

virginiaacademy



Lower School Program Guide
2023-24

This Program Guide provides an overall programmatic view of the lower school, which includes kindergarten through 5th grade. For policies and procedures, please refer to our parent/student handbook. For more specific details regarding anything in this guide, please contact our Lower School Principal.

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Accreditation

Virginia Academy is fully accredited by the International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which also certifies our faculty and affords Virginia Academy full accreditation with the state of Virginia.

International Christian Accrediting Association (ICCA)

ICAA exists to assist Christian educational institutions in improving education within its Christian distinctive by establishing an organizational witness to their credibility of performance, integrity, and quality. For more information, visit www.icaa.us.

Southern Association of Colleges & Schools (Cognia)

The mission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is to improve education in the South through accreditation. School leaders engaged in Cognia Accreditation will:

- Take stock of themselves in relation to a set of research-based quality standards
- Establish a vision, assess their current reality, implement an improvement plan, monitor progress, and evaluate results
- Enhance the school's best thinking with the insights and perspectives of an external review team

Learn more at www.cognia.org

Mission and Vision

Mission

Virginia Academy is a college preparatory Christian school serving families with children age 2 through 12th grade. Virginia Academy exists to prepare students for their best life through...

Faith

A confidence in God

Scholarship

A passion for knowledge

Purpose

A life with a clear mission

Vision

We see Virginia Academy graduates making a positive impact in every arena of life!

Academic Overview

Virginia Academy Lower School is a diverse and supportive learning community where students are developing a life-long love of learning and being prepared for their best futures. Smaller class sizes, favorable ratios, and teachers focused on individual student success help everyone receive the attention and support needed to excel at their highest level.

Christian character development and mentoring help students to become the best versions of themselves - poised not only for success in higher education but also in life. Music, performing arts, STEM, and art enrichment help to provide for a well-rounded education and a life-long love of learning. Extended hours provide parents with the flexibility of schedule & peace of mind to know their child is in safe care.

We use a blended approach to develop our lower school curriculum. Grades K-2nd use Abeka and BJU. 3-5th use a combination of McGraw Hill and BJU. These curriculums are used as tools and resources for our teachers. The lower school teachers at Virginia Academy seek to provide a structured environment where children can learn more about God's world from a Biblical perspective. Students learn about God's wonderful world and how they can use their understanding to bless Him and others. The following provides the core of our lower school academic programming.

Lower School Subjects

BIBLE - Deep Roots (K - 5th)

Deep Roots Curriculum aims to further students' biblical understanding by using practical activities and lessons to teach students how to apply their faith to everyday living and help develop their core values. They will learn a Biblical Worldview by viewing life through a Biblical perspective. Many online resources allow parents to learn and grow alongside each student! There are ready and available online tools, study guides, and videos to facilitate learning at home.

READING/PHONICS - ABeka Publications (K - 2nd)

The K - 2nd-grade reading program aims to build upon the excellent phonics training received in the preschool to develop strong reading skills. Comprehension skills, advanced work analysis, and vocabulary development are stressed to help the pupil increase his ability to read narrative and informational material independently. Students reinforce the application of phonics rules in their reading. Readings include excerpts from children's classics, biographies, historical events, poetry, scripture readings, etc., to develop a well-rounded love for reading in various genres. By the end of 2nd grade, students will have developed a strong phonetic foundation in reading to build upon.

READING - BJU Press (3rd - 5th)

Students in grades 3 - 5 will be exposed to various genres. BJU Press selects texts that support a Biblical worldview and Christian character development. Passages emphasize literary skills, reading comprehension strategies, and vocabulary development through feature pages before and after each passage. Our 3rd - 5th-grade reading curriculum aims to inspire a love for reading and teach an appreciation for literature.

LANGUAGE STUDIES - ABeka Publication (K - 2nd)

Students will benefit from Abeka's commitment to emphasizing reliable grammatical and literary structure that prepares them for analysis and practice. The desirable result is mastery with the development of critical thinking. Because of this emphasis, students see the importance of correct spelling and continually expanding one's vocabulary. Students are given examples of the best literature of the ages, opportunities for improving speaking and writing ability based on a strong grammatical foundation, and individual discernment based on a biblical worldview.

ENGLISH - BJU Press (3rd - 5th)

Approaching communication from a Biblical worldview, students will learn the importance of communicating effectively through five major themes and areas of their lives: friendship, authority, work, celebration, and understanding differences amongst people. Students will learn foundational writing, listening, speaking, and grammar skills to help develop a strong language arts foundation. Lessons include daily guided practice with independent activities, analyzing sentence structure, identifying grammar and mechanics errors, and journaling prompts. Songs and hands-on activities are used to reinforce important skills and concepts from each unit. Students also learn how to incorporate dictionary and thesaurus usage in their writing. Opinion, narrative, and informational writing projects are incorporated within each grade at a developmentally appropriate level.

ARITHMETIC - ABeka Publications (K - 2nd)

A strong foundation in math facts, money, time, and place value is established early on in Kindergarten and first grade. These concepts are reviewed and built on in 2nd grade, where students will explore more difficult concepts like fractions, graphs, simple geometry, multiplication, and division. Students will begin to develop strong critical thinking skills through daily reasoning questions that focus on the real-life application of concepts. A year-long review is incorporated into each lesson.

MATHEMATICS - McGraw Hill (3rd - 5th)

Taking an interactive approach, 3rd-5th grade students will master multiplication, division, fractions, and geometry concepts. Emphasis is placed on building student rigor

through conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and real-world application. Students will participate in collaborative conversations and chapter projects and use hands-on manipulatives to model critical math concepts. Various assessments are provided to help guide individual learning through data-driven instruction. In 5th grade, students will begin to dive deeper into geometry and begin an introduction to algebra, preparing them for a successful transition into higher levels of math as they enter middle school.

SCIENCE

Abeka (K5) The Abeka science and health program presents the universe as God's direct, orderly, law-abiding creation. Students are presented with plants, animals, rocks, elements, forces, the human body, and much more according to an understanding of the design and laws of nature.

BJU (1st-5th) God has revealed Himself through His Word and through creation. Our curriculum focuses on shaping the biblical worldview of science for students so they can interpret, analyze, and synthesize scientific information through a biblical lens. Each lesson centers around the three main ideas of a biblical worldview: God is the Creator of all things, people are important to God, and God placed people on the earth to rule in His place. Lessons focus on foundational scientific concepts such as animal classification, energy and matter, plants, and the solar system. Students can marvel at and investigate the wonders of God's magnificent creation and learn how to use their knowledge to be good stewards and keepers.

HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY

Abeka (K5) Abeka's history courses present an inspiring portrayal of peoples, lands, religions, ideals, heroes, triumphs, and setbacks in light of the biblical principles that govern the natural course of history. Students benefit from this traditional, conservative approach to studying what man has done with the time God has given him.

BJU (1st - 4th) Our heritage studies curriculum examines historical, geographical, cultural, economic, and governmental topics and issues through a Biblical lens. First and second grade will focus on family, community, and government, while our 3rd - 5th grade will focus on world regions and American history. Interactive discussions on historical figures that have either followed or not followed Biblical truths and standards are incorporated into units of study. The heritage studies curriculum aims to strengthen the knowledge of God and encourage Christian growth, develop an interest in the areas of study, present a balanced overview of American heritage, promote understanding and connection of important historical events, and organize historical information chronologically. Each lesson gives students the necessary skills and knowledge to think

critically about current and past global issues. Lessons also incorporate primary and secondary sources, map studies, and interactive, hands-on activities to create an engaging classroom atmosphere.

Vestal (5th Grade) To best prepare for the subsequent scope and sequence of history in the upper school years, fifth-grade students will use Vestal's 21st Century Classroom curriculum to learn foundational geography skills critical for exploring world maps, globes, and landforms. Fifth Graders will study notable highlights of United States history from the Native Americans and Early Exploration days of the 1400s chronologically through the American Revolution, Westward Expansion, and the Civil War era of the 1800s.

Academic Enrichment

Virginia Academy offers a variety of enrichment to accompany the curriculum to provide a well-rounded education. Students receive at least one class of instruction weekly from teachers specializing in Spanish, Visual Arts, Music & Performing Arts, Computer & Technology Education, and Physical Education.

VISUAL ARTS

The Art program for lower school is designed to develop artistic skills through visual art production while managing basic creative factors. This is done primarily through the knowledge of the elements and principles of design, critiquing famous works of art, basic color theory, and creative stimulation. Students will work with the following techniques throughout the school year: watercolors, tempera, acrylic painting, clay modeling, crayons, markers, colored pencils, oil pastels, and mixed media creations.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Our health and physical education program at Virginia Academy is designed to cultivate a desire in students to honor the Lord by being good stewards of their physical bodies through a life of fitness and optimum health. Instruction is aligned with Virginia's standards of learning for Physical Education. Students will develop their physical, cognitive, and psychosocial skills by learning rules, strategies, gameplay, and proper techniques of various sports and functional movements. These skills will aid students' motor skill development and prepare students for a healthy lifestyle, both now and in the future. Students will understand important fitness concepts through the instruction of the body's physiological response to proper nutrition and exercise.

MUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS (K5 -1st)

The goal of the music program is for students to experience learning through their entire body. One of the main curriculums we use for music at the younger ages is the Feierabend First Steps in Music. This curriculum is designed to prepare children to become musical in three ways: tuneful, beatful, and artful. Each student can participate in music through many facets, including movement, singing, playing instruments, reading stories, and creating. In addition to learning beginning music concepts and vocabulary, students will also learn vocal and some instrumental techniques. The Christmas Show and Kindergarten Graduation will allow students to showcase their performance skills and some of what they have learned in music.

MUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS (2nd - Semester 1 4th Grade)

This music program aims for students to take their knowledge of music a step further in the world of basic music theory. Students will learn note values, how to read rhythms, and how to read the treble clef staff. Once they learn these basic music reading skills, they implement that knowledge into playing an instrument (bucket drums, boomwhackers, recorders, ukulele). Each grade level performs at least once to gain more experience as an instrumentalist on the stage.

MUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS (Semester 2 4th - 5th Grade)

This music program aims to introduce theater into the music classroom. At the end of 4th grade, we discuss the fundamentals of the three types of theater. Students will learn theater terminology, audience etiquette, vocal types, and backstage importance and watch numerous examples of each type of theater. Not only does this help prepare them for the 5th grade musical the following year but it also gets them interested in the Upper School performing arts program. Entering 5th grade is when more serious vocal techniques are introduced. Students have many opportunities to utilize what they have learned in the Veteran's Day Chapel, 5th grade musical, and 5th grade promotion.

SPANISH

Introduction to conversational Spanish through an interactive learning program that exposes students to the culture and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries. Spanish conversation is encouraged and supported throughout the student's school day, from the classroom to the hallways and cafeteria. Students can visualize Spanish culture and folklore through stories, music, and poetry. A class may include creative group activities, art, and music.

COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY

Computer classes at Virginia Academy will focus on digital learning - learning activities that effectively use technology to strengthen student's academic experience.

Technology will be used to inform students on how to be better digital citizens. Learning activities will include but are not limited to; coding, keyboarding, PowerPoint, Digital Art (pixel art and/or photo editing), Excel, Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Google Slides, and other Google platforms.

CHAPEL

We provide a weekly Chapel service to guide character and spiritual development. Lower School chapel services occur weekly for all Kindergarten – 5th grade students. Chapel begins with dynamic praise and worship songs followed by a staff-led Bible lesson. Lessons are usually presented in a series format and tailored to elementary-aged students. We play games, present awards, and have in-house grade-level performances during some of our chapels. The goal of Chapel is to instill a love for the Lord in our students and to help develop Christian character.

Additional Academic Services

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER (ASC)

Virginia Academy views each student as an individual and endeavors to meet the academic needs of every student. On a case-by-case basis, Virginia Academy may be able to provide academic support for students with learning differences by managing and/or making accommodations for students with IEPs (Individual Education Programs) or private educational evaluations. A student's IEP/testing will be reviewed to identify needs and determine our ability to develop a Virginia Academy Academic Support Plan.

Report Card

At the end of each grading quarter, parents and students will receive a comprehensive report card evaluating performance in all academic areas and conduct.

BASIC GRADING SCALES

Kindergarten, 1st Grade & Enrichment Courses:

Letter	Grade
O+	96 - 100

O	90 - 95
O -	87 - 89
S +	84 - 86
S	80 - 83
S -	75 - 79
NI	74 and Below

1st - 5th Grade Core Subjects:

Letter	Grade
A+	97-100
A	94 - 96
A -	90 - 93
B	87 - 89
B	84 - 86
B	80 - 83
C +	77 - 79
C	74 - 76
C -	70 - 73
D +	67 - 69
D	64 - 66
D -	60 - 63
F	59 and Below

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Lower School teachers are available for parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year by appointment. We will have extended office hours for parent-teacher conferences the week following 1st quarter report cards. Teachers will make themselves available until 5 p.m. for conferences scheduled in advance. Teachers may also request a parent-teacher conference for students of concern at this time and throughout the school year. We believe in teamwork and collaboration to ensure that all of our students have a successful school year. Please contact your student's teacher if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to partnering with you in your child's education!

End-of-Year Testing

IOWA

The Iowa Assessments are achievement tests assessing students' Reading, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science skills. The tests assess foundational and higher-order thinking skills and provide national and local comparisons.

Extracurricular Programming

FIELD TRIPS

In addition to our enriching curriculum and classes, Virginia Academy students benefit from unique “out of the classroom” learning opportunities. Our students have approximately 3-4 field trips or guest presentations during the school year to complement an already well-rounded curriculum.

STUDENT LIFE

At Virginia Academy, we desire to prepare students for life. In addition to academic rigor, chapel services, and various field trips, we allow our upper elementary students to serve on our safety patrol team, Student Council Association (SCA) and/or apply for admittance into the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS). This gives them valuable leadership and service skills to prepare them for future community and world impact.

SCA

Students participate in an annual election to determine student council leadership and class representatives. SCA officers and representatives meet with the lower school principal, speaking about student life, service opportunities, and school activities. SCA leadership is made up of elected 5th-grade students.

NEHS

Students in the 4th and 5th grades, who meet eligibility standards, can apply for admittance into the NEHS program. A committee of teachers will review applications, and an induction ceremony is held each fall. Students will work to lead their peers in the four pillars of NEHS: leadership, scholarship, service, and responsibility. Students must maintain a 3.5 GPA and a clean conduct record to be eligible to apply.

Student Behavior and Discipline

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

Virginia Academy is dedicated to creating a positive climate with a research-based approach to discipline called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS). PBIS is an approach for teaching students appropriate behavior and providing the support necessary to sustain that behavior. PBIS aims to reduce challenging student behavior in a proactive, positive, and consistent manner across all school settings and to improve academic achievement and social competence. Our TEAM ORANGE values are taught and reinforced throughout our school and recognized by students and staff.

Lower School students are encouraged to uphold our TEAM values as they drive the mission and vision of our school forward. First, the “T” represents spending time with God because we run on the Holy Spirit's power! Students are to be “E” empowering, encouraging their peers in a positive way and being a Christ-like example to all around them. We value “A” for accountability. We hold students accountable for their character and behavior through every arena of life. Finally, we are “M” for Mission 1st! We believe every student is on a mission to hit the mark they were created for!

Discipline

The teachers will use the RenWeb Demerit/Merit System. Students will be given demerits for undesired behavior and merits for positive behavior. When a student receives a demerit/merit, the student will be alerted; and the demerit/merit will be recorded on the behavioral report form in RenWeb, and the parent(s) and divisional principal will also be notified.

Extended Care Programs

BEFORE & AFTER CARE

Morning care is free to upper school students. A monthly fee will be charged for lower school students. Care begins at 7:00 a.m. Students will start their day with their peers, have additional study and work time, or engage in group activities. Breakfast will be provided.

Virginia Academy's aftercare program exists to provide a safe, exciting, and loving environment where students can experience the love that God has for all of us. We will provide a place where students can enrich themselves academically and spiritually through targeted programming and intentional interactions. Aftercare runs daily from 3:30-6:30 PM and provides a snack, homework time, and enriching activities for students. Aftercare is free to upper school students. An additional monthly fee will be applied for lower school students.

SPECIALS

Our very own VAA teachers will lead specialized classes after school! Many themes may be covered throughout the year, including art, STEM, cooking, soccer, basketball, and so much more! These extra classes will have an additional fee and will last for 6 weeks at a time. Sign-up will be on a first-come basis, and spaces are limited! Specials are available for all lower school students regardless of enrollment in aftercare.

WINTER AND SPRING CAMP

During winter and spring break, school is closed for all ages. Extended Care will host a camp for kindergarten through fifth-grade students, 8 AM - 5 PM. Students will participate in field trips, indoor and outdoor activities, crafts, experiments, and daily devotional time with experienced camp counselors. Lunch and snacks will be provided. Seasonal camps are available for all lower school students at an additional cost regardless of enrollment in aftercare.

SUMMER CAMP

Virginia Academy's summer camp program exists to provide a safe, exciting, and loving environment where students can experience the love that God has for all of us. We will provide a place where students can enrich themselves academically and spiritually through targeted programming and intentional interactions. Our Goal: To show Northern

Virginia the value of a Christ-centered community and promote the amazing staff and students who attend Virginia Academy.

VAA Summer Camp runs for four weeks, 8 AM-4PM and includes summer fun and care with various indoor and outdoor activities for graduating kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Along with the most exciting summer activities around, VAASC boasts a top-notch staff committed to making sure children have a very safe but most active summer adventure ever. VAASC is available to all K5-5th-grade students regardless of enrollment in VAA.