

Hello Pre-Kindergarten Parents,

I hope you are excited for the new school year to begin! We have been working hard to ensure that the coming months will be an exciting transition for you, as well as your children! I believe that openness and communication are essential components in establishing a good relationship in the classroom. I was initially drawn to St. Raphael The Archangel School because of its strong spiritually-focused atmosphere, family cooperative nature, and emphasis on hands-on learning. I believe that children learn and develop in different ways and should be measured based upon their own growth—never compared. Children are not meant to be programmable—they are bright, caring, idealistic, exceptional individuals. My goal is to help each child find what makes them special, nurture that uniqueness, and watch them embrace it!

I recently moved to Louisville from Austin, Texas, where I lived for four years, married my sweetheart, Cody, and finished up graduate school. I hold a B.S. in Education from Liberty University, as well as a M.Ed. in Elementary Education (Emphasis: Early Childhood Education) from Texas State University. My husband and I are currently pursuing PhDs in Education and Social Change at Bellarmine University; he is placing his emphasis in environmental education and sustainability and I am placing my emphasis in literacy-based practices in early development—examining young learners in poverty and exploring the intersection of play and creative writing. We are also seasoned folk musicians and we love to bring music to the classroom for special events, curriculum support, and service projects around the area.

I align well with the ideas of Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, and Gardner, and their advocacy for play-based learning. From theory to application, play and inquiry have proven themselves time and time again to be foundational to the development of a child as a *whole person*. When children play, they exhibit qualities found in the developmental domains. This can, and does often times, include the practice of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. I feel that children learn best when they are truly engaged in what they are doing. A play oriented classroom is one that is able to incorporate discovery, problem-solving, problem-finding, cooperation, persistence, oral language, and creativity successfully into its curriculum. Your children will be exposed to a variety of open-ended materials that will initiate curiosity within them. Together, we will learn to explore the multiple intelligences of Howard Gardner: linguistic, musical, logico-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, personal, and social. Your children will do a great deal of playing this year; through this, they will also do a great deal of learning!

I am a teacher, by nature and by calling, and I am so looking forward to getting to know your children this year! Please do not hesitate to meet with me personally if you have any questions!



Erika B. Nygard M.Ed.
Director, Pre-Kindergarten
St. Raphael The Archangel School
enygard@srparish.org