

HMS Gains State License for Preschool

HMS Richards is ready to welcome more three to five year-old children into its newly State-licensed preschool program! Miranda Gomez, a highly qualified and experienced preschool teacher, has taken on the role of Preschool Director. She worked tirelessly this summer taking classes and completing the lengthy application process in order for the school to expand this program. "Working with the children and teaching them is just my passion," says Mrs. Gomez. "I love walking in the door every day to see the children's smiles and their eagerness to learn."

She works closely with Kristie Smith, who is in charge of the kindergarten program, and also helps to design and teach the preschool curriculum in the combined classroom.

The number of families interested in preschool at HMS has increased dramatically in recent years, and the State license allows them to include a greater number of 3 and 4-year-olds in its program. The license process included making sure every aspect of the program met the highest standards. One visible change at HMS was fencing in the playground to help keep this younger group of children safe while playing.

Similar to other multi-grade classrooms at HMS, the preschool program shares a room and is often combined with the kindergarten class. Mrs. Gomez and Mrs. Smith are able to partner together to meet the needs of the individual student. They strive to individualize the curriculum to meet each child at their current learning level. "My favorite part about teaching this age group is that they love to learn," says Mrs. Smith. "This particular class is very inquisitive and are constantly asking me how to spell things and love learning about letters."

Learning in the Preschool and Kindergarten classroom is very hands-on and full of playful experiences. They might be spotted exploring campus and the church on a "letter-walk" where they search for things that begin with the letter of the week. One of children's favorite times of day is craft time, when they get to be creative and work on developing fine motor skills. Another highlight are the frequent field trips. One of the favorites this year so far was a fishing trip that culminated their science unit on fish. Currently, they are incorporating project-based learning by having children learn about and design their own pizzeria.

The most important aspect of the preschool program is that it is Christ-centered. The children are led in worship every morning and Bible stories are taught daily. This year's school theme is Super-Heroes of the Bible. They are reminded each day how much Jesus loves them and how they can learn to always show love to others. Mrs. Smith finds, "The children in this class are very loving. They are constantly giving hugs and I love how sweet they are."

Currently there are 12 children enrolled in the preschool and kindergarten and they may have up to 15 students on a given day. Since many of the children are part-time, there are more openings depending on the days selected. The school offers flexibility to help meet the needs of parents. The three-year-old program is offered for half-days (8-12), while the four-year-old and kindergarten program may be half or full days (8-3). Parents may choose how many days per week they would like to send their child. If you are interested in enrolling your child or finding out more, please call our office at 970-667-2427 or find us online at hmsrichards.org.

By Jill Harlow
7th & 8th Grade Language Arts Teacher
ELL Teacher at Campion