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.

Required Instructional Hours

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School complies with all applicable Nebraska statutes and regulations governing instructional time and student attendance.
Instructional Hours

- Kindergarten students receive a minimum of 400 instructional hours each school year.
- Students in Grades 1–8 receive a minimum of 1,032 instructional hours each school year.

Certificated Staff

Administrators will conduct the hiring process for certificated teachers by identifying and recommending qualified applicants. The head pastor/president/executive director hires certificated teachers and signs their contracts.

Certificated staff will be formally evaluated regularly/systematically by those charged with responsibility for such evaluation. Evaluation procedures are in accord with Catholic Schools Office guidelines.

Overview of Curriculum

Religion and Faith Formation

This 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

Reading and ELA

The curriculum is not designed from just one model and is always subject to change as we analyze data. The ELA curriculum includes the following:

- **The Science of Reading:** The science of reading is a vast body of research from cognitive science, psychology, and neuroscience that explains how the human brain learns to read and identifies the most effective, explicit methods to teach reading skills.
- **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.
    - Recognizing and using parts of speech, including 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 and identifying credible sources and recognizing bias

Mathematics

The curriculum at St. Stephen the Martyr aims to develop a strong understanding of mathematical concepts and skills, rather than 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

Science

The curriculum involves hands-on activities, inquiry-based learning, and coverage of life, physical, and Earth sciences, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The science curriculum aligns with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Core science areas include the following areas of study:

- **Scientific method:** Introduce the steps of the scientific method, including observing, hypothesizing, experimenting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions
- **Life science:** Plants and animals (including their needs, habitats, and life cycles), human body systems, and ecology and ecosystems
- **Physical science:** Matter (states of matter, properties, and changes), motion and forces (including gravity, friction, and simple machines), and energy (light, heat, and sound)
- **Earth and space science:** Earth's systems (weather, water cycle, rocks and soil) and the solar system and beyond

Social Studies

The curriculum introduces students to history, geography, civics, economics, and cultures. It is designed to foster critical thinking and to prepare students for citizenship and civic engagement. Key components of the curriculum include the following:

- **Overview:**
    - **Early elementary (K-2):** Personal and family history, local community, and basic concepts of time and chronology
    - **Upper elementary (3-5):** Broader historical periods, key figures, and events, including the study of different cultures and civilizations
    - **Middle school (6-8):** Specific historical periods, events, and movements, both domestic and global, with an emphasis on critical analysis and source interpretation
- **Geography:**
    - **Early elementary:** Basic geographic concepts like landforms, continents, and oceans, maps, and the location of places
    - **Upper elementary:** Regions, countries, and cultures, focusing on the relationships between people and their environment
    - **Middle school:** Global patterns, environmental issues, and the impact of geography on human societies
- **Civics and government:**
    - **Early elementary:** Concepts of citizenship, rights, and responsibilities, and the importance of rules and laws
    - **Upper elementary:** Different forms of government, the role of citizens in a democracy, and the structure of local and national government
    - **Middle school:** Principles of democracy, the U.S. Constitution, the branches of government, and how to engage in civic participation
- **Economics:**
    - **Early elementary:** Basic economic concepts like scarcity, production, and consumption, and the role of money
    - **Upper elementary:** Different economic systems, markets, and the role of individuals and businesses in the economy
    - **Middle school:** Economic issues, global trade, and the impact of economic policies.
- **Cultures and societies:** Diverse cultures, societies, and perspectives and an understanding and appreciation for different ways of life

Fine Arts

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:** Basic drawing techniques, exploration of different media (pencils, crayons, markers, etc.), and development of their ability to represent objects and ideas
    - **Painting:** Experimentation with various painting techniques and materials (tempera, watercolors, acrylics), learning about color theory and composition
    - **Sculpture:** Creation of three-dimensional art using clay, papier-mâché, or other materials, development their spatial reasoning and fine motor skills
    - **Printmaking:** Exploration of printmaking techniques like linoleum cuts, stencils, and block printing, learning about repetitive patterns and image creation
    - **Art history and appreciation:** Introduction of different art movements, artists, and cultures, learning to analyze and appreciate art
- **Music:**
    - **Rhythm and melody:** Basic musical concepts like rhythm, pitch, and tempo, through singing, playing instruments, and listening to music
    - **Instrumental skills:** Introduction to instruments like recorders, keyboard, or ukulele and development of their musical skills and creativity
    - **Music history and appreciation:** Musical genres, composers, and culture
    - **Concerts and performances:** K-3: Christmas music program; 3-4: spring program; 5-8: Advent prayer service
- **Theatre/Dance:**
    - **Acting:** 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:** Basic dance movements and choreography of simple dances

Library, Media and Technology

The 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.

- **Information literacy:** How to identify information needs, locate relevant resources, critically evaluate information sources, and synthesize information effectively
- **Media literacy:** An understanding of different media formats (print, digital, audio, video) and how they are used to communicate information and influence audiences
- **Technology integration:** How to use technology tools and resources to enhance their learning, create content, and collaborate with others; STEM activities; understanding and using presentation skills
- **Digital citizenship:** Ethical and responsible online behavior, including copyright, privacy, and online safety
- **Research skills:** How to conduct research, organize information, cite research, and present findings effectively
- **Critical thinking:** How to analyze information, identify biases, and form informed opinions
- **Communication skills:** Communication using various media and technology tools

Family and Consumer Science Education (Grades 6-8)

- **Nutrition & wellness:**
    - Nutrition basics, MyPlate, food groups, nutrients, meal planning, food safety, wellness, healthy lifestyles
    - Analyze nutritional needs; read food labels; plan balanced meals; demonstrate safe food-handling practices; evaluate personal wellness choices
- **Leadership & career readiness:**
    - Personal strengths, goal setting, career exploration, employability skills, communication, teamwork, professionalism, resume building, and interviews
    - Identify career interests, set SMART goals, create a professional resume, complete a job application, practice interviewing, and demonstrate workplace communication
- **Financial literacy:**
    - Needs vs. wants, budgeting, saving, banking, credit, debt, taxes, insurance, consumer decisions, and financial goals
    - Create and maintain a budget, compare financial products, calculate income and expenses, understand credit and interest, make informed consumer decisions
- **Textile, apparel & retailing:**

    - Textile fibers, fabric construction, clothing care, sewing fundamentals, design principles, fashion, consumerism, merchandising, retail careers
    - Identify fibers and fabrics, demonstrate basic sewing skills, follow garment-care instructions, apply design principles, evaluate clothing purchases, and explore careers in apparel and retail

Physical Education and Health

The 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:** Locomotor skills (running, jumping, hopping), non-locomotor skills (stretching, bending), and manipulative skills (throwing, catching)
    - **Movement concepts:** Space (general, personal), time (fast, slow), and force (strong, weak)
    - **Physical fitness:** Activities that promote cardiovascular health, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition
    - **Sports and games:** Sports and games that foster teamwork, sportsmanship, and strategic thinking
    - **Lifelong physical activity:** Encourage students to participate in various activities throughout their lives
- **Health education:**
    - **Physical health:** Nutrition, sleep, exercise, and hygiene
    - **Mental and emotional health:** Stress management, self-esteem, and positive relationships
    - **Social health:** Communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution
    - **Safety:** Safety in various environments (home, school, community)
    - **Lifestyle and health:** Common illnesses, benefits of nutrition, and healthy behaviors

Spanish and Multicultural Education

The Spanish and multicultural education curriculum is offered for grades 2-5. The program includes foundational language skills through interactive activities and covers 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:** 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:** 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:** Ordering food, asking for directions, or describing daily routines
- **Cultural elements:**
    - **Spanish-speaking countries:** Introduction of the culture, geography, and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries
    - **Festivals and celebrations:** Learning about and celebrating Spanish festivals and holidays; Celebrate Your Culture Day
    - **Music and dance:** Spanish music and dance styles
    - **Food and cuisine:** Learning about traditional Spanish foods and dishes

Counseling

The 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. The counseling program often uses lessons from *Second Step*.

- **Social-emotional development:**
    - **Self awareness:** Understanding emotions, strengths, and weaknesses
    - **Social skills:** Effective communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation skills
    - **Coping strategies:** Tools to manage stress, anxiety, and other challenges

    - **Empathy and compassion:** Understanding and kindness towards others
- **Academic success:**
    - **Study skills:** Strategies for organization, time management, and effective learning
    - **Goal setting:** Setting realistic and achievable goals
    - **Motivation and perseverance:** Overcoming challenges and staying focused on goals
- **Career exploration:**
    - **Career awareness:** Different careers and industries, including a career day in April
    - **Skills development:** Identification of interests and strengths and development of skills relevant to future careers.
    - **Goal setting:** Future aspirations and setting goals related to their career paths

Please refer to the Omaha Archdiocese Curriculum Standards for more information about grade level standards and skills.

2026–2027 Assessment Schedule

Assessment Plan 005.01A: All school districts participate annually in statewide assessments in compliance with the schedule as outlined in Appendix E. Nonpublic schools have an assessment plan which includes a schedule and procedures for assessing success in achieving their academic content standards. Student success in achieving their standards is reported to the head administrator or governing board of the nonpublic school.

Assessment	Date(s)	Grades
IXL Diagnostic ELA	Fall: 8/24-9/1 Winter: 12/7-12/17 Spring: 5/3-5/13	4-8
IXL Diagnostic Math	Fall: 8/24-9/1 Winter: 12/7-12/17 Spring: 5/3-5/13	2-8
STAR Assessment Math	Fall: 9/3 at 8:15 Winter:1/14 at 8:15 Spring: 4/22 at 8:15	2-8
STAR Assessment Reading (Early Literacy)	Fall: 9/10 at 8:15 Winter:1/21 at 8:15	Grades 2-8 (Early Literacy K-1)

	Spring:4/29 at 8:15	
STAR 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency	Fall 8/25-9/15 October	Grade 3
Phonics Screeners	Fall Winter Spring	K-3
Oral Fluency- STAR CBM	Fall Winter Spring	1-4
Archdiocese Math Summative/Measured Progress	4/13-5/8	3, 5, 7
Archdiocese ELA Summative/Measured Progress	4/13-5/8	4, 6, 8
Archdiocese Science Measured Progress	4/13-5/8	4, 8
Archdiocese Social Studies Explore a Destination or Extreme Explorer (Grade 4) History Hall of Fame, We the People, National History Day, or Civics Assessment (Grade 8)	4/13-5/8	4, 8
Archdiocese Religion	April-May 2027	
SSM Writing Assessments	April-May 2027	

Policy for Performance Reports (010.01B)

1. Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the annual preparation, review, approval, and distribution of the school system's student performance report in accordance with Nebraska Department of Education Rule 10, Title 92, Chapter 10, Section 010.01.

The school system shall use student performance information to assess progress toward Nebraska academic content standards, inform instructional planning, evaluate progress toward school improvement goals, and communicate appropriate information regarding student achievement to the school community.

2. Annual Performance Report
The school system shall prepare a written performance report annually.

The annual report shall include, at a minimum, the information required by Rule 10.010.01A, including:

- Student academic performance, as required by Rule 10.005.02;
- School system demographics;
- School improvement goals and progress toward those goals; and

3. Data Sources and Accuracy
Performance information shall be based upon reliable and appropriately validated data available to the school system.

Where applicable, the report may incorporate information from:

- Nebraska state assessments;
- District or school assessments;
- Nationally norm-referenced assessments;
- Graduation and completion data;
- Student growth and improvement measures;
- Attendance and other relevant student indicators;
- School improvement measures; and
- Other data appropriate for demonstrating student progress toward academic standards and school improvement goals.

The school system shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that reported information is accurate, clearly presented, and appropriately interpreted.

Assessment results shall be used, consistent with Rule 10, to assist educators in planning instruction, monitoring student progress, evaluating program effectiveness, and identifying areas for improvement.

4. Confidentiality of Individual Student Performance

- Individual student test scores and personally identifiable student performance information shall be treated as confidential.
- Individual student results shall not be included in the public performance report unless disclosure is otherwise specifically authorized by applicable law.
- Public reports shall present student performance in aggregate form and shall be designed to prevent the identification of individual students.
- The school system shall follow applicable federal and state requirements governing the privacy and confidentiality of student education records.

5. Minimum-Group-Size and Suppression Requirements

To protect student confidentiality, the school system shall not publicly report student performance for a grade when:

- Fewer than ten (10) students are enrolled in the grades being reported; or
- Reporting the results would permit identification of individual students because the students have comparable scores.

When a performance result is suppressed under this section, the report shall use an appropriate notation such as:

- Data suppressed to protect student confidentiality.
- The school system shall not attempt to circumvent this requirement by publishing the same information in another table, category, subgroup, graph, narrative, or other format that would allow individual student performance to be inferred.

6. Review and Approval

Prior to public distribution, the annual performance report shall be reviewed by the administration:

- Accuracy and completeness;
- Compliance with Rule 10;
- Protection of individual student confidentiality;
- Appropriate suppression of small-group data;
- Consistency with the school system's improvement goals; and
- Clarity and accessibility for the intended audience.
- The Superintendent shall determine when the report is ready for distribution, subject to any Board of Education requirements.

7. Annual Distribution
The school system shall annually distribute the performance report to residents of the public school district.

Distribution may include one or more appropriate methods, including:

- Posting the report on the school system's website;
- Providing the report at the school system's administrative office;
- Providing notice to families and community members regarding the availability of the report;
- Presenting the report at a public Board of Education meeting; and
- Providing copies upon request.

The school system shall retain documentation demonstrating that the annual report was prepared and distributed in accordance with this policy.

8. Accessibility and Communication
The school system shall make reasonable efforts to present performance information in a clear and understandable manner.

Where appropriate, the report should include explanatory information that helps community members understand assessment results, including the purpose and limitations of the measures used.

The school system may provide charts, graphs, trend information, comparisons, and narrative explanations when those materials can be presented without compromising student confidentiality.

9. Connection to Continuous Improvement
Student performance information shall be used as part of the school system's continuous improvement process.

Performance results shall be reviewed to:

- Identify strengths and areas needing improvement;
- Monitor progress toward school improvement goals;
- Inform instructional and programmatic decisions;
- Identify needed changes to improve instruction and student outcomes; and
- Support professional learning and other improvement strategies.

This policy is intended to complement the continuous improvement requirements of Rule 10, including the collection and analysis of student performance data and evaluation of progress toward improvement goals.

10. Responsibility
The administration shall be responsible for implementation of this policy.

The administrator may designate appropriate staff to collect, analyze, verify, prepare, and communicate information contained in the annual performance report.

The School Advisory Board shall review this policy periodically to ensure continued alignment with Nebraska Department of Education requirements.

11. Compliance With Rule 10
This policy shall be interpreted and implemented in a manner consistent with the current requirements of Nebraska Department of Education Rule 10, Title 92, Chapter 10, Section 010.01A and 010.01B, and any applicable state or federal law.

If a conflict exists between this policy and a mandatory legal or regulatory requirement, the applicable law or regulation shall control, and this policy shall be reviewed and revised as necessary.

Instructional Framework

St. Stephen the Martyr School's instructional framework aligns with The Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework for Structured Learning. 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."



“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
CKLA (Grades 1-4)	Math Expressions Grades (K-5)	Amplify Grades (1-8)	TCI Grades (K-8)	Alive in Christ Grades (1-8)
Simple Solutions	Simple Solutions	Mystery Science	BrainPop	Children's Bible
IXL ELA	IXL Take Off Math-piloting in grades 2 & 5	BrainPop	NearPod	Theology of the Body
BrainPop	IXL (1-8)	NearPod	Flocabulary	Gospel Weeklies

Voyages in English (Grades 1-5)	Manipulatives	Flocabulary	Teachers Pay Teachers	Catechism
Grammar for Writing (Grades 6-8)	Math Boards	Investigation Kits		
Spelling Connections (grades 4-6)	BrainPOP	Teachers Pay Teachers		
Harcourt Trophies-Reading Anthology (Grade 5)	Khan Academy	Microscopes		
Elements of Literature -Reading Anthology (Grades 6-8)	McDougal Littell Courses 1, 2, 3	Telescopes		
Write Source-Grades 5-8	McDougal Littell Algebra 1			
D'Nealian Handwriting (Grade 2)	Renaissance STAR			
UFLI Phonics	Renaissance CBM Assessments			
Rewards	BrainPOP			
Spalding Phonics	NearPod			
Renaissance STAR and CBM	Teachers Pay Teachers			

Technology to Enhance Instruction

Technology is used in schools to enhance instruction by providing dynamic tools that personalize learning, increase student engagement, and streamline teaching tasks.

Macbooks	Laptop Carts	iPads	Chromebooks	Apple TV	Powerlite Projectors
54 (All teachers)	23	554	One-to-One Grades 6-8	40	40