

## Aquinas Catholic Elementary (ACE)

### Curriculum Descriptions:

#### Religion:

- ACE uses the Faith and Life series for 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade religion instruction. Kindergarten uses the Word of Life program. Students learn the history and lessons of the Catholic Church and the Catechism through the lessons and activities. Teachers take time to pray with students throughout the day, both spontaneous and memorized. Catholic prayers and devotions are utilized in the classroom and throughout the school, especially in alignment with the liturgical year.
- Sacraments: Students attend daily Mass each morning. Various priests of the David City Deanery celebrate these Masses, giving students a variety of homily messages and voices to help them live and love their Catholic faith. All students in proper disposition and sacramental stage receive Communion each mass. Students and staff have a penance service each month. All students who have received the sacrament of confession have the opportunity to participate. Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades are prepared to receive Confession, First Communion, and Confirmation.
- Older students take Mass journals to pray the responsorial psalm and take notes from the homily. These are used as reflection during the day on the Daily Mass Board and for 5<sup>th</sup> grade Coffee and Rolls periodically.
- Virtues: Teachers include virtues instruction using content from Open Light Media (Dominican Sisters of Michigan). Students focus on one virtue per month, including some optional virtues homework to practice at home.
- Priests and sisters visit the classrooms to give presentations and answer questions 3-4 times per month.

#### History:

- ACE adopted the Story of Civilization textbook series in 2023. This tells the story of the world in 4 volumes from K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. It provides the spine for other grade level activities to build a solid understanding of the world, its citizens, and how Christianity developed in that same timeline. Students see God's hand in the story of the world.
- Teachers teach additional American history in contextual overlaps with the Wit and Wisdom curriculum.
- Citizenship content is added as appropriate through daily classroom work.

#### Reading:

- ACE adopted the Sonday foundations curriculum in 2024 for all grades PK-5. It includes phonics, blending, sight words, and spelling.
  - The spelling portion of the program is focused on skill-building and not just word memorization. Students learn how letters work to form sounds and syllables and how syllables become words. They learn the rules that govern the letters and the syllables and can then apply those rules to words they do not know, yet. They also learn which words don't follow those rules and have to be memorized.
- ACE initially adopted the Wit and Wisdom reading curriculum on a pilot basis. Most classrooms K-5 started its implementation in 2024. The remaining classrooms implement in 2025. Wit and Wisdom utilizes actual books, non-fiction and fiction, novels, picture books, etc. It includes comprehension, thinking, writing, speaking, and analysis activities. It includes grammar instruction that is also integrated into writing.
- Additional reading support:

- ACE supplements with Sonday support materials implemented by a Title I reading teachers and para-educators for students who need more reading foundation support.
- Paras utilize the Language for Learners program for students who need additional vocabulary and communication support.
- Advanced students experience more challenging content in small reading groups, are encouraged to participate in the Page One reading club, and may receive additional challenge through the school librarian.
- Students memorize poetry during the year to learn beautiful language and maintain memory skills.
- Handwriting is taught through the Sonday program with additional practice in proper formation and cursive instruction in the Catholic Handwriting program. Students learn proper print letter formation beginning in preschool and start cursive letter writing in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

#### Mathematics:

- ACE utilized the Saxon math curriculum. Its strength is in the spiraling practice it provides for students.
- Additional math support:
  - Para-educators work with students to reteach, complete tasks, or practice new content in the classrooms and in independent settings.
  - Advanced students have the opportunity to complete additional math challenge activities through para support and are encouraged to participate on the school's chess club and robotics teams.

#### Science:

- ACE is transitioning from independent books and units to the Amplify program. As teachers develop capacity and exhaust supplies, they transition to the Amplify program. Amplify blends hands-on investigations with literacy-rich activities.
- Classes spend time outdoors in the Outdoor Classroom and at the picnic tables as well as using nature journals to learn to wonder and document the details of God's creation.

#### Computer Skills:

- Students learn to use learning apps, activities, and assessment tools beginning in Kindergarten on a limited basis. They may use an app for 10-15 minutes of a center rotation in most grades.
- Beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students are scheduled for computer lab time each week to learn keyboarding skills and to type in a word document. They begin to learn the tools of the office suite including word documents, storage, spreadsheets, and PowerPoints/presentations. These skills are further developed through 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, including beginning programming/robotics, 3-D printing, engineering/design, and more.
- Students word process hand-written documents beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Students do not access email at the elementary level and all internet usage is filtered and monitored.

#### Music:

- ACE uses the Quaver online music curriculum. It guides students through learning rhythms, music notation, composers, vocal skills, and instruments. It includes classical composers and their histories as well.

#### Physical Education:

- ACE adopted the Spark health and PE materials in 2024. It provides students with skills to build coordination, strength, sports knowledge, rhythm and movement, and more. Health lessons are incorporated into daily activities.