numerical reasoning and communication, and practical application of skills. Conflict resolution skills are specifically taught through the Young Peacemakers program in the fourth grade.

## Fifth Grade

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Fifth Grade marks the end of the Lower School experience for our students. Our dedicated teachers have designed a program that addresses academic, social and spiritual needs of students in this age group. In addition to independent reading, students explore six novels in class. Literature selection reflects an emphasis on academic and social development themes that provide avenues for teachers to help students wrestle with heavy themes of war and freedom. The math program extends students' understanding of numeration, operations, applications, and problem solving in preparation for middle school. In social studies, our fifth grade students study United States history through 1865. Colonialism, slavery, westward movement, and the Civil War are examined from various perspectives. The development of positive study habits and important study skills is firmly established in the academic program. Goals in this area include student self-management skills, time management skills, and strategies for making choices. Students at this age are increasingly aware of the world around them and our experienced fifth grade teachers encourage our students to begin to define not only who they are but whose they are.