



EPIPHANY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Let the Children come to Me - Luke 18

The Catholic faith is the center of Epiphany Catholic School and is the reason for its existence.

The school challenges all students to reach their full potential in all areas of the curriculum: spiritually, academically, and socially. To help the students strive for academic excellence, teachers use whole group and small group instruction, interactive lessons, class discussions, cooperative learning, project based activities, and authentic assessments. Each grade level uses many types of supplemental materials in addition to textbooks aligned to state learning standards. At Epiphany, core curriculum areas include religion, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, Spanish, art, music, physical education, and computer/technology.

Religion is the core of Epiphany Catholic School. While it is integrated across the curriculum, religion classes use the Loyola Press series for religious formation. The class focus is faith development, knowledge of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Church history and traditions, prayer and adoration, service and love of others. Additionally, all students attend weekly Mass and monthly adoration, Rosary, and Stations of the Cross. Periodic religious events include Corpus Christi, Benediction, and Reconciliation.

Character Education, with an emphasis on virtues and morality, is woven into the Epiphany curriculum at all grade levels. In addition, students in preschool through eighth grade attend two Character Education classes every month. Epiphany has implemented *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* and *Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program* for the elementary students. At the middle school levels students focus on the prevention of bullying and cyber bullying, moral dilemmas, and learn conflict resolution and peer mediation skills.

The goals of Epiphany's language arts curriculum range from learning to read and write to using reading and writing to learn across the curriculum. At each stage reading and writing are coupled as Epiphany teachers believe that good readers are good writers.

The Epiphany mathematics program has three components in addition to core instruction based on the mathematics textbooks at each grade level. These are *Simple Solutions* daily review, homework assignments aligned with the Common Core State Standards for teaching mastery and fluency.

The science curriculum at Epiphany Catholic School spirals from kindergarten through eighth grade using textbook lessons, hands-on experiments and activities, the scientific process, research of various topics, and field trips. The curriculum also integrates science content and experiences with other areas of the curriculum. It provides students with many opportunities to develop reading, writing, and math skills through meaningful activities and strategies. Lab experiences and other hands-on projects are an integral part of the instruction.

The social studies curriculum instructs students about political systems, economics, history, geography, and social systems. Elementary students begin with appropriate experiences about neighborhoods and family. Middle grade and junior high students move on to study world history, American history, citizenship, and government. Annual



1002 East College Avenue, Normal, IL 61761 309-452-3268
Pre-School: ext. 201 Elementary: ext. 300 Junior High: ext. 320 Fax: 309-454-8087

field trips to the state legislature, state and county historical museums, and state and local historical sites augment the classroom lessons.

All Epiphany Catholic School students in kindergarten through eighth grade receive instruction in Spanish, beginning with a weekly class in the primary grades and increasing to daily for grades seven and eight. The aim of the Spanish curriculum is to build a strong foundation for the students to succeed at the high school level, while opening the students' eyes to an understanding and appreciation of the richness of other cultures.

Epiphany students enjoy a wealth of experiences in the fine arts curriculum. Art instruction includes understanding of basic art principles and art appreciation. Students display art within the school building and the community along with participating at local, state, and national art competitions. The music program features instruction in music theory, choral singing, and instrumental performance. Students perform in school concerts, at community events, and in solo and ensemble contests. Classes attend professional and high school productions and produce classroom plays to further their experience of drama.

Physical Education is a component of Epiphany Catholic School's emphasis on the physical development of each child. The focus on physical education begins in kindergarten. All Epiphany students attend physical education classes ninety minutes weekly. The physical education curriculum encompasses team sports, fitness activities, choosing healthy lifestyles, and personal safety. Students in grades four through eight are eligible to participate in a wide-range of co-curricular programs including not only athletic but also Speech and Scholastic Bowl. Epiphany athletics have had great success in state series administered by the Illinois Elementary School Association.

All Epiphany students participate in technology classes. Skills taught are integrated throughout all other areas of learning. The curriculum is sequential and progressive with all students receiving instruction in keyboarding, internet usage, word processing, using spreadsheets, inserting graphics, developing presentations, movie making, and podcasting. The use of SMART Boards and other technology has become an integral part of these classes.

Epiphany Catholic School's reading curriculum is standards-based from preschool through eighth grade. It begins in the preschool program with Rowland Reading Foundation's *Happily Ever After* Program which integrates literature and phonics for early learners. This provides a foundation of reading for success in kindergarten and the lower elementary grades. In addition, Epiphany's kindergarten and first grade classrooms successfully piloted Rowland Reading Foundation's *Superkids* program: an integrated program that includes phonetic awareness, decoding skills, reading comprehension, and spelling, as well as written language skills such as grammar and English conventions. A well-developed program, *Superkids* builds reading skills within each academic year and from one year to the next. The teachers use whole group, small group, and individual teaching activities to reinforce skills to achieve a high success rate for all of the students. The school has recently extended the *Superkids* program through the second grade.

The third through eighth grade reading/language arts program is also standards-based and focused on challenging literature. The teachers use a combination of literary novels, informational texts, and basal stories. Comprehension skills and reading strategies are taught through these readings. A variety of genres are covered each year with special attention paid to covering many genres throughout a student's time at Epiphany. Writing skills emphasizing strong organization and elaboration, the use of supporting details and examples, and essential writing conventions are taught and integrated into the reading program. At the middle school level, Epiphany students receive two separate class periods daily: one of language arts and one of literature instruction.

In addition, Epiphany students in first through fifth grade develop spelling skills through a combination of spelling assignments and tests. By the middle school level, the focus shifts to vocabulary assignments and tests geared toward building a strong working vocabulary and increased recognition of word roots, word families, and etymologies. The goal is to provide Epiphany students with the reading comprehension and writing skills required to master increasingly challenging reading across the curriculum and to demonstrate the writing prowess that characterizes good literature.

For those students struggling within the language arts curriculum, Epiphany offers help and assistance through the *Academy of Reading and Math* software program. Struggling students can be referred to the Academy for early testing followed by year-long individualized skill building. Epiphany strives to help all students become life-long readers and strong readers in all content areas.

The mathematics curriculum at Epiphany Catholic School is correlated with the Common Core State Standards and with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards for School Mathematics. Instruction is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills in problem solving, pattern identification, data analysis, and communication. Mathematical understanding and procedural skills are viewed as equally important.

The ability to articulate mathematical concepts demonstrates understanding; therefore students are encouraged to explain their work and defend their selection of strategy, assuring understanding of mathematical concepts. Manipulatives are utilized in classrooms to foster conceptual understanding of key ideas.

Simple Solutions Mathematics is used as a supplement to the core mathematics textbooks in first through eighth grades, providing daily distributed practice. This practice allows students to regularly and systematically revisit material that has been introduced by the classroom teacher. This supplement provides for the reinforcement and practice of skills which are critical to the development of automaticity and fluency. An additional supplement to the mathematics curriculum, *Mathletics* offers students in grades 3-5 an opportunity to practice their Math at home to earn certificates for extra credit.

For those Epiphany students struggling with the current curriculum, the *Academy of Reading and Math* computer program by AutoSkills is used to supplement and reinforce key mathematical concepts introduced in the classroom. The program is also used to provide an enrichment opportunity for those excelling in mathematics.

Performance based assessments are emphasized in the progressive curriculum. Eighth grade students who qualify have the opportunity to enroll in a high school algebra course at our local Catholic high school.

It is Epiphany's goal to prepare its students to fully participate in a 21st century world through the daily use of technologies. Class projects are designed with 21st century skills in mind: collaboration, critical thinking, sharing, and producing. Epiphany School integrates technology into the curriculum in myriad ways. For each grade level the students have a semester long computer/technology class. The curriculum includes keyboarding skills, study of hardware and various software, and the regular use of software such as Power Point, Word, and Excel. Ethical behavior on the internet has been addressed through this technology class and will also be covered within a new Digital Citizenship curriculum being developed for fifth through eighth grades. This Digital Citizenship curriculum will help students, teachers, and parents discuss safety and ethics as they pertain to a digital world.

Most importantly, Epiphany's desire is to provide daily lessons with the regular integration and use of technology. The two-building campus houses two separate computer labs (at the elementary and middle school levels) that include SMART Boards, projectors, and digital cameras. In 2011, three carts of lap tops and two carts of iPads

were purchased and are used at all grade levels. The middle school lab also allows for the regular use of clickers. In addition, all classrooms currently have SMART Boards and mounted projectors. Classrooms in the newly-renovated K-3 wing have two SMART boards. Epiphany has begun administering some tests on computers over its intranet providing students with practice in computer-based testing situations. All middle school students have been given school provided email addresses for use with school assigned web-based projects using Web 2.0 tools such as VoiceThread, TimeRime, and Glogster. In addition, students are encouraged to create presentations and quizzes using SMART Notebook Software.

To better assist both students and parents, Epiphany teachers for all grade levels are expected to maintain current web pages that provide regular communication between school and home. All school news is provided on Epiphany's main page replacing its paper based weekly newsletter. Also, the principal supplies information weekly in messages contained in the parish bulletin. A Technology Task Force, comprised of teachers representative of all grade levels, works throughout the school year to provide a vision for Epiphany's integration of technology into all content areas. Starting with this current year, teachers have been invited to "Lunch and Learn" sessions led by this task force. Through regular lunches, teachers are introduced to and work with Web 2.0 tools. Epiphany Catholic School sees all students as 21st century learners and strives to provide its students with the tools and skills they will need to be successful in the future.

Epiphany Catholic School faculty members strive to meet the individual needs of all students by employing a variety of appropriate and challenging instructional methods. This variety is based on the fact that children have different learning styles and it is necessary to use a myriad of strategies to ensure that all students reach their full potential. Differentiated instruction is used in order that students can be provided with different avenues to acquire content, to process ideas, and to develop product.

All classroom instruction is based on a standards aligned curriculum and integrates a best practices philosophy. Instructional units are developed to include activities which require students to organize, interpret or evaluate information. Varied performance based assessments, with clear and realistic rubrics are used to evaluate the effectiveness and success of each unit. The school's Response to Intervention (RtI) integrates individual assessment and intervention strategies to maximize student achievement in all grade levels.

A learning specialist is available to provide reinforcement to those students in areas where additional help is needed. She also assists in extending or enriching lessons to challenge those who excel. The *Academy of Reading and Math* is accessible to those students who require either support or enrichment.

A CARES committee (Collaborative Action and Response for Educational Success), consisting of the learning resource teacher, principal, classroom teacher, and several members from the local public school resource department, addresses specialized learning needs of individual students at risk. Intervention plans are devised and enacted through the CARES team and follow-up takes place on an annual basis.

Epiphany Catholic School is committed to continually expanding and strengthening the knowledge base of its faculty. In the past several years, Epiphany has partnered with the *Modern Red SchoolHouse Institute*, a nonprofit organization that seeks to provide customized training for school improvement, to enhance its curriculum and academic performance. *Modern Red SchoolHouse* has provided the faculty with training in scope and sequence, differentiating instruction, unit development, understanding different learning modalities, performance based assessments, and data interpretation and analysis. With this training, Epiphany developed a curricular sequence for mastery of the Illinois State Standards and more recently the Common Core State Standards at all grade levels.

Epiphany teachers have embraced the use of technology in their classrooms. The Technology Task Force works to provide a vision and familiarize the teachers with the most effective use of emerging technologies. Teachers have attended technology trainings sessions on the use of SMART Boards and SMART Board Notebook software. Additional regular training is offered on the use of educational web sites and web resources. Epiphany teachers are encouraged to attend conferences such as the Illinois Education and Technology Conference and are provided with the opportunity to share their gained knowledge with their colleagues. Teachers collaborate on a regular basis to share ideas with each other.

In addition to technology training, Epiphany teachers are encouraged to attend content area conferences and workshops such as the Annual Conference on the Teaching of Mathematics organized by the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Teachers also avail themselves of continuing education either through the Regional Office of Education or the graduate programs at Illinois State University.

Faith based professional development is provided through the Peoria Diocese and Epiphany School. Recent topics have included classroom management, the motivation of disruptive students, and the prevention of bullying all within a faith based context. Epiphany School believes that continuing professional development is one of the keys to helping students reach their full potential academically and spiritually.

Epiphany Catholic School has a leadership structure that is headed by the pastor and the principal. As parish and school leaders, they ensure that policies, programs, and resources focus on improving student achievement and helping students develop as young Catholic men and women. The pastor and principal seek advice from the School Advisory Board, consisting of school parents and parish members, to ensure that they are addressing the concerns and values of the Epiphany parish and school community.

Epiphany Catholic School staff, teaching and non-teaching, serve on working Task Force Committees designated for Curriculum, Organizational Structures, Technology, and Parent/Community Involvement. Committees are formed on an annual basis and teachers rotate chair leadership. Monthly working task force meetings are held to share information and make recommendations to the principal on such matters as school safety, new teacher mentorship, curriculum, staff technology training needs, school assembly programs, and all school service projects.

Epiphany teachers engage in shared leadership for the curriculum of the school. They have worked together during in-service activities on the school's scope and sequence and have aligned the school's curriculum with the Illinois State Standards. Textbook selection, instructional minutes, differentiated instruction, and units of instruction have been topics of teacher training over the past several years.

At Epiphany Catholic School, through collegial leadership, all share the responsibility and opportunity to provide an educational program that supports and nurtures the spiritual, academic, social, and emotional growth of Epiphany students.

