Curriculum

St. Gerald School provides an outstanding, Catholic faith-based education from preschool through eighth grade. Our students are engaged and inspired to do their best.

Early Childhood Program Preschool 3 and Pre-Kindergarten - St. Gerald Early Childhood Program Preschool 3 and Pre-Kindergarten provides a safe, loving, "first school" experience for all our students, where the growth and development of the whole child is nurtured and supported; where each child is seen as unique and loved by God. Flexible schedules and extended care options make this an easy choice for working parents.

Kindergarten - The St. Gerald Kindergarten program is a faith filled program that not only covers core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, arts, and social studies, but works to develop our Catholic virtues. These virtues guide children to develop strong moral character, fostering compassion, integrity, and a deep connection with God and others. Our goal is to create a supportive environment where children can grow both academically and spiritually.

First Grade - First grade religion focuses on loving God, learning about God's creation and how to care for it, understanding Jesus' death and resurrection, and learning how to be followers of Jesus. Students pray together daily and attend mass twice a week. In first grade the students build on math skills learned in kindergarten. Students become fluent in addition and subtraction. They also learn other math concepts such as counting coins, telling time, and measurement. In language arts, students will learn basic concepts, such as synonyms, antonyms, nouns, verbs, and adjectives. They learn how to construct a complete sentence and how to use correct punctuation in those sentences. The Superkids reading program is used in first grade and combines the subjects of reading, spelling, and phonics. Students learn to build and spell words with digraphs, blends, and short/long vowels. Science topics include plants, animals, our bodies, and weather. In social studies students learn about communities, jobs, transportation, and early settlers.

Second Grade - In second grade, we focus on preparing students for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and helping them understand the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They also learn about the Church as God's people, Jesus' disciples, and the importance of the Ten Commandments. We cover various religious topics like prayers, Scriptures, liturgy, and saints, and students deepen their faith through daily prayer and attending school liturgies twice a week. In language arts, students work on reading, writing, spelling, phonics, vocabulary, and grammar. They read different texts to improve fluency and comprehension, learn word recognition, and use reading strategies. They also build vocabulary, understanding, and research skills. In writing, they learn to write paragraphs, reports, narratives, and letters, focusing on nouns, adjectives, and verbs in past, present, and future tenses. In math, students learn about place value, money, and multi-digit addition and subtraction using different methods. They also interpret data with graphs, understand area by partitioning rectangles, and identify shapes. Additionally, they solve number sentences and word problems. In science, students explore topics like the water cycle, plant growth, states of matter, weather, and life cycles. They also study the heart, lungs, basic anatomy, and health practices through activities and discussions. In social studies, students learn about their place on Earth, teamwork, and our country's past and present. They discover prominent figures and places from history, helping them understand community and history better.

Third Grade - Third grade religion focuses on loving God, building God's kingdom, deepening students' understanding of Jesus' death and resurrection, and learning how Jesus helps us answer our call to be holy through the sacraments. Students will pray together daily, attend mass weekly, and participate in the sacrament of penance throughout the year. In third grade the students build on the math foundation created during the primary years to set the foundation for fourth grade math. Students become fluent in multiplication and division. They also learn other math concepts such as area, perimeter, and comparing fractions. In language arts, students will learn basic concepts, such as subjects, predicates, and possessive nouns, to prepare them for more complex sentence structures in fourth grade. Reading begins to focus on comprehension skills while reading many different genres of texts. Science focuses on animal survival, traits, behaviors, and adaptations. In social studies students will discuss communities and government. During the year students' progress from writing individual letters in cursive to whole words.

Fourth Grade –The religion curriculum in fourth grade includes students learning about the different parts of the Holy Mass, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. They also study various saints, their lives, and their significance within the faith tradition. Additionally, students explore the liturgical seasons of the Church year and their theological significance. Fourth grade math covers foundational arithmetic skills including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with larger numbers. Students also learn about fractions, decimals, geometry, measurement, and basic algebraic concepts such as patterns and equations. Problem-solving strategies are emphasized to help students apply mathematical concepts to real-world situations. The reading curriculum focuses on developing advanced reading comprehension skills, vocabulary expansion, and fluency. Students engage with a variety of literary genres, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, to deepen their understanding of different text types. Comprehension strategies such as summarizing, predicting, and making connections are taught and practiced extensively. Additionally, students are encouraged to analyze characters, settings, plot elements, and themes to enhance their critical thinking abilities. Additionally, students explore the liturgical seasons of the Church year and their theological significance. Science explores concepts in physical science, life science, and earth science. They learn about topics such as electricity and magnetism, ecosystems and habitats, and the Earth's geological processes like weathering and erosion. The social studies curriculum focuses on the United States history and geography. Students learn about key events, figures, and regions of the country, as well as basic civic concepts such as democracy, citizenship, and community participation.

Fifth Grade - Fifth grade is an exciting year for our students! They move up to the third floor to be with 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. As a school, we attend Mass weekly, go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the school year, and attend Stations of the Cross during the Lenten season. Our Religion curriculum continues to enhance the learning of creation, bible readings, the memorizing of new prayers, while also reviewing the meaning of the Ten Commandments, the seven sacraments and introduces important saints. Our Science, Math, and STEM classes challenge our students to use what has been learned in previous years to achieve solutions and be creative in their thinking. Our Reading curriculum coincides nicely with the lessons reviewed in our I-Ready assessment program. A variety of literary genres are studied as well. We also read a few novels during the school year. Our Language Arts for fifth grade continues to review punctuation, sentence structure, and a variety of paragraph writing. Social Studies provides key facts about the

connections of our continents and early life of migration. We cover colonial life, wars, our growing nation, and our relationship with the world. A big event for Social Studies includes our Living Wax Museum. The students do research, write a report, dress up as their famous American, and perform a speech about their character. The fifth grade also has a police officer visit our students, once a week for 10 weeks, to teach them the D.A.R.E program. The students also write a report at the conclusion of the program to show what they have learned.

Junior High Curriculum - Grades 6 through 8 Grade

Junior High Religion – The Junior High religion curriculum provides the opportunity for our students to understand the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. Students learn about the Old and New Testament, the importance of a strong Catholic identity, and understand and live out the Catholic Church's commitment to social justice and peace. Our students prepare for Confirmation in seventh grade. In addition, students take part in school masses, Stations of the Cross, participate in service projects, and attend religious retreats.

Junior High English – sixth grade students focus on grammar usage. We practice writing sentences and paragraphs to improve our skills. Sixth grade also uses a vocabulary workbook. We use this workbook to build our knowledge of words, phonics, spelling, and definitions. Seventh grade students will develop skills in writing, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. They focus on developing grammar use, mechanics, and perfecting the skills to become fluent writers. To do this, we examine different types of sentence structure and common errors. At the eighth-grade level, we build on those skills by creating different forms of writing, such as essays and poetry.

Junior High Literature/Reading – Students will practice their skills in reading critically, analyzing texts, and citing evidence to support claims. Through the exploration of both fiction and informational texts, students will learn to dissect and interpret various forms of writing. Students will sharpen their ability to think critically about what they read and how to formulate well-supported arguments and opinions.

Junior High Math – St. Gerald School follows the Archdiocese of Chicago's Math Curriculum which is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and Common Core State Standards but does not exclude interventions needed for all students to be successful in math. Our junior high math curriculum prepares students to understand math models using a variety of teaching strategies, materials, and technology that will help them think critically in and out of the classroom. The curriculum focuses on basic math skills, pre-algebra, and algebra concepts. Practice, application, and problem-solving help our students to achieve a lasting understanding of fundamental math concepts preparing them for high school and the challenges of today's world.

Junior High Science – Last year our science/stem lab was updated to create a 21st century engaging learning environment. The new lab includes new collaborative desks and chairs, six new LG smart TV's, colorful new walls with murals, new cabinets, new sink, lab equipment, and much more.
In sixth grade science, we learn all about the makeup of the Earth. We begin discussing plate tectonics, earthquakes and volcanoes and move to minerals, the various types of rocks and the rock cycle. The second half of the year focuses on weathering, erosion, soil formation and the geologic time scale. In seventh grade science, we learn about living things, viruses and bacteria,

protists and fungi, and plants in the first half of the year. The second half of the year includes topics relating to all the systems of the human body. We study several aspects of nutrition including vitamins and minerals. We learn about how diseases affect the human body. In eighth grade, we learn about describing and measuring matter. We also focus on changes in matter as well as energy and matter. The periodic table information begins in the first part of the year and carries into the second half. In the second half of the year, we also learn about forces, motion, and momentum.

Junior High Social Studies – The Junior High social studies curriculum includes the study of the ancient world. The sixth grade begins with prehistoric man and continuing through Ancient Greece. The 7th and 8th grade students learn the many political, social, and economic events that shaped the United States as well as the state of Illinois. Seventh grade focuses on early exploration to the American Revolution, as well as the study of the US and Illinois Constitutions. Eighth grade begins with Washington's Presidency through the Civil War. They finish their studies with units on WWI and WWII.

Specials – Our special classes enhance our core curriculum and encourage our students to become well-rounded individuals.

Art - In our new Art Room, students grades first-eighth meet once a week for Art Class. Students are introduced to different types of mediums, art styles, and artists. Holiday themed projects are also done throughout the year.

Computer Class - St. Gerald School provides computer education classes to students in grades 3-8 in the school's computer room. Classes meet forty minutes each week. Students leverage technology to participate in an interconnected digital world, construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others. Additionally, students develop and employ strategies for understanding and solving real-world problems.

Library Services - St. Gerald School provides library services (access to reading and listening materials, for educational and recreational purposes) to students in grades PreK-8 in the school's library. Students in grades K-2 may check out books from the classroom and students in grades 3-8 may check out books and materials from the school library using a digital checkout system. Classes meet for 40 minutes each week. Additionally, students participate in monthly thematic listening activities and discuss the main idea of the content. There are also some multimedia and multi-disciplinary projects whereby students will research a topic in the library, discuss the problem, and find possible solutions ex. to Human Impact on the Earth. Then, in Computer, students will create a podcast or PSA as a final product addressing the solution to the problem above using multi-mediums.

Music - Music Education is an integral part of a well-rounded education that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit. Students learn important skills such as discipline, teamwork, leadership, and creativity while also cultivating a deep appreciation for the arts.

Our music program has a curriculum that includes vocal and instrumental instruction, music theory, and performance opportunities. It incorporates elements of worship and praise through singing hymns and other religious songs that help reinforce the values and teachings of the

Catholic Faith. The students can explore and develop their musical talents in a supportive and encouraging environment that helps instill confidence in who they are and their abilities.

We believe that music has the power to uplift and inspire, and we are committed to providing our students with a strong foundation in music education that will enrich their lives for years to come.

Physical Education - PE Class meets once a week for Preschool - eighth grade. The children learn about the importance of fitness and movement through exercise. Each week the children have 40 minutes of physical activity during their class.

SEL - Social-Emotional Learning, or SEL, is an essential component of every child's growth. The St. Gerald School social emotional learning curriculum includes strategies and skills students need to develop personal and social awareness. These skills will help them to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, make responsible and caring decisions, and problem solve. These important skills will help the student achieve a higher level of engagement and improve overall mental and physical well-being.

Spanish Language Acquisition Description - At St. Gerald School, Spanish language acquisition typically involves a combination of different teaching methods and techniques to help students develop their Spanish language skills. The focus is on building vocabulary, practicing speaking, and improving their listening, reading, and writing skills.

A variety of resources, including textbooks, online tools, audiovisual materials, and authentic materials from Spanish-speaking countries, are used to make the learning experience engaging and relevant.

Students participate in interactive lessons, group discussions, role-playing, games, and cultural activities to immerse themselves in learning the Spanish language and help them to retain what they have learned.

At St. Gerald School, Spanish language acquisition also goes beyond learning new vocabulary in a new language. It is an experience that aims to foster empathy, unity, understanding, and a sense of global citizenship in students, preparing them to engage with diverse communities and make a positive impact in the world.

STEM - STEM is a once each week class for grades 3-8 to enhance and supplement science coursework in each grade. We use Stemscopes hands on learning, Gizmos online learning, and Tinkercad design. Holiday themed projects are also incorporated into our learning. Students learn to cooperate and collaborate to complete lab and project assignments.