

# Elementary Grades at Grace

Grace Lutheran School 7300 Division River Forest IL 60305 708-366-6900 [www.graceriverforest.org](http://www.graceriverforest.org)

## Grace Lutheran School Where children live the life of faith

*Our mission at Grace Lutheran Church and School is to bring in, build up, and send out disciples for Jesus Christ. Our school prepares children for a life of discipleship by helping them to grow in faith, knowledge, and character.*



### First Grade

Children in first grade gather knowledge, acquire skills, and develop relationships with God and others. The curriculum is child-centered, with activities and lessons to help each individual develop intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The classroom is a place for children to “wonder, question, and imagine” as they embark upon the journey of learning.

In religion class students hear the many stories of God’s love for his people throughout the ages. During weekly chapel students gather as a community to worship and celebrate the story of salvation.

Language arts instruction includes literature, phonics, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension skills, creative writing, and critical thinking. Children are nurtured in these important skills as they work toward the goal of becoming lifelong readers.

Math instruction provides a foundation of knowledge designed around direct instruction, the use of manipulatives, games, and problem-solving activities. Science is an opportunity to learn more about living things, weather and seasons, magnetic force, and care for the environment. Children observe, experiment, and form conclusions.

Social studies instruction helps children learn about being good citizens in a community. They read stories about real people, past and present, as well as gain better understanding of places and cultures.

Classes in art, music, and physical education are additional opportunities for first graders to express themselves. Each child has been blessed with many talents. The goal in first grade is that each child pursues learning and gains great success!

Paulette Reddel

### Second Grade

In second grade, students are avid, enthusiastic learners. They are developing a sense of responsibility and confidence in their abilities. They learn to negotiate friendships and how to support and respect each other.

Second graders are in a pivotal stage of learning to read and write. They delve into analysis of literary elements and practice comparing, predicting, inferring, and summarizing. They enjoy the excitement of reading selections from many different genres and choosing their favorites. Writing is woven into every day’s classroom activities. The children also participate in writing workshops where they plan, draft, revise, publish, and share their writing.

In math, second graders become increasingly aware of the patterns of mathematics. They do more story problems, learn double-digit addition and subtraction, and are introduced to multiplication. They also study time and money, fractions, measurement, and geometry.

Discovery and hands-on learning guide our science curriculum. Second graders use intuitive reasoning, exploration, and cooperation skills in the lab activities which are integrated into each unit.

Social studies spans many important areas including the study of community, earth and its natural resources, economic goods and services, and government and citizenship. Additionally, students study American history, and the year culminates with a study of landmarks, customs, and traditions in the United States and beyond.

The second grade learning journey is dynamic and fun, and children emerge as confident, well-rounded, faithful, and hard-working students.

Stacy Sorg

## Resource Rooms

The special education resource rooms at Grace School are places where children learn, grow, and become better students. Children move in and out throughout the day to work in small groups or individually. We welcome all who need help, support, or maybe just a quiet place to think or work. We take great care to ensure that these rooms are places where children feel safe, where they can learn from their mistakes and experience success.

We use multi-sensory, hands-on techniques to teach reading and math skills, and we recognize and respond to individual learning styles. Both of the resource rooms at Grace are happy places where children receive positive feedback and are encouraged to do their best.

Maureen O'Connor, Special Education Coordinator  
Deirdre Byrne, Resource Teacher

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## Third Grade:

Children take giant steps forward in third grade. They still read, write, and do math, of course, but the way they do these things starts to shift. Students move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” and from “learning to write” to “writing to communicate.” My job as their teacher is to guide them closely, but also move them towards another goal: working independently.

After three years of being “little” in kindergarten through second grade, third graders are now among the “big” kids. Third grade is a time of significant growth as students find themselves standing more firmly than ever in the world of school. The curriculum is more challenging in third grade. Students will advance unevenly at times, but the goal in third grade is to differentiate to meet the needs of all students.

Third graders are asked to respond in writing in almost every subject, even math, so they get a lot of practice expressing their thoughts and ideas. They will write book reports and even learn to do research papers.

In social studies, students focus on communities within the United States and around the world. They study geography, use in-depth map skills, and learn about economics and money.

Reading becomes integral to every other subject in third grade, and will continue to be so through college and beyond. By the end of the year, third graders are expected to read lessons and chapters on their own and to be ready to discuss them in class. In third-grade math students cross the bridge from simple computation to more complex skills. Students will memorize multiplication and division facts, laying a firm foundation for concepts taught in fourth grade.

Third grade science can be divided into two broad categories: science processes and science concepts. As we study basic concepts in science, we also focus on the “how” of the process of science: gathering evidence, taking measurements, constructing models, and connecting data to explain form and function.

Third grade is a great year for having fun while learning. There is always something exciting happening in our classroom.

Mary Berendt

## Fourth Grade

The fourth grade classroom at Grace is inviting, stimulating, and exciting – a kaleidoscope of color, ideas, and information. It stimulates the imagination and invites children from different backgrounds with different learning styles to grow and flourish.

Learning centers and bulletin boards reinforce and enrich the material covered in class. There are quiet areas for reading and writing and space for small groups to work together on social studies and science projects. Students also work in listening centers and other areas that challenge and develop their higher levels of thinking.

Fourth grade students are encouraged to explore their special gifts and talents, and they are supported as they work to improve in areas of weakness. All of this is accomplished with large and small group instruction, peer tutoring, and individualized instruction.

Fourth grade students are also encouraged to grow spiritually and socially, and to learn to solve conflicts in non-violent ways. Time is set aside to discuss social and spiritual issues. Children are listened to, nurtured and supported in their challenge to grow and learn.

Whether it's regular instruction in math, reading, social studies, or science, special units on African American history or the human body there is always something interesting going on in fourth grade.

Jo-Ellyn Dorsey

## Fifth Grade

Enter fifth grade and be prepared for a journey to the past, present and future.

The journey to the past gets started with social studies. Looking back at ancient civilizations helps students understand what our world is like today and why.

Special programs such as the unit on the Protestant Reformation and the “Heart and Soul of Chicago” field trip also help students connect the past with the present.

Science is another subject where students look back and use the work of earlier scientists to help them explore the same concepts in our modern world. Life, earth, and physical science topics are experienced with hands-on activities in the fifth-grade curriculum.

Math and language arts represent the present in the fifth grade journey. Mastering these subjects now is very important to future success in school. Leading and participating in religion



classes, daily devotions, and weekly chapel services are part of the spiritual journey in fifth grade. Fifth graders also take on a larger role in the annual Christmas Eve service. Years from now, many of these students will make the pilgrimage back to Grace to worship as part of the congregation at these traditional services.

The future? The values we discuss and practice on a daily basis in fifth grade will be an important part of students’ future. In my forty years of teaching, I have been blessed to see the variety of firsthand journeys taken by many students. It is truly a wonderful feeling to know I have been a part of those journeys.

Bill Thompson

## Sixth Grade

Sixth grade is a year for preparing for the future, for looking forward to junior high and adolescence. Higher-level thinking, increasing independence, good Christian character, and self-confidence are goals for sixth-grade students.

The year includes a major field trip shared with the fifth graders. Trips follow a two-year cycle. One year holds an outdoor education experience. The second year is the “Heart and Soul of Chicago” field trip, three days of touring Chicago churches and other city sites. Destinations include Holy Name Cathedral, Fourth Presbyterian Church, and the Bahai Temple, along with Chinatown, the John Hancock Building, and Pizzeria Uno. As a final project, students design a model worship space, incorporating elements from places they visited.

One of the big academic events of the sixth grade year is the research paper, when students follow a step-by-step process for researching a topic and writing and revising a paper. Sixth-grade math focuses on pre-algebra, and social studies looks at medieval times. Sixth graders also participate in literature circles which meet weekly for student-led discussions.

Laura Clauss

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## Sports, Music, Art, After-School Enrichment

Grace Lutheran Church has a long tradition of praising God with outstanding choirs and instrumental ensembles. Music at Grace is an expression of faith, an opportunity to strive for excellence, and a source of joy and pleasure. Children sing for Sunday morning worship services several times each year and lead the early-evening services on Christmas Eve. Junior high students may participate in the handbell ensemble. Orchestra and band programs offer lessons and ensembles for students who play instruments. Annual dramatic presentations involve students in other dimensions of performing. Students at Grace attend weekly art classes during the school day and after-school enrichment programs offer additional opportunities for creative learning, with programs that include Lego robotics, drama classes, art, and chess club. After-school sports teams for fifth through eighth grade boys and girls compete against other Lutheran schools in volleyball, basketball, track and cross country.

## Junior High

The goal of the junior high school program at Grace is to prepare students to live out their faith in high school and beyond.

### **“Do your best; let God do the rest!”**

We seek to give students the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in high school. Each student is expected to do his or her best. Students in the junior high handle a challenging curriculum:

- Language arts, including grammar, literature, and writing
- Pre-algebra and algebra
- U. S. history
- Biology, physical, and earth sciences
- Old Testament and New Testament studies
- Foreign language
- Technology

### **“Each one a unique creation”**

Students in the junior high have the opportunity to explore interests and discover talents outside of the classroom during and after the school day.

- Choir and bell choir
- Broadway Jr. productions
- Class trips to Springfield and Washington, D. C.
- Volleyball, basketball, cross country, and track teams

- Science, math, and other competitions

### **“Led by the Spirit”**

We are a Christian community, bound together by God’s love. We worship, pray, work, and play together. The challenges of life in junior high and relationships with parents, teachers, and peers are not always easy, but led by God’s Word, junior high students are encouraged to seek God’s will for their lives in all they do.



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## Media and Technology

The goal of the Grace Library Media Center is to help students become lifelong readers and independent learners. We have materials, both non-fiction and fiction, for all students’ ages and learning styles.

Along with traditional print books, the LMC has audio books, videos, and computers for students to access online materials. Younger students come to the library for story times and materials checkout, while older students use the library for classes in the research skills that are important to academic success, as well as to find material for the recreational reading that is crucial to intellectual development.

The library is available to students during school hours, before and after school, and at home through online access to the databases and discussion forums on our web site. The Library Media Center is a relaxed and friendly place, with comfortable seats for reading, tables for studying and group projects, and a full-time media specialist to help students ask interesting questions and investigate the answers.

Technology resources at Grace include a computer lab, a laptop cart, interactive whiteboards and other equipment that enables teachers to integrate computer literacy instruction with the classroom curriculum.

Christa Holm, Media Specialist