LOWER SCHOOL
AT A GLANCE

St. Francis
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

Lower School students are encouraged to reflect and grow in the classroom as they learn to advocate for themselves and others, deepen their own and others' knowledge, and positively impact the world in which they play a part.

2026–27 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC LEARNING (SEL) APPROACH

This research-informed approach to teaching focuses on the strong link between social-emotional skills and academic, personal, and civic success. Integrating SEL into the St. Francis curriculum helps students develop four core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

We offer a balanced physical education program that emphasizes the values of health-related fitness. Lower School students attend physical education class four times per week and enjoy a wide variety of activities presented in a well-structured manner.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Lower School students participate in visual and performing arts courses in which they have opportunities to explore various forms of creative expression. Building a strong foundation in the principles of art, music, and creative drama, taking risks, growing in confidence, and working collaboratively are cornerstones of the program.

SPANISH

Spanish is woven into the daily learning environment, helping to facilitate language acquisition and retention. Engaging in hands-on learning experiences, including games, songs, and meaningful projects, helps students build their Spanish skills. Throughout each grade level, students explore elements of Spanish culture and work to improve their Spanish reading and writing skills.

LOWER SCHOOL CHAPEL/RELIGION

A primary component of our mission is to help our students appreciate and engage in the wonderful world God has made and entrusted to our care. As we gather twice per week in chapel, we discover that our relationship with the Creator and Redeemer forms the heart and soul of our school family. Our chapel services are led by the fourth graders, and each Lower School student serves as a member of the chapel party during the school year. During weekly religion class, students engage in purposeful activities designed to help nurture their spiritual growth.

2026–27 CORE CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

In a nurturing, learner-centered environment that encourages active student engagement, risk-taking, and independence, Lower School students concentrate on the following skills:

KINDERGARTEN

HUMANITIES

- Developing and building reading skills through a balanced approach to literacy, which includes differentiated phonics instruction, sight word recognition, shared reading, independent reading, and read-alouds.
- Decoding using learned reading strategies.
- Reading daily to build fluency, stamina, and confidence.
- Building listening skills and learning comprehension strategies through interactive read-alouds.
- Engaging in writing for authentic purposes across genres, including narrative, informative, opinion, and poetry.
- Cycling through all stages of the writing process.
- Applying capitalization, punctuation, and spacing, as taught and reinforced through Writer's Workshop.
- Understanding and applying phonics principles, word patterns, and high-frequency words in daily reading and writing.
- Developing a precise pencil grip and proper letter formation.
- Integrating social studies concepts and engaging in research via inquiry.

MATH

- Counting, representing, comparing, and writing whole numbers.
- Classifying objects and counting quantities accurately.
- Understanding addition as putting together and adding to, and understanding subtraction as taking apart and taking from.
- Working with numbers to 20 to gain foundations for place value.
- Building skip counting skills.
- Describing and comparing measurable attributes.
- Recognizing, comparing, and composing two- and three-dimensional shapes.

STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

- Using discovery and observation to investigate and understand scientific concepts such as the five senses, force and motion, weather, and living/nonliving things.
- Asking questions and defining problems, planning and investigating, collecting and recording data, and engaging in critical conversations.
- Engaging in arguments from evidence.
- Practicing the engineering design process: defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, designing a solution, creating a prototype, and optimizing its design.
- Developing and expanding critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills to solve complex engineering, science, and math problems.
- Practicing logical thinking through basic coding and programming.
- Integrating technology and mathematics to deepen understanding.

TECHNOLOGY

- Exploring and building proficiency with apps, websites, and software that support core curriculum concepts and differentiated instruction.
- Laying the foundation for an understanding of digital citizenship.
- Using iPads and Promethean Boards to support and enhance learning.

1 FIRST GRADE

HUMANITIES

- Reading through a balanced approach to literacy, which includes differentiated phonics instruction, sight word recognition, shared reading, independent reading, and read-alouds.
- Engaging in daily, rich literary discussions as a community of readers, where others' opinions are respected.
- Practicing fluency and comprehension strategies through shared, independent, and partner reading from self-selected and leveled texts.
- Focusing on specific reading comprehension strategies to delve deeper into texts.
- Recognizing literary elements (genre, character, setting, problem/solution).
- Writing authentic pieces across genres, including narrative, informative, opinion, and poetry.
- Setting goals, reflecting, and developing writing voice and craft.
- Cycling through all stages of the writing process.
- Applying capitalization and punctuation rules, parts of speech, and editing skills, taught through systematic, literature-based grammar lessons.
- Understanding and applying phonics principles, word patterns, and high-frequency words in daily reading and writing.
- Continuing to strengthen handwriting skills.
- Integrating social studies concepts and engaging in research via inquiry.

MATH

- Understanding place value.
- Representing and solving word problems and equations involving addition and subtraction within 20.
- Extending the counting sequence and counting by various intervals.
- Growing an understanding of working with a number line.
- Building math fact fluency.
- Measuring and comparing lengths using non-standard units.
- Telling and writing time.
- Recognizing, counting, and comparing coins.
- Recognizing, describing, comparing, and manipulating two- and three-dimensional shapes.
- Representing and interpreting data.

STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

- Using discovery and observation to investigate and understand scientific concepts such as sound, light, space, seasons, the water cycle, plants, and animals.
- Asking questions and defining problems, planning and investigating, collecting and recording data, and engaging in critical conversations.
- Engaging in arguments from evidence.
- Practicing the engineering design process: defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, designing a solution, creating a prototype, and optimizing its design.
- Developing and expanding critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills to solve complex engineering, science, and math problems.
- Practicing logical thinking through basic coding and programming.
- Integrating technology and mathematics to deepen understanding.

TECHNOLOGY

- Becoming familiar with the keyboard.
- Exploring and building proficiency with apps, websites, and software that support core curriculum concepts and differentiated instruction.
- Developing an awareness of and practicing digital citizenship.
- Using iPads and Promethean Boards to support and enhance learning.

2 SECOND GRADE

HUMANITIES

- Progressing from "learning to read" to "reading to learn".
- Engaging in daily, rich literary discussions as a community, where others' opinions are respected.
- Practicing fluency and comprehension strategies through independent and partner reading.
- Recognizing literary elements (genre, plot, character, setting, problem/solution, theme).
- Writing across genres, including narrative, informative, opinion, and poetry, with increased independence.
- Cycling through all stages of the writing process.
- Setting goals, reflecting, and developing writing voice and craft.
- Applying capitalization and punctuation rules, parts of speech, and editing skills, taught through systematic, literature-based grammar lessons.
- Understanding and applying word patterns and high-frequency words in daily reading and writing.
- Introducing cursive handwriting.
- Integrating social studies units focused on understanding communities from global to local, with a focus on Houston.
- Engaging in the research process to promote inquiry and independent learning.

MATH

- Understanding place value.
- Using place value and properties of operations to add and subtract multi-digit numbers.
- Representing and solving multi-step problems involving addition and subtraction.
- Strengthening math fact fluency.
- Working with equal groups of objects to gain a foundation for multiplication.
- Understanding the concepts of perimeter and area and investigating how they relate to addition and multiplication.
- Recognizing and describing fractional parts of a whole.
- Estimating and measuring length in standard units.
- Working with time and money.
- Recognizing, drawing, and analyzing two- and three-dimensional shapes.
- Representing and interpreting data.

STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

- Using discovery and observation to investigate and understand scientific concepts such as matter, heat, earth science, biomes, habitats, food chains, and plants.
- Asking questions and defining problems, planning and investigating, collecting and recording data, and engaging in critical conversations.
- Developing fair tests to answer scientific questions.
- Engaging in arguments from evidence.
- Practicing the engineering design process: defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, designing a solution, creating a prototype, and optimizing its design.
- Developing and expanding critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills to solve complex engineering, science, and math problems.
- Expanding the use of logical thinking through basic coding and programming.
- Integrating technology and mathematics to deepen understanding.

TECHNOLOGY

- Becoming familiar with the keyboard.
- Broadening research skills using the internet and the school's database subscriptions.
- Exploring and building proficiency with apps, websites, and software that support core curriculum concepts and differentiated instruction.
- Using technology to communicate information and ideas.
- Deepening understanding of and practicing digital citizenship.
- Using iPads and Promethean Boards to support and enhance learning.

THIRD GRADE

HUMANITIES

- Reading across genres to build a more robust personal "reading life".
- Engaging in meaningful discussions about reading to reflect upon personal growth and set goals.
- Applying reading comprehension strategies, including making thoughtful connections, observations, and "wonderings" that are modeled and taught during Reader's Workshop.
- Using context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Writing across genres, including narrative, research-based informative, persuasive, and original folktales.
- Cycling through the stages of the writing process.
- Examining writing mechanics and parts of speech taught through systematic, integrated grammar instruction.
- Understanding and applying word patterns and high-frequency words in daily reading and writing.
- Practicing cursive handwriting.
- Applying nonfiction reading, writing, and research skills through social studies units focused on exploring countries and cultures around the world.
- Developing communication skills through collaborative projects and individual presentations.

MATH

- Using place value understanding and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic.
- Identifying and explaining patterns in arithmetic.
- Developing strategic thinking to solve increasingly complex story problems.
- Representing and solving problems involving multiplication and division.
- Gaining familiarity with factors and multiples.
- Comparing, recognizing, and generating equivalent fractions and placing them on a number line.
- Estimating and measuring time.
- Extending understanding of area and perimeter.
- Sorting, classifying, analyzing, and constructing two- and three-dimensional shapes.
- Drawing and identifying lines and angles.
- Solving problems involving measurement, including mass and volume, and estimation.
- Representing and interpreting data.

STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

- Using discovery and observation to investigate and understand scientific concepts such as plant/animal adaptations, earth science, weather, climate, simple machines, forms of energy, electricity, circuits, and matter.
- Asking questions and defining problems, planning and investigating, collecting and recording data, and engaging in critical conversations.
- Developing fair tests to answer scientific questions.
- Engaging in arguments from evidence.
- Practicing the engineering design process: defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, designing a solution, creating a prototype, and optimizing its design.
- Developing and expanding critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills to solve complex engineering, science, and math problems.
- Writing programs and animations using coding and programming concepts.
- Integrating technology and mathematics to deepen understanding.

TECHNOLOGY

- Building keyboarding skills.
- Conducting online research using the internet and the school's database subscriptions.
- Exploring and building proficiency with apps, websites, and software that support core curriculum concepts and differentiated instruction.
- Understanding and practicing digital citizenship.
- Using iPads and Promethean Boards to support and enhance learning.

FOURTH GRADE

HUMANITIES

- Reading independently across genres.
- Engaging in meaningful discussions about reading to reflect upon personal growth and set goals.
- Applying reading comprehension skills, with emphasis on character, theme, and synthesis across texts.
- Using context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Writing across genres, including narrative, research-based informative, persuasive, literary essays, and poetry.
- Cycling through all stages of the writing process with increasing independence.
- Understanding and applying grammar concepts taught through a systematic, integrated approach.
- Applying spelling patterns, analyzing irregular words, and exploring how words are related in spelling and meaning, as well as their histories.
- Integrating social studies through units and book clubs focused on United States regions in which geography and historical perspectives are researched and analyzed.
- Collaborating with peers to develop, organize, and create multimedia presentations.
- Developing critical thinking skills and strategies to promote accountable talk and productive discussion.

MATH

- Using the four operations to solve equations involving whole numbers.
- Writing and interpreting numerical expressions.
- Analyzing patterns and relationships.
- Using place value and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic.
- Extending understanding of multiplication and division.
- Understanding prime numbers, factors, and multiples.
- Finding and using common denominators to add and subtract fractions.
- Understanding and comparing decimals and fractions.
- Solving problems involving measurement and conversion of measurements within a given measurement system.
- Understanding concepts of volume.
- Applying the concepts of area and perimeter.
- Classifying polygons.
- Representing and interpreting data.
- Graphing points on the coordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems.

STEM

(science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

- Using discovery and observation to investigate and understand scientific concepts such as forces, motion, energy, circuits, weather, natural disasters, electricity, geology, astronomy, life science, and inventions.
- Asking questions and defining problems, planning and investigating, collecting and recording data, and engaging in critical conversations.
- Constructing explanations and engaging in arguments from evidence.
- Practicing the engineering design process: defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, designing a solution, creating a prototype, and optimizing its design.
- Developing and expanding critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills to solve complex engineering, science, and math problems.
- Writing original programs and animations using complex coding and programming concepts.
- Integrating technology and mathematics to deepen understanding.

TECHNOLOGY

- Beginning to use word processing to publish original compositions.
- Using digital tools to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically source information.
- Creating more sophisticated visual and audio presentations to share learning with others.
- Utilizing apps, websites, and software that support core curriculum concepts and differentiated instruction.
- Practicing digital citizenship.
- Using iPads and Promethean Boards to support and enhance learning.
- Building keyboarding skills.

CONTACT INFORMATION

MARSHA PALMER
Head of Lower School
713-458-6121
MPalmer@StFrancisHouston.org

KRISTIN BRYAN
Assistant Head of Lower School
713-458-6176
KBryan@StFrancisHouston.org

MELISSA ARANDA
Lower School Office Manager
713-458-6122
MAranda@StFrancisHouston.org

JENNIFER GLOVER
Head of Enrollment Management
713-458-6112
JGlover@StFrancisHouston.org

MARGARET YERKOVICH
Assistant Head of Admissions
713-458-6152
MYerkovich@StFrancisHouston.org

St. Francis
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

PINEY POINT CAMPUS + MAILING
335 Piney Point Road
Houston, TX 77024

COUPER CAMPUS
2300 South Piney Point Road
Houston, TX 77063

www.StFrancisHouston.org

P: 713-458-6100