
St. Gabriel's Cradle



A Developmental Playschool

First a little history- Our program is getting ready for its 15th school year. In 1998, as the Ministry Center was nearing completion, our parish decided to begin a ministry addressing early childhood education and faith formation. By summer's end that year, classrooms had been equipped, a staff hired, and a curriculum sketched out- all that we needed were the children. They came, and they have kept coming ever since. In the summer of 2007, we added 3 additional classrooms. Our early childhood program is still small compared to the programs available in the neighboring protestant churches. With our recent expansion, we currently enroll about 130 children, almost all from the Catholic community. The Cradle is comprised of a loving community of families. We welcome your interest in our program and apologize for not always having enough room to welcome every family desiring enrollment.

What is our *philosophy* towards early childhood education? We are a play-based program. The themes, centers, lessons and activities planned by the teachers encourage social development, sharing, as well as core fine and gross motor skills and pre-literacy skills. Our primary objective is that play within our classrooms should be a provocation for learning, exploration and creativity as well as an expression of our Catholic faith.

Should school really be about play?



Our curriculum allows us to meet the needs of each child by providing lessons and materials that take into account where each child is developmentally, teaching them new skills that encourage new learning, but are not too frustrating as they work toward mastery of new skills. We include the word "playschool" in our name rather than preschool, not because we avoid structure or pre-academic learning, but to remind all of us that young children should not be required to race through skill acquisition just for achievement's sake, but be allowed and given the opportunity to explore, challenge, and shape their learning through play.



Our Classes

The Cradle is designed for children ages 2, 3, 4, and 5 and encourages them to experiment with hands-on activities, learn to interact independently with the world around them, and develop friendships with other children and adults.

Children are placed in classrooms according to their age and developmental abilities. In the 2 & 3 year-old classes, children are grouped so that older and younger children can be with their peer group allowing teachers to best meet the needs of both older and younger students. We now offer 3 classes for 4 year-olds which allows us to group children in a manner that will allow us to facilitate learning and to meet their individual needs.

What is Transitional Kindergarten?

In our school setting, it is recognized by both parents and educators that early childhood spans the years between birth and age 8. It is during this time that learning pathways are laid out in a child's brain. The more varied the opportunities a child is given to learn, the more hands-on the activities presented, and the more experimental in nature those activities are, the greater the ability for a child has to learn and problem solve. In Charlotte, kindergarten in particular, has become very academic and task oriented, thus the prerequisite skills required for success have increased. Many children will acquire these skills between 4 and 5, but not all will, some will still be working on these skills through age 6 and 7. Both sets of children will arrive on the door step of third grade having caught up with each other on the skill sequence chart.

Our 4 year-old, two Pre-K, and TK classes are designed to help get children ready for kindergarten.

In the 4's and Pre- Ks children are working toward increasing their attention span so that they can work successfully in both small and large groups, controlling impulsive behaviors, practicing fine motor skills so that they have the coordination and stamina to write and cut, move independently in the classroom, and work within established classroom procedures and rules. From September through May teachers will have worked diligently instructing and modeling pre-literacy, letter recognition and early math skills for our 21st Century Learners.

In TK 5 year-olds are showing steady progress in these areas but are still working on mastering these skills. This year gives them the gift of time in an environment that respects their developmental progress. Here the breadth of the curriculum is widened encompassing a more in depth language arts & literacy, math, science and social studies curriculum in anticipation of kindergarten, but not duplicating kindergarten.

Registration Information

Our current Cradle families have been asked to register and pay the registration fee for their children beginning in mid January. Once your child has been enrolled into our program, your family is able to register first for the next school year.

During that same time we begin to accept registrations for new families for the next school year. First priority is given to St. Gabriel parishioners. Registration materials are available in the church office beginning January 19. If you would like to be considered for enrollment, please complete a registration card so that we may contact you if a space is available. There is no fee until we can offer you placement in a class. **We plan to complete registration by February 15.** If you have not been contacted before then, you can assume that your child has been placed on the waiting list for next year. Registration will remain open until classes have been filled.

Acceptance into our program is random with a few basic considerations: boy/girl ratios, age, and special needs. Our current enrollment indicates that we will have very limited openings in our 3 year-old classes. Every year we are able to accept families from the waiting list throughout the summer and even into the school year. However, we would recommend that you explore other preschools in the area as well during this time as most programs have waiting lists after February.

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School starts in September
An enrollment packet is mailed at the beginning of August. Classes begin right after Labor Day with a staggered start to keep the first few days of school from being too overwhelming for everyone. We hit the ground running and don't stop again until May.

There are two teachers in every classroom, class sizes getting progressively bigger as the children get older.

More questions? Call Kate Stephens, Cradle Director, any time to find out more about our program. It can be hard to catch her at her desk, but every effort is made to return all calls. Please feel free to e-mail Kate as well at kstephens@stgabrielchurch.org

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A description of classes and the curriculum for the 2011-2012 school year.



St. Gabriel Catholic Church