



THE PARISH SCHOOL

Advancing Language.
Empowering Learners.






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Giving voice to children

The story of a child's development can be one of subtle changes and sudden revelations. Indeed each child's tale is unique. Every achievement, trial and winding pathway to progress is what makes your child a remarkable individual.

For many children, language and learning differences are part of the journey. While certainly challenging for any family, such distinctions may only signal the approach to a unique road to be taken in a lifetime of learning. At The Parish School we embrace these differences and through them, work to unlock and inspire the voice inside every child. Our professional team understands that a child's language, social, memory and motor skills are all pieces of the developmental puzzle.

We work to help each child consistently master his or her own voice, through comprehension skills, speaking, reading and writing. We strive to make that voice boldly resonate as part of a child's personal, social and intellectual identity. We capitalize on a child's existing strengths to develop confident voices that take shape through new ways of tackling lessons and activities. We hear excited voices that express thoughts, feelings, accomplishments and ideas like never before. Beautiful voices that whisper, shout and inquire, all to the amazement of teachers, friends and family – and perhaps most importantly, voices that speak to the delight of the child's and parents' ears.

We believe in nurturing the heart and empowering the mind

Our Mission – The Parish School identifies, educates and empowers children who have language and learning differences.

The Journey Begins

The Parish School was established in 1983 when it welcomed six students. Today, thanks to the vision of founder Robbin Parish, a gifted speech-language pathologist, The Parish School has grown to rank among one of the state's most esteemed resources for children who have language and learning differences. The Parish School has been accredited by the AdvancEd Accreditation Commission since 1992.

As evidenced by The Parish School's unique architecture, Robbin envisioned an educational setting reminiscent of a Texas Hill Country summer camp. Children thrive in a nurturing and inspiring environment located on a wooded, 17-acre campus. Decades of shared passion for the power of early intervention and quality education have given those who have come through our doors self-confidence and a love for lifelong learning.

A Philosophy Built on Passion and Pride

At The Parish School, we uphold high standards of excellence. Our philosophy is based on the following principles:

- Students learn best through multisensory teaching methods.
- Children benefit from a balanced curriculum of explicit instruction and hands-on experiences.
- Student achievement increases when the focus is on the whole child – language, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.
- Parents are valued partners in their child's education.



Building self-worth is the foundation of every lesson

Personalized Learning Environment

Children who attend The Parish School have language and learning differences and average to above average learning ability. Individualized and language-based instruction is vital for these children to reach their full learning potential.

Social Thinking®

Children who have language and learning differences frequently need support in understanding and responding to social situations. The Social Thinking® framework is incorporated into our classroom curriculum.

The Good News Book

Communication using the Good News Book is a hallmark of The Parish School. This “journal” records in pictures and words the daily accomplishments (large and small) observed by teachers, parents and students themselves. It focuses on a child’s strengths and provides an avenue to build literacy and writing skills.

Embracing the Outdoors

An outdoor learning center, turtle habitat, butterfly garden, nature trail, and fruit, vegetable and herb gardens are integral parts of our teaching and learning landscape. Well-equipped playgrounds and a covered sports court promote health and the physical well being of students.

EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

The Parish School’s curriculum is designed to challenge students while meeting the specific needs of each child. Small class sizes allow for personalized instruction as our professional team develops specific strategies and compensation skills for each student. Our focus is on discovering how each student learns in order to maximize their educational experience and accomplishments. Lessons blend language and social skills into the curriculum developing self-confident, motivated children who enjoy learning.

Our Professional Team

- **Speech-language pathologists (SLPs)** hold a Master’s degree in Communication Disorders and a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) awarded by the American Speech Language & Hearing Association.
- **Teachers** are certified and have the required training in specific reading methods. Many have advanced degrees in reading, special education and/or are Certified Academic Language Practitioners (CALP).
- **Intra-Curricular Activities Teachers (ICATs)** include therapists and experts in drama, art, music, physical education, digital learning and library sciences.



- **Paraeducators** assist teachers, support students and contribute to classroom instruction. Many have degrees in education, psychology or early childhood development.
- **Occupational therapists (OTs)** are certified and specialize in sensory processing and integration.
- **Mental health professionals** provide counseling support for students and families as needed.

Professional Partnerships

We embrace collaboration with professionals who support a student beyond the doors of The Parish School and consider them important members of the child's team. Outside professionals may include speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, physical therapists or medical doctors. We welcome professionals to communicate with us regularly and attend parent-teacher conferences.

Nancy Kaufman, Director of the Kaufman Children's Center in Michigan and national expert in the area of apraxia, consults regularly with our staff on individual students. The Kaufman Center is also utilized for training our speech-language pathologists in this specialty area.

The Parish School serves as a training site for resident neurologists and pediatricians from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Children's Learning Institute. The goal of this affiliation is to assist medical professionals in identifying and understanding the needs of children who have language and learning differences.



Where others see disabilities we embrace differences

Students who have language and learning differences may have additional diagnoses including social (pragmatic) communication disorder, specific learning disorders, apraxia, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder.

Children who benefit from our program often have a history that includes a low Apgar score, low birth weight, chronic ear infections or delayed developmental milestones. There may be a family history of language and learning differences or a child may be experiencing attention or behavior difficulties.

We embrace these differences and support children through multisensory learning. Multisensory learning is a way of teaching that

integrates sight, sound, smell, taste, movement, touch, problem solving and enjoyment. It results in active student engagement and a higher level of achievement. Student experiences are carefully choreographed to increase social participation, language development and intellectual growth. Our instruction incorporates visual supports and a specialized classroom sound system. Each component contributes to the success of those who learn differently.

Diversity of Experiences through Intra-Curricular Activities (ICATs)

Special instructional activities can identify extraordinary hidden abilities, boost self-esteem and promote self-expression. ICAT classes are available to all students, Levels A/I and higher.



*Individualized curriculum
and instruction support our
students.*

Self-expression can take many forms



Drama Class – Students have multiple opportunities to pretend, role-play and strengthen language and learning concepts. Drama performances are an avenue to find and develop talent, while building self-confidence and increasing public speaking skills.

Art Education – Students experience enjoyment, creativity and emotional development through drawing, painting and sculpting. Children interact with a variety of art media that encourages artistic design and teaches appreciation of the process. Their artwork becomes a bridge to verbal expression.



Music Education – Students engage in musical expression through listening to music, singing, playing instruments and dancing with opportunities for creativity and stress release. Students learn performance skills, practice audience-listening skills, develop self-confidence and improve teamwork strategies through solo and group performances.



Physical Education – Motor skills, coordination, muscle strength and endurance are essential for the health and growth of all children. Group games and introduction to sports develop cooperation, teamwork, social skills, communication competence and sportsmanship.

Library – A positive and nurturing library experience helps children acquire and develop a joy for reading. This part of our curriculum reinforces literacy and listening skills, while fostering responsibility and respect for books. Library time also helps develop student-initiated searches for information.



Digital Learning – Technology use reinforces a child's educational experience. Specific software and applications are selected to improve students' keyboarding skills and enhance academic, language and social learning. Our teaching and learning environment integrates interactive SMART boards, iPads and laptops to prepare students for success in the digital world.



A group of children in green shirts and red sashes are holding up a large red banner. The banner has some faint, illegible text on it. The children are smiling and looking up at the banner. The background is a clear blue sky.

Children of The Parish School are encouraged,
challenged and taught to make the most of
their strengths. Ours is an environment where
students are enthusiastic about learning.

Children develop knowledge through hands-on experiences

Early intervention for a lifetime of learning.

PRESCHOOL

Our early intervention program is guided by best practices as outlined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

- Our preschool program integrates language and social cognition intervention with a preschool curriculum.
- Lead teachers are speech-language pathologists who specialize in language and social development.
- Students receive 15 hours of group language and social therapy per week.
- An early childhood educator prepares the way for later academic learning.
- Class size is capped at 10 students with teacher-student ratios that range from 1:3 to 1:5.
- Our professional team focuses on a child's developmental needs and builds on existing strengths.
- Comprehensive and dynamic intervention is delivered within a nurturing classroom setting.

PILLARS THAT PAVE THE WAY FOR LEARNING SUCCESS

Relationship Development – Research-based approaches develop joint attention skills, imitation practices, attachment and emotional engagement.

Communication Building – A variety of techniques foster the understanding of receptive and expressive language, facilitate the use of words and sentences and develop vocabulary.

Social and Play Skills – Specific strategies guide the development of self-regulation, pretend play, cooperation, conflict resolution and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others.

Group Participation – Teaching methods and reinforcement help children follow directions, take turns, understand class routines, maintain attention and communicate within a group.

Cognitive Learning – Instructional components include emergent literacy, memory and processing abilities, math and writing.

Physical Development – Daily gross and fine motor activities address coordination, strength and dexterity along with promoting personal independence.



Developing habits of high expectations and standards of excellence

Advanced technology, outdoor learning and tailored teaching are among the many advantages of The Parish School.

ELEMENTARY

Our academic program is aligned with the standards developed by the State of Texas and follows best practices as outlined by the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA).

- Elementary curriculum incorporates a wide range of research-based approaches tailored specifically for the needs of each child.
- Lead teachers use multiple techniques to enhance classroom success.
- Speech-language pathologists provide approximately 6-8 hours of group language and social therapy per week.
- Systematic and comprehensive instruction accelerates language, social and academic skills.





What begins with language ends with an inspired learner

SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Reading – Sequential and multisensory approaches are utilized for those “learning to read.” Literature-based reading instruction is employed for those “reading to learn.”

Spelling – Lessons leverage phonetics, rule-based instruction and sight word learning methods. Spelling words correlate with reading programs.

Written Expression – A variety of systematic approaches teach the mechanics of handwriting and composition skills.

Math – Curriculum meets both national and state standards. Activities are designed to develop the language and application of math skills.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving – Critical thinking and problem solving strategies assist students in recognizing problems and generating solutions.

Science and Social Studies – Direct instruction and learning centers target vocabulary development and communication skills with a focus on environmental and world knowledge.

Social Development – A social-cognitive approach builds upon the curriculum taught in

the preschool program. This approach facilitates understanding the perspective of others and relationship development.

Self-Advocacy – Students use learning strategies to complete tasks independently and to advocate for their individual learning needs.

Executive Functioning – Organizing work, planning ahead and managing time are an integral part of the school day.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Measuring Student Success

Student achievement is measured in a variety of ways. Baseline performance is established upon enrollment. Our professional team develops a Therapy Care Plan (TCP) that targets essential language, social and academic skills. The school administers standardized assessments to measure student growth in a quantitative manner. Performance-based and observational assessments throughout the year include completed projects and personal portfolios that document student progress.

Written reports that communicate the professional team’s comprehensive assessment of progress are provided three times per year. Parent-teacher conferences are held in October and February.

Families are an important part of our team



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Philosophy

Parents are the most influential teachers in a student's educational journey. Empowered parents enhance a child's potential for success. Progress is optimal when parents understand and are actively involved in the learning process.



Opportunities to Connect

- Teachers and therapists are available via email, telephone and conferences during established times.
- Daytime and evening family education opportunities are available.
- Classroom observation windows with specialized sound systems enable parents to observe their child in the classroom.
- A Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) provides a platform for networking, support and service to the school.
- Educational resources include books, DVDs and The Parish School website (www.parishschool.org).
- Social and family events provide memorable school experiences.
- Short-term counseling services are available to all Parish School students and their families.



A lifetime of learning one step at a time

The Parish School believes in nurturing the heart and empowering the mind. Inside our classrooms and on our grounds, students, parents, instructors and staff are part of a family unlike any other. Yet like every family, at The Parish School we rely on one another, so that we all may grow together. With open arms and hearts, we invite your family to join ours.







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