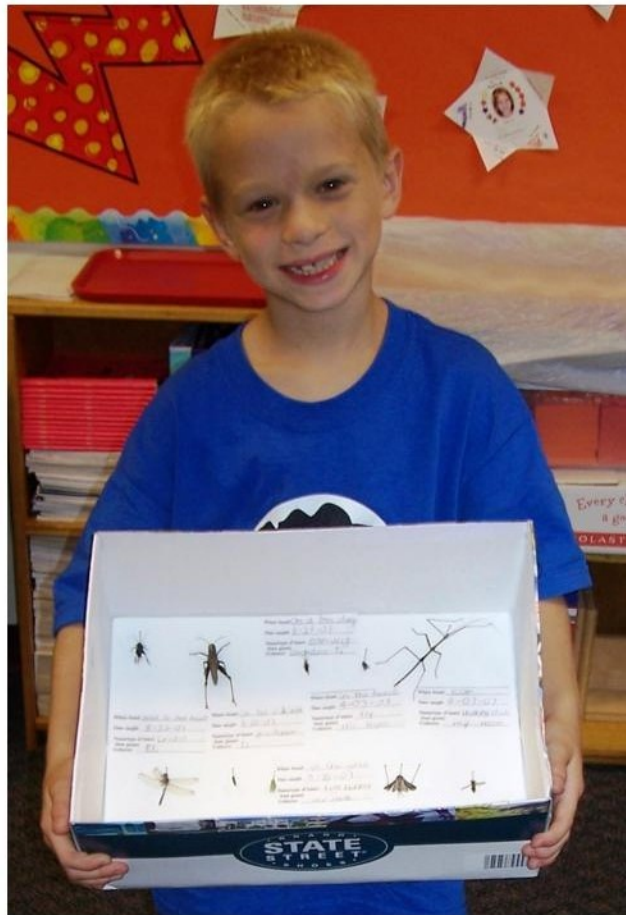


# Third Grade Curriculum Guide for Parents



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# 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Language Arts

## Reading

There are three aspects to reading instruction in third grade. The first aspect involves direct reading instruction based on a class novel that correlates with our study units. These books serve as the basis for instruction in various comprehension skills, vocabulary development, character analysis and literary techniques. At times, students will participate in small-group and partner reading to practice their oral reading fluency. As these books are read, students will be asked to analyze the characters and themes from a Christian point of view.

The second aspect of the reading curriculum is an individualized reading program that we call our "DEAR" (Drop Everything And Read) time. Students are given individualized goals based on their reading level and read independently for 20 to 30 minutes each day. Student progress is monitored through the use of the Accelerated Reader Program, which provides computerized comprehension, vocabulary, and literacy quizzes.

The third aspect of the reading curriculum is the at-home reading program called "Book It." Students at this age need to read independently at home for a minimum of 20 minutes per day. Individualized monthly goals are given to each student.

## Class Novels

*The Cricket in Times Square* – Insect Unit

*Chocolate Fever* – Nutrition and Digestion Unit

*Squanto: Friend of the Pilgrims* – Native Americans Unit

*Fables* – See the USA Unit

*Helen Keller's Teacher (biography)* – Sound and Light Unit

An excerpt from *Child of the Silent Night* (a short story recounting the life of Laura Bridgeman) – Sound and Light Unit)

*The Finches' Fabulous Furnace* – Rocks and Minerals Unit

Students also read biographies of famous Americans for our Language Arts biography unit. Upon reading these stories, students write reports on their famous American as well as participate in the "3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Wax Museum," in which they dress up and deliver speeches as their famous Americans.

This curriculum was developed knowing that the top three factors in determining literacy achievement are: parental involvement, the amount of reading done at home, and the amount of reading done at school!\*

Other interesting statistics for parents to know:

- Students who read 5 to 10 minutes a night score in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests.
- Students who read 20 minutes a night score in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests.
- Students who read 30 or more minutes a night score in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized reading tests.
- The average American student reads 9-10 minutes per night (including reading necessary to complete homework).

Ways to help reluctant or struggling readers:

- Turn on closed captioning on your television. Students will be reading despite themselves!
- Paired Reading – parent and student read aloud together. Helps student feel the pace and rhythm of reading.
- Audio assisted reading – Books on tape. However, students must follow along in text.
- Master 600 most frequently used words in reading and writing. The first 300 words represent about two-thirds of all the words students encounter in their reading.

*\*Postlethwaite, T.N. & Ross, K.N. Effective Schools in Reading: Implications for the Classroom. Hague: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.*

## **Writing**

During third grade, we emphasize the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading and publishing). Special instruction also takes place on paragraph writing skills, such as using topic, supporting, and closing sentences. Students explore and are encouraged to use dialogue in their writing. Students have conferences on their writing with their teachers and peers. Their writing is published and shared in a variety of ways.

The Daily Oral Language program is used to help the students practice and review a wide variety of grammatical and mechanical skills. The *Writers Express* by Write Source serves as a resource for mini-lessons in a variety of areas.

## **Writing Projects for Third Grade**

Poetry Unit – We begin the year with this creative writing unit. Students explore some of the more traditional poetry structures, such as the acrostic poems and haiku, and then they branch out into some less common expressions that employ imagery and the five senses.

Circle Story – This narrative writing project focuses on a circular plot structure. Insects serve as the main characters for these stories. Students publish this story in a book format, with the “circle” theme even influencing the illustrations. Students have many opportunities to share their circle stories with classmates, parents, and other children in the school. (Insect Unit)

Story Maps – Upon completion of *Chocolate Fever*, children create a story map poster that includes writing samples and illustrations. The story map covers literary concepts such as characters, setting, plot main points and summary, favorite scenes, and character analysis. (Nutrition and Digestion Unit)

Native American Tribe PowerPoint Presentations – Students split into partners or small groups and choose a Native American tribe to study. They work together to research a variety of information on their chosen tribe such as tribe location, food, clothing, way of life, housing, customs, traditions, and interesting facts. Emphasis is placed on note-taking and research skills as well as cooperative group skills. Students compile their information and organize it into a PowerPoint presentation. Students manipulate the text and PowerPoint program to create an appealing, interesting, informative presentation that they share with their parents and peers. (Native American Unit)

Paragraphs – In this mini-unit, students explore the components of a well-written paragraph and spend time writing a variety of paragraphs.

Fables – This narrative writing project is modeled after the fables students read in class. The students use animals as their main characters, and use their stories to teach important lessons about life.

Famous American Report / Wax Museum Speeches – As part of a mini-unit on biographies, students choose a biography to read on a famous American. While reading, students take notes on their American. Upon completion, students use their notes to write a report on their famous American. The unit culminates with the “3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Wax Museum” in which students dress as their famous Americans. They prepare and present speeches to their classmates, families, and schoolmates from the first -person perspective of their famous American, sharing highlights of their lives.

Newspaper Articles – Students create a year-end newspaper by writing articles that share the highlights of their year in third grade.

## **Spelling**

As students become older, conventional spelling becomes more and more important. Our spelling curriculum is called *Spell It – Write!* Each week the students receive a basic list of words based on a spelling or phonics pattern. Then each student individualizes his/her list by adding words that he/she needs to learn to spell. These words may be misspelled words from recent writing assignments or words that the student is interested in learning. In addition, students learn at least one new vocabulary word each week that the teacher has taken from recent reading lessons.

## **Public Speaking and Listening**

Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills in public speaking from their insect interviews to their PowerPoint presentations to their wax museum speeches. Opportunities are given for positive peer feedback in addition to the teacher's feedback.

## **Cursive**

Formal cursive instruction begins in third grade. We use the *Handwriting Without Tears* program by Jan Z. Olsen.

## **Computers**

Computers will be used in conjunction with various units for the purpose of research or practice. Students will use pre-determined websites.

In addition, students use computers for Accelerated Reader tests and for another reading assessment test.

Because of the emphasis on cursive handwriting in third grade, formal keyboarding instruction will not begin until fourth grade. However, students will have the opportunity to use the computer in a number of different ways throughout the school year, like in their PowerPoint presentations.

# **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Math**

Students in third grade use the Scott-Foresman/Addison Wesley textbook as the basis for mathematic instruction. Some concepts covered include: graphing, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, subtraction, fractions, measurement, geometry and a variety of problem-solving skills. Multiplication and division are formally introduced for the first time in third grade, and special emphasis is placed on learning and mastering multiplication facts. Pre-testing and differentiated assignments are used to help meet the unique needs of the students. Third graders periodically have homework in math to help them develop greater independence.

In addition to the textbook, AACCS uses a supplementary mathematics program called Exemplars. This program focuses on problem-solving activities in which students learn to better understand multi-step word problems, plan and implement a strategy, solve the problem, and communicate in writing their thought processes and written notation throughout the problem-solving experience. We do these activities periodically throughout the year, using skills that correlate with our Scott-Foresman chapter whenever possible. Exemplars provides the option of simplifying or challenging a problem based on a student's abilities and skill level. Students will be assigned their problems accordingly.

Students also have the opportunity to work on a variety of math stations such as Menu Math, calculator activities, critical thinking activities, math fact review, and problem-solving puzzles.

In second through fourth grades, AACCS uses the *Mastering Math Facts* program. This program provides students with daily practice in mastering their addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. Some practice at home also may be required. An information letter is sent home at the beginning of the school year that further explains this program.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Bible**

The Bible curriculum, which is based on *Biblical Choices* by Standard Publishing, aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus.

We begin our year by dividing our class into the tribes of Israel and re-enacting the Israelite's escape from Egypt and journey to the Promised Land. Then, during the first semester, we progress through the Old Testament stories of the cycle of Judges, including special focus on the lives of Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel, and Israel's demand for a king, with emphasis on the lives of Saul and David. Students also are reminded of the importance of family as we study the story of Ruth and celebrate our own families by creating a special family-tree project.

During second semester, the curriculum focuses on helping students understand the heart of the gospel through studying the life of Jesus. As the students examine the life of Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, and ascension, they have an opportunity to keep a journal of their own reflections on all that they are learning as well as how it is impacting their own faith. We finish the year with a study of Jesus' Great Commission, Pentecost, and the Acts of the Apostles as they worked to form the first church. Generally, each week there is a memory verse that ties in to the lesson. Our desire is that students memorize

various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages which they can apply to their own daily lives.

At Ann Arbor Christian School, we believe that serving those in need is an important part of our Christian discipleship. Thus, both individual-class service projects and whole-school service projects are part of the school year. In conjunction with a Bible lesson on how King Saul's poor choices affected the Israelites, third graders take the opportunity to write encouragement letters to their pastors, thanking them for being such positive leaders in their lives.

A daily morning devotion that includes singing, scripture reading, a lesson, and prayer is part of each day. Students are given opportunities to learn how to pray for the needs of others and share their own praises and requests.

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other is a K-5 chapel. Students are assigned to multi-age "chapel families," in which older students serve as mentors. Also, older students often put on skits and perform for younger students during chapels.

## ***Units - Science and Social Studies Topics***

"Units" are Ann Arbor Christian School's approach to learning science and social studies. Units are not based on a textbook but rather on hands-on, teacher-created lessons which are correlated with reading and writing projects. Thematic units with a Christian focus are integrated in the curriculum with related literature, videos and other opportunities for hands-on activities, explorations and field trips.

### **Insects**

In this unit, we explore the amazing world of insects. Insects make up three-fourths of all animal species in the world. While many people are afraid of insects, only one percent are considered harmful to people. The purpose of this unit is for students to understand the important role that insects play in God's creation. As part of this unit each student will put together an insect collection with data tags and display it for the rest of the class. Students also choose a specific insect to study more in-depth, create an interview in question/answer format that shares their research, dress up as their chosen insect, and perform the interview for their classmates. As part of this unit, students may have the opportunity for a field trip to Leslie Science Center in Ann Arbor where they participate in the *Incredible Insects* program.

## **Nutrition and Digestion**

We celebrate the wonderful way God created us, and we learn to be good caretakers of our bodies. In this unit, we learn about good nutrition, care for our teeth, and take an in-depth look at the digestion process. Students apply their knowledge of food groups by planning, cooking, and serving a well-balanced meal to their families in our Make-A-Meal project. They also examine their own lifestyle by keeping a food log for a day. The unit includes many more activities and experiments, such as an experiment to explore how sugar affects the growth of plaque in our mouths. A field trip to the Health Exploration Station in Canton enables students to participate in their *How Our Bodies Work*. It allows us to review digestion, gain exposure to other body systems, and spend time in a hands-on health museum.

## **Native Americans**

Native Americans played an important part in our nation's history and continue to impact society today. This unit focuses on the Native American culture, both past and present. We begin with a study of Michigan tribes with a special focus on the "Three Fires" – the Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwa tribes. Children have the opportunity to explore another form of communication by creating a story using Native American inspired pictographs. The unit culminates with the students researching a tribe and creating a PowerPoint presentation to share with their parents and classmates.

## **See the USA**

We begin this unit with an overall review of the geographical and major geological features of the United States, with special emphasis on map work and skills. Students create a 3-D map of the United States that depicts important land features. Children then work cooperatively on "Travel Teams" as they embark on an exciting cross-country expedition to explore the unique characteristics of our United States. Travel Teams research the geography, government, history, people, and culture of selected states. They visit many diverse sites along their route and prepare projects to communicate interesting facts they discover. Special emphasis is placed on cooperative group skills, money and budget management, and utilizing a variety of research materials and resources. Through this unit, we recognize that God has blessed the U.S. with physical, cultural, and economic diversity, and we have the opportunity to explore and embrace these differences as well as celebrate the beauty of the land and people of the U.S.

## **Sound and Light**

This unit integrates science and health as students explore aspects of sound and light as well as discover the complexities of the human ear and eye. Students perform a number of scientific experiments throughout this unit as they explore areas such as how sound and light waves are produced and how they travel, factors that affect sound-wave frequency and pitch, how vocal cords function, how light is reflected and refracted, and much more. Students are challenged to explore the role of sound and light in God's creation as well as His amazing creation of our own ears and eyes. As part of this unit, students may participate in a field trip to the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum to take part in their workshops on sound and light.

## **Rocks and Minerals**

Rocks and minerals are some of our most important resources. In this unit, students are introduced to the science of geology. Students explore concepts such as the earth's layers; the formation of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks; types of volcanoes; earthquakes and other natural disasters; the formation of fossils; and the theory of plate tectonics. Students have the opportunity to engage in many scientific experiments and opportunities for hands-on learning. Highlights of experiential learning include identifying "mystery minerals" by their characteristics (hardness, color, streak, and luster), creating a working paper-mache volcano, creating a mosaic model of granite, eating "rock cookies," and more!

Note: Beginning in third grade, students are expected to show mastery of the material presented in each unit by taking a formal test at the end of each unit of study.

# **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Art**

The art curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in God's creation. Students explore different mediums for artistic expression including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, textiles and performance. Projects are largely integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Art history and aesthetic criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop creative problem-solving in order to help students find and express their unique voice in the world.

Our art classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic learners through applied art activities. We work to further develop technical skills and to build confidence by experimenting with a wide variety of new media and techniques. Students will learn to contextualize art works by relating them to the cultural and historical climates that influenced them as well as to broaden their perspective on the possibilities of art making. Throughout this exploration, the teacher works with students to help them express their ideas both creatively and clearly so that art can be used as a positive means of self-expression and enjoyment.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade General Music**

The music curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in music. Students explore different instruments for music expression including body percussion, percussion instruments (shakers and whackers), handbells, singing, and Orff instruments. Music instruction is integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Music history and music criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop the understanding of rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, form, notation, expression, and performance.

In third grade, we emphasize teaching students to participate in making music. Our music classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic singers and instrumentalists through applied music activities. We work to develop listening and music-making skills and to build confidence by using a wide variety of music and techniques. Through the exploration of different styles of music and different ways of making music, the teacher helps students to grow in the understanding and use of music in their daily lives.

Third grade music skills include:

- Performing various songs on handbells
- Perform accompaniment rhythms on xylophones and Orff instruments
- Read and write music notation through eighth notes and rests
- Singing rounds, canons and partner songs on pitch
- Instrument identification
- Music expression

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Physical Education**

Physical Education helps students develop in cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and spiritual domains. The P.E. program at AACCS encourages individual potential, leadership, and participation, which will promote lifelong fitness. Students grow in an understanding of rules, safety, and strategies of games and activities. Both individual and team sports allow for the expression of sportsmanship and sensitivity needed to function in a diverse society. Physical Education reflects the high value God places on human life and the respect we should have for ourselves and for one another. Students are encouraged to model behavior that Christ would exemplify.

Our P.E. instruction includes fundamental skills/movement patterns; attributes like balance, rhythm, and creative movement; motor abilities like coordination, quickness, power, speed, agility and flexibility; fitness (movement, body awareness, muscles, bones, regular exercise); sports skills like playing performance and proper technique; and knowledge and understanding of rules and procedures.

A wide variety of offerings keep students of all skill levels interested in physical activity. Units range from dance and gymnastics to football and basketball at age-appropriate levels. K-5 students look forward to once-weekly P.E. class while 6-8 students enjoy P.E. twice a week.

While technically not part of our physical education program, AACCS offers elementary school children encouragement to get daily exercise with what we call "Mileage Club." As long as the weather allows and we have sufficient volunteer parent supervisors, students can spend all or part of their lunch recess accumulating miles while walking or running on a set course outside the school. Students can earn awards for meeting mileage milestones like 25, 50, or even 100+ miles!