

STAR OF THE SEA EARLY LEARNING CENTER 1980-Present

Our Philosophy

The purpose of Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is to educate the whole child: spiritually, intellectually, physically and personally. The curriculum is designed to be sufficiently flexible and varied so as to provide the experience necessary to achieve these ends. The schools exist to supplement the work of the parent in Catholic education and to foster in a students a love of God and Neighbor.

Our Mission Statement

Our Commitment at Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is to provide quality early childhood education through the implementation of the Montessori Method within a Catholic school environment.

We believe that all children can learn and grow in a nurturing, caring, and safe environment that allows them to make meaningful choices and become active learners.

We believe that parents are the first and foremost primary educators of their children.

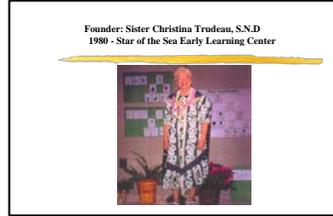
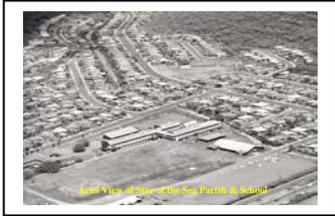
We believe that children are often influenced by societal values and environment which may challenge our Catholic beliefs. We are thus entrusted by parents to supplement and complement the formation of Catholic Christian values that begin at home. We encourage and invite all parents to become involved in the education of their young child.

We believe that Star of the Sea Early Learning Center provides quality early childhood education that is distinctively Catholic, academically excellent and uniquely contemporary.

Mission of Catholic Education

The mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Honolulu is to form children who are nourished intellectually, spiritually, and liturgically to share the presence of Christ in the world. Our Catholic educational institutions are obligated by our faith to shape our youth by immersing students in curriculum and experiences rooted in Catholic teaching and doctrine with emphasis on morality and Christian character building. This formation paired with 21st century academics and teaching methods are critical for success at any Catholic educational institution in Hawaii. Each family has choices in the education and faith formation of their children. We expect all families who have chosen to enroll their children share fully in the light of Christ and to cooperate and support the mission and activities of Catholic School education in the Diocese of Honolulu.

History



Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is the preprimary division of Star of the Sea Schools. The Early Learning Center was established in 1980 in the former convent of Sisters of Notre Dame. Prior to becoming an Early Learning Center, the convent was very private and cloistered and no one but the nuns were allowed on its premise. Sr. Christina Trudeau, a Sister of Notre Dame, had a vision...based on the needs of Star of the Sea parish for early childhood education; the decreasing numbers of sisters at the convent; and a mission to establish the first Catholic Montessori school in the State of Hawaii...Star of the Sea Early Learning Center opened its doors in 1980 with 36 young children.

The Kahala Nui Senior Living Community/New ELC

The development of the Kahala Nui Senior Living Community began in 2003. By January 2004, Star of the Sea Early Learning Center opened its door in the new center right after Christmas break. Dedicated teachers and staff gave up their two week Christmas time-off to set-up the new classrooms so that there would be a seamless transition from the old school building to the new. In January 2005, the Kahala Nui Senior Living Community was completed and residents began to move in. As a result, intergenerational programs and activities between the residents of Kahala Nui and the ELC are currently on-going.



Our School Community- “Innovative, Fluid, Flexible”

The ELC is licensed by the State Department of Human Services and accepts children from two through six years of age. Although our toddler division is self-contained, we implement the Montessori mixed age grouping in our “upper division” for 3-6 year olds. The mixed age grouping concepts provides a family-like environment where older children can assist the younger child and be role models. Teachers and assistants are also grouped in teaching teams to provide a multi-faceted approach to learning for students. In the upper 3-6 division, a head teacher is assigned as the primary educator, with a teaching assistant. The teacher will have 20 students and a 1:10 ration of adults to children. Within this group of 20 students, the teacher will have both 3, 4 and 5 year olds

The children will remain with that same teacher for a 3 year cycle (if they start at 3 years old in the ELC). This creates a strong bond and continuity. The 3, 4 and 5 year olds have differentiated curriculums based on specific learning benchmarks that they are expected to learn for their chronological age. However, within this learning environment, there also exists an individualized educational plan for each child, so the a student can progress according to their individual aptitude and skills, that is not limited by chronological age. The ELC has curriculum materials that extends to 1st and 2nd grade for advanced students and the teacher also provide enrichment materials for advanced students. However, it is important to note, that the ELC strongly believes in supporting the development of the **WHOLE CHILD** so as to provide each child the opportunity to develop not just in the cognitive area, but also socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, etc.

Toddler Division: Age Range 2-3.3 Years of Age

There are 48 toddlers, with a total team of 10 adults. The ratio is 1:6 and the children are divided into groups of 12 per group. We have four toddler groups of 12 students each; each group has a head teacher, and a assistant. The teaching team concept is also used in the Toddler Division, since two large classroom areas are used: Malama Room 1 and Malama Room 2. Each room has a teaching team of 5 adults (2 teachers, 2 assistants and floater). Both classrooms have a mixture and age range of young 2's through young 3's and are aligned in their toddler curriculum area. Both classrooms also work as a "village" and each child is supported by many members of this "village," although there is a primary teacher assigned to each group of 12 students. The Toddler Division have their own classroom area and playground. Although they do not mix with the older students (unless for special events and occasions), they can flow into both classrooms and common lanai area during their "work period" times. The Toddler Division is highly sought after program; fills quickly and usually has a wait-list; and "feeds" are upper division. Toddlers do not have to be "potty-trained," because toileting is part of their curriculum, along with separation, independence, self-help and independence skills, language and verbal development, gross motor/physical development, emotional and social development. Toddlers do not have to wear uniforms have can have a flexible schedule when arriving at school. Toddlers are recommended to move up to the 3-6 division if they are fully potty trained, social and emotional adjusted, can follow simple directions and have not strong separation issues. Transitions of Toddlers to the upper division take place in January, Summer and in Fall.



Multi-Aged Groupings: Preschool and Kindergarten (3-6 years olds)

The mixed age grouping concept is part of the Montessori and Philosophy. The Montessori Method also incorporates other age groupings such as: 6-9 years old; 9-12 years old.

The ELC was designed by administration and staff in partnership with the architect Nick Ybl, to provide an environment which supported the mixed age grouping concept; team teaching organization; and a spacious indoor and outdoor learning environment. It is a classroom design that supports a “village concept,” rather than individual classrooms with one teacher and a group of students primarily sitting at desks most of the time and doing seat work, and the teacher in the front of the class as the primary deliverer of information, or sitting at the teacher’s desk. The traditional classroom has its merits, but a Montessori environment is a flexible, fluid and a highly organized, prepared environment that promotes independence, responsible choices and collaborative learning. For example doing work period times (1.5-2 hours), teachers are working one on one with students; or working with groups of student; students can also choose to work individually; or work in small groups. Children are assessed daily and have freedom to move about the classroom and engage in hands-on experiential learning. Teachers are also involved with children at all levels during the day and help to support the concept of individualized and independent learning while providing group lessons and instruction for core curriculum areas. Teachers also send written assessments and communicate with parents on a daily, weekly or bi-monthly basis. Formal progress reports are provided 3 times a year.

In this division, uniforms are required and the school day starts at 8:00 AM and ends at 2:45 PM. An after school program is also offered for all ages from 2:45 to 6:00 PM.

Preschool (3 and 4 year olds)

The preschool curriculum provides opportunities for children to engage in individualized learning as well as being provided with group instruction in core curriculum areas. These curriculum areas include math, language, religion, cosmic, science, geography, historical and cultural studies, computer, sensorial, practical life, music, art, and physical education.

The preschool division also continues to build upon the social, emotional, physical, fine motor, gross motor and cognitive skills acquired through their prior ELC experience in the toddler division. Teaching and learning involves experiential, hands-on and developmentally appropriate learning.



Kindergarten (5 & 6 year olds)

Kindergarten

The kindergarten curriculum involves further “scaffolding” and refinement of previous skills and knowledge learned in all curriculum areas. The ELC utilizes primarily the phonetic method of teaching reading and writing skills that begins in preschool and is supported through whole language, basal readers and literature-based methods. These include the

- development of language and integrated languages experiences (too include Mandarin)
- math, language, science, social studies, religion, sensorial, practical life, computers, art, music and PE
- refinement of writing and fine motor skills, to include proper formation of letters and directionality.
- journal writing in core curriculum areas
- development of inventive and creating writing.
- development of auditory skills, concentration and comprehension
- research skills
- development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- exposure to interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum concepts to show relationships between academic areas.
- development of positive social relationships with peers and adults.

Since many of our kindergarteners move on to traditional school settings, they are provided with table and seat work instruction daily to prepare them for this.

Religion Curriculum and Peace Education

Our religion curriculum is an integrated, developmentally appropriate and experiential approach of teaching God’s love in a Catholic school setting. This experience of God's love is reflected in their family relationships, interactions with others, care of plants and animals, and the world around them. Religious holidays and observances are practiced, and the Blessed Sacrament priests and other members of Star of the Sea religious community are welcomed visitors to the ELC. Daily prayer is part of our morning circle for teachers and students. Our peace curriculum is integrated into our religion curriculum called “I am Special,” that was developed by Catholic ELC teachers of religion. The ELC also utilizes the Hawaii Catholic Schools (HCS) guidelines for preschool aged children as well as the Montessori’s “The Good Shepherd” program, which HCS will be implementing for the early learning centers. The importance of God’s love is also integrated into our daily environment, where adults are expected to role model love, care and nurturance and to “Teach as Jesus Did.” It is important that this love, care and nurturance is role modeled and permeates the learning environment throughout day, and not just for a lesson.

-Preschoolers and Kindergarteners participate in the Safe Environment Program with parental consent.

Summary of ELC Curriculum

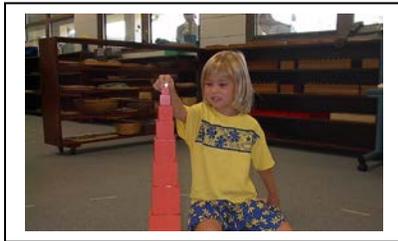
- Montessori emphasis –Catholic value orientation
- Developmentally appropriate -Experiential, hands-on learning
- Learning center approach
- Integrated curriculum
- High quality early childhood education

Summary of Mixed Age Grouping Concept

- Children can learn new skills from each other, older students can be peer tutors
- Children progress according to their abilities, individualized learning
- Reflection of a family-like environment that promotes cooperation, care, and role modeling

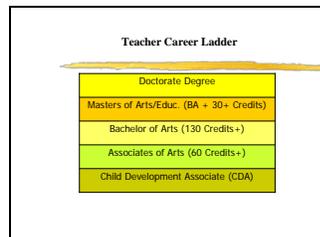
Effectiveness of Montessori-

The Montessori Method supports developmental learning, self-esteem, cooperative learning, independence, decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, cultural awareness, developmentally appropriate practices, hands-on learning, sequential learning, didactic materials or self correcting materials, and scaffolding of learning experiences from concrete to abstract.



TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:

- Tiered level of teachers -Head Teachers, Teachers and Assistant Teachers.
- All teachers have college degrees in ECE or Education -Teachers with degrees outside education, are required to have 36 units of ECE credits and minimum 2 years of ECE experience.
- 10 out of 11 teachers are Montessori certified with Education degrees.
- 3 teachers have Masters degrees in Education
- 1 has a Doctorate degree in Education
- All teachers and staff must attend 3 workshops or seminars per year
- All teachers and staff are certified by the Department of Human Service and PATCH registry; Hawaii Catholic Schools, Naeyc, AMS
- All teachers and staff are observed and receive a written evaluation each year
- Full-Time Assistants must have a Child Development Associate/CDA, equivalent, or higher.



Quote from Maria Montessori: "Education must consider the walking man, who walks as an explorer; all children should walk in this way, guided by attraction...A child is a discoverer. He/she is a splendid being in search of his own proper form." (The Secrets of Childhood)

THE END