



United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

The curriculum at St. Stephen the Martyr School evolves from and aligns with the Omaha Archdiocese, Nebraska State, and National standards and skills. The grade level and content standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do. These standards and skills tell us what needs to be learned, but they do not prescribe what instructional materials are used nor does it prescribe instructional methods.

**Religion and Faith Formation** is the core reason for our existence and the foundation for everything we do. We are committed to providing a curriculum that provides every child an opportunity to grow in their faith and love for Christ. Throughout their time at St. Stephen the Martyr, students will learn and understand the following as these topics relate to the Catholic Church:

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Seven Sacraments
- Morality and how it relates to Catholic teachings
- Sacramental Preparation
- The life and works of Christ
- Catholic prayers
- Service to others
- Learning about saints
- Theological virtues
- Bible studies
- Theology of the Body
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Sanctity of Life
- Vocations

**The reading/ELA curriculum** at St. Stephen the Martyr is not designed from just one model. As we analyze data, review the standards and skills, curriculum is always subject to change. As an overview the ELA curriculum includes the following:

- **Foundational skills:** Phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency
- **Comprehension:** Understanding and analyzing different types of texts both literary and informational
- **Text types:** Exposure to various genres, including narrative, informational, and literary texts
- **Close Reading**
- **Elements of Writing:** Narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and more.
- **Writing Processes:** (Drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).
- **Grammar and Mechanics:** Understanding and applying grammar, punctuation, and spelling rules. Understanding and applying grammatical rules. Parts of speech: recognizing and using nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.
- **Speaking and listening:** Oral Communication: Developing effective speaking skills, including presentations and discussions. Active Listening: Understanding and responding to others.
- **Language Development:** Vocabulary Development: Expanding vocabulary through various activities and texts. Grammar and Usage.
- **Media Literacy:** Analyzing Visual and Digital Texts. Understanding how different mediums communicate messages. Evaluating Information: Identifying credible sources and recognizing bias.

**The Mathematics curriculum** at St. Stephen the Martyr aims to develop a strong understanding of mathematical concepts and skills, rather than just rote memorization. The curriculum also targets individual academic strengths and weaknesses by providing opportunities for students to advance as well as receiving instruction in areas where benchmarks have not been met. The math curriculum includes the following:

- **Number Sense:** Understanding place value, counting, comparing, and ordering numbers.
- **Operations:** Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, including problem-solving strategies.
- **Geometry:** Shapes, spatial reasoning, and measurement.
- **Measurement:** Understanding units of measure (length, weight, volume, etc.) and using them to solve problems.
- **Data Analysis:** Collecting, organizing, and interpreting data.
- **Problem Solving:** drawing diagrams, breaking problems into smaller parts, organizing information, and working backwards.

**The Science curriculum** involves hands-on activities, inquiry-based learning, and coverage of life, physical, and Earth sciences, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Core science areas include the following areas of study:

**Scientific Method:**

Introduce the steps of the scientific method - observing, hypothesizing, experimenting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions.

**Life Science:**

- Plants and animals (including their needs, habitats, and life cycles)
- Human body systems
- Ecology and ecosystems

**Physical Science:**

- Matter (states of matter, properties, and changes)
- Motion and forces (including gravity, friction, and simple machines)
- Energy (light, heat, and sound)

**Earth and Space Science:**

- Earth's systems (weather, water cycle, rocks and soil)
- The solar system and beyond

**The Social Studies curriculum** introduces students to history, geography, civics, economics, and cultures, fostering critical thinking, and preparing them for citizenship and civic engagement. Key components of the curriculum include the following:

- **Early Elementary (K-2):** Focus on personal and family history, local community, and basic concepts of time and chronology.
- **Upper Elementary (3-5):** Introduce broader historical periods, key figures, and events, including the study of different cultures and civilizations.
- **Middle School (6-8):** Delve deeper into specific historical periods, events, and movements, both domestic and global, with an emphasis on critical analysis and source interpretation.

**Geography:**

- **Early Elementary:** Introduce basic geographic concepts like landforms, continents, and oceans, maps, and the location of places.
- **Upper Elementary:** Explore regions, countries, and cultures, focusing on the relationships between people and their environment.
- **Middle School:** Analyze global patterns, environmental issues, and the impact of geography on human societies.

**Civics and Government:**

- **Early Elementary:** Introduce concepts of citizenship, rights, and responsibilities, and the importance of rules and laws.
- **Upper Elementary:** Explore different forms of government, the role of citizens in a democracy, and the structure of local and national government.
- **Middle School:** Analyze the principles of democracy, the U.S. Constitution, and the branches of government, and engage in civic participation.

**Economics:**

- **Early Elementary:** Introduce basic economic concepts like scarcity, production, and consumption, and the role of money.
- **Upper Elementary:** Explore different economic systems, markets, and the role of individuals and businesses in the economy.
- **Middle School:** Analyze economic issues, global trade, and the impact of economic policies.

**Cultures and Societies:**

- Throughout K-8, students should learn about diverse cultures, societies, and perspectives, fostering understanding and appreciation for different ways of life.

**The Fine Arts curriculum** gives our students the opportunity to experience instruction in visual arts, music, and theater. The curriculum aims to foster creativity, critical thinking, and cultural understanding, components of the curriculum include:

- **Visual Arts**

**Drawing:**

Students learn basic drawing techniques, explore different media (pencils, crayons, markers, etc.), and develop their ability to represent objects and ideas.

**Painting:**

Students experiment with various painting techniques and materials (tempera, watercolors, acrylics), learning about color theory and composition.

**Sculpture:**

Students create three-dimensional art using clay, papier-mâché, or other materials, developing their spatial reasoning and fine motor skills.

**Printmaking:**

Students explore printmaking techniques like linoleum cuts, stencils, and block printing, learning about repetitive patterns and image creation.

**Art History and Appreciation:**

Students are introduced to different art movements, artists, and cultures, learning to analyze and appreciate art.

- **Music**

- Rhythm and Melody:**

- Students learn about basic musical concepts like rhythm, pitch, and tempo, through singing, playing instruments, and listening to music.

- Instrumental Skills:** Students may be introduced to instruments like recorders, keyboard, or ukulele, developing their musical skills and creativity

- Music History and Appreciation:** Students learn about different musical genres, composers, and culture.

- **Theatre/Dance**

**Acting:** Students participate in musical programs that include singing, dancing, and speaking roles. Students also have the opportunity to be part of the Spring Musical that is financed through a grant in conjunction with the Rose Theater.

**Movement and Dance:** Students learn basic dance movements and choreograph simple dances, expressing themselves through movement.

**The Library/Media/Technology curriculum** focuses on equipping students with the skills to effectively find, evaluate, and use information from various sources, including print, digital, and multimedia formats, while also fostering digital literacy and responsible technology use.

### **Core Skills and Concepts**

**Information Literacy:** Students learn to identify information needs, locate relevant resources, critically evaluate information sources, and synthesize information effectively.

**Media Literacy:** Students develop an understanding of different media formats (print, digital, audio, video) and how they are used to communicate information and influence audiences.

**Technology Integration:** Students learn to use technology tools and resources to enhance their learning, create content, and collaborate with others. STEM activities are included in the curriculum as well as understanding and using presentation skills.

**Digital Citizenship:** Students learn about ethical and responsible online behavior, including copyright, privacy, and online safety.

**Research Skills:** Students learn how to conduct research, organize information, cite research, and present findings effectively.

**Critical Thinking:** Students learn to analyze information, identify biases, and form informed opinions.

**Communication Skills:** Students learn to communicate effectively using various media and technology tools.

**The Physical Education and Health Curriculum** offers opportunities for developing fundamental movement skills, promoting active lifestyles, and teaching healthy habits, often through a combination of games, activities, and instruction.

### **Physical Education**

**Fundamental Movement Skills:** PE emphasizes developing locomotor skills (running, jumping, hopping), non-locomotor skills (stretching, bending), and manipulative skills (throwing, catching).

**Movement Concepts:** Students learn about space (general, personal), time (fast, slow), and force (strong, weak).

**Physical Fitness:** Curricula often incorporate activities that promote cardiovascular health, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition.

**Sports and Games:** PE introduces a variety of sports and games, fostering teamwork, sportsmanship, and strategic thinking.

**Lifelong Physical Activity:** PE aims to instill a love for physical activity and encourage students to participate in various activities throughout their lives.

### **Health Education**

- **Physical Health:** Topics include nutrition, sleep, exercise, and hygiene.
- **Mental and Emotional Health:** Curricula may address stress management, self-esteem, and positive relationships.
- **Social Health:** Students learn about communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution.
- **Safety:** Instruction on safety in various environments (home, school, community) is a key component.
- **Lifestyle and Health:** Health education may cover topics like common illnesses, benefits of nutrition, and healthy behaviors.

**The Spanish curriculum** is offered for grades 2-5. The program includes foundational language skills through interactive activities, covering basic vocabulary, grammar, and cultural elements, often using stories, songs, and games to make learning fun and engaging.

### **Foundational Language Skills**

- **Basic Vocabulary:** Greetings, numbers, colors, days of the week, months, family members, animals, food, clothing, and classroom objects.
- **Simple Grammar:** Basic verb conjugations (present tense of regular verbs), subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure.
- **Pronunciation:** Focus on Spanish sounds and pronunciation patterns.

- **Listening and Speaking:** Activities to practice listening comprehension and speaking skills, such as simple conversations, role-playing, and singing songs.
- **Reading and Writing:** Introduction to reading and writing simple Spanish words and sentences.

### **Interactive Learning Activities**

**Songs and Rhymes:** Using Spanish songs and rhymes to learn vocabulary and grammar in a fun and memorable way.

**Stories and Storytelling:** Reading and retellings of Spanish stories to enhance vocabulary and listening skills.

**Games and Role-Playing:** Engaging students in interactive games and role-playing activities to practice language skills in a real-life context.

**Arts and Crafts:** Integrating Spanish language lessons with art projects, such as creating posters or coloring pages.

**Real-Life Situations:** Using real-life situations and scenarios to practice language skills, such as ordering food, asking for directions, or describing daily routines.

### **Cultural Elements**

- **Spanish-Speaking Countries:** Introducing students to the culture, geography, and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries.
- **Festivals and Celebrations:** Learning about and celebrating Spanish festivals and holidays.
- **Music and Dance:** Exploring Spanish music and dance styles.
- **Food and Cuisine:** Learning about traditional Spanish foods and dishes.

**The Counseling curriculum** includes classroom guidance lessons once a week for all grade levels. The presentations focus on developing students' social-emotional, academic, and career skills through structured lessons, group activities, and individual counseling, aiming to foster well-rounded development and prepare students for future success. The Circle of Grace curriculum is also taught during classroom counseling presentations.

### **Core Areas of Focus**

#### **Social-Emotional Development:**

- **Self-Awareness:** Helping students understand their own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses.
- **Social Skills:** Teaching effective communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation skills.
- **Coping Strategies:** Equipping students with tools to manage stress, anxiety, and other challenges.

- **Empathy and Compassion:** Fostering understanding and kindness towards others.

**Academic Success:**

- **Study Skills:** Providing strategies for organization, time management, and effective learning.
- **Goal Setting:** Helping students set realistic and achievable goals.
- **Motivation and Perseverance:** Encouraging students to overcome challenges and stay focused on their goals.

**Career Exploration:**

- **Career Awareness:** Introducing students to different careers and industries.
- **Skills Development:** Helping students identify their interests and strengths, and develop skills relevant to future careers.
- **Goal Setting:** Encouraging students to think about their future aspirations and set goals related to their career paths.

Please refer to the Omaha Archdiocese Curriculum Standards for more information about grade level standards and skills: <https://schools.archomaha.org/academics/>



## St. Stephen the Martyr Instructional Framework

About six years ago, St. Stephen the Martyr School decided to adopt the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework for structured learning. Although teachers began training, the school experienced a turnover in teaching staff as the years went on. This year we started training once again from the beginning. For those who are already familiar with this framework are getting a refresher course, and new teachers are learning strategies to implement this method into their daily instruction.

**The Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework** is a structured instructional approach that shifts cognitive responsibility from the teacher to the student in a deliberate, step-by-step manner, often described as "I do, we do, you do".



Here's a more detailed explanation:

### **"I Do" (Focused Instruction):**

The teacher models the skill or concept, providing explicit instruction and demonstrations, often using think-alouds to explain their thought processes.

### **"We Do" (Guided Practice):**

The teacher and students work together, with the teacher providing support and guidance as students practice the skill or concept.

### **"You Do" (Independent Practice):**

Students apply the learned skill or concept independently, with the teacher monitoring their progress and providing feedback through continuous noticing and formative assessment throughout the lesson.

**Purpose:**

The GRR framework aims to help students develop independence and mastery of skills and concepts by gradually increasing their responsibility for learning.

**Benefits:**

- **Increased Student Engagement:** Students become more actively involved in the learning process.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** The framework allows teachers to tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners.
- **Improved Student Outcomes:** By providing scaffolding and support, the GRR framework can help students achieve greater success.

## Instructional Materials



St. Stephen the Martyr School uses a variety of instructional materials and resources to facilitate learning and ensure curriculum alignment. This is a list of some of our instructional materials currently used:

Reading/ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	Religion
Wonders Grades (1-4)	Math Expressions Grades (K-5)	Amplify Grades (1-8)	TCI Grades (K-8)	Alive in Christ Grades (1-8)
CKLA- K (Implementing grades 1-4 fall 2025)	Simple Solutions	Mystery Science	BrainPop	Children's Bible
Simple Solutions	Freckle Math (Grades 1-4)	BrainPop	NearPod	Theology of the Body
Freckle ELA (K-4)	IXL (5-8)	NearPod	Flocabulary	Gospel Weeklies
IXL (5-8)	Manipulatives	Flocabulary	Teachers Pay Teachers	Catechism
NearPod	Math Boards	Investigation Kits		
Flocabulary	BrainPOP	Teachers Pay Teachers		
BrainPop	Khan Academy	Microscopes		
Grade Level Novels- Grades 3-8	McDougal Littell Courses 1, 2, 3	Telescopes		
Grammar for Writing -Grades 6-8	McDougal Littell Algebra 1			

Write Source- Grades 5-8	Renaissance STAR			
Trophies- Grade 5	Renaissance CBM Assessments			
Spelling Connections Grades 5-6	BrainPOP			
D'Nealian Handwriting	NearPod			
Foundations Phonics	Teachers Pay Teachers			
Rewards				
Spalding Phonics Cards				
Renaissance STAR				
Renaissance CBM Assessments				
Teachers Pay Teachers				
Elements of Literature Grades (6-8)				

### Technology to Enhance Instruction

Macbooks	Laptop Carts	IPads	Chromebooks	Apple TV	Powerlite Projectors
54 - All teachers	23	465	One-to-One Grades 6-8	40	40