

Middle School Curriculum Guide for Parents



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Middle School Curriculum

6th Grade Bible

The sixth grade Bible curriculum is based on *The House of Israel, The Story of God and His People* (Christian Schools International 1998) and aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus today.

During the first semester, sixth graders start by looking at The Setting of God's Story: the Bible's purpose, languages, genres, and geography. Geography and Earth Science are integrated in mapping the Middle East and discussing how the land forms and prevailing winds affect climate, a key factor for story context in the Old Testament. They move into Stories of the Ancient World, including the creation, fall, promise, conflict, Noah, and Babel. Creation is specifically integrated with life science with the use of two segments from Lee Strobel's *Case for a Creator* (DVD) and discussion.

Next comes a look at *The Patriarchs*: God choosing Abram, imperfect growth of Abram's faith, covenant, Isaac, Jacob and his family's journey, and Joseph as God's instrument. Integration of social science study of nomadic culture helps students grasp how God did indeed set aside Abraham's family as distinct from their host cultures. Also, in *From Slavery to Covenant*, students see Egypt's influence on many generations of Israel, God's work in Moses, God's 10 wonders, Israel's exodus, God's provision (safety, food, water, guidance) in the desert, Mt. Sinai "retreat" in a new covenant, and 10 commands. Lessons built on God's revelation of himself in the architecture, personnel, and ceremonies of His tabernacle. We make a model of it amidst the camp. Social studies integration impresses students with the overwhelming sophistication of Egyptian culture that had cocooned Israel during her infancy. This, in turn, makes authentic our personal application of God's call for Moses and Israel to reject the dominating culture that surrounds in order to become God's people with hope.

During second semester, sixth graders look at the *Journey to Canaan*, noticing God's provision in the desert, challenges against authority, Balak and Balaam and a burro, covenant renewal. *The Conquest* looks at a change of command, when our children ask, a battle of faith, Ai defeated and covenant renewed, God's command, division of the land, cities of refuge, and Joshua's farewell. *Judges and Ruth* introduces students to the period of the judges, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, and up to seven others; Ruth and Naomi's story is set in refreshing contrast and shows God's unceasing purposes progressing behind the dismal headlines. In *Israel's Early Monarchy*, students contrast God's ability to demonstrate his sovereignty (Ark of the Covenant's return from the Philistines) with Israel's stubbornness; God's ability to work out good and provide an entirely capable king when faced by that rebelliousness; ups and downs of King Saul's reign; as well as God's preparation of David to replace Saul within the king's own household and Saul's end. Finally, in the section *Under David and Solomon*, students see a consolidation of the tribes, God's promise to David, victories and kindnesses, a broken David, generational sin, dealing with sin's effects over time, God's choice of Solomon and David's death, Solomon's gifting, and the temple's construction and dedication.

As the students examine how God revealed himself in word and deed to the people of the early Old Testament, they also apply the spiritual and historic principles to their own lives. Historic and cultural context are included to reveal detail of God's providence and majesty.

Generally, each week there is a memory passage that ties in to the lesson. Our desire is that the students memorize various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages which students can apply to their own daily lives.

Additional opportunity to work out personal application is afforded in class or advisory club-level service projects and whole school service projects three or four times each year. Day to day matters of conduct and responses to events and people are also common ground for class discussion and accountability.

A daily devotional that focuses on prayer begins each day. Students are given opportunities to learn how to praise God as well as petition him. Many prayer requests are recorded and followed up on as living testimony of God's faithfulness.

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other is a 6-8 chapel. Middle-school students assist in preparation and leadership for many of these by way of music, song, drama, audio-visual management, and theme promotion.

7th Grade Bible

The seventh-grade Bible curriculum, which is based on *The Day of the Lord* by Christian Schools International, aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus. During first semester, we look at the divided kingdom of Israel as we study Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and Elijah. We use skits, readers' theaters, and journals to help make these Biblical concepts easier to apply to our lives. We also take a look at Israel's slide to destruction. Through interviews, writing newspaper articles, and drama presentations we explore how God used prophets to portray His message to His chosen people. While learning about God's prophets and the injustices they spoke about, the seventh graders will be challenged to think about the injustices in the world around them. This unit will tie into our school's Homeless Awareness Week and will give seventh graders a chance to put their thoughts into action. The last topic we study during first semester is Judah's kings and prophets. Students work in small groups to discover what prophets have to say about the way kings rule and the consequences of their actions.

During second semester, seventh graders explore the final judgment of Judah. Students write various Bible verses in contemporary terms to make them easier to understand. They study the days of exile and use visual representations to portray various prophets' visions and messages. After the study of the exile, the seventh graders look at the return from captivity and discuss God's love for His people. Students conduct mock interviews of the exiles to communicate how they think an exile might have felt. During each of these units, the seventh graders will journal, hold debates, and discuss Biblical issues and how they tie into the world today.

As the students examine these Old Testament concepts, we encourage them to discover the relevance each of these stories has to their lives as seventh graders. They also have the opportunity to question concepts they don't understand and explore areas that are challenging to them.

Generally, each unit features a memory verse that ties in to the lesson. Our desire is that the students memorize various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages which students can apply to their own daily lives. Both individual-class service projects and whole-school service projects are part of the school year.

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other is a 6-8 chapel.

8th Grade Bible

The 8th grade Bible curriculum, which is based on *A Light to the Gentiles* by Christian Schools International, aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus. During first semester, study begins with reading and discussion of *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. Students then turn to the CSI curriculum with units that overview the gospels and explore Jesus' early ministry, concluding with a small unit on music, memorization, and Advent. During second semester, students take a more in-depth look at how Jesus is portrayed in the book of Mark, followed by units on Holy Week and the early church.

As students examine the Bible to learn about the life and ministry of Jesus, they also have the opportunity to learn about how God uses the weak to accomplish his purposes, how God's plan is revealed over time, and how the work of Jesus intimately applies to their own lives. Students do all these things through the use of a variety of sources (Bible Gateway, the internet, commentaries, study Bibles, and other resources) to delve deeply into the concepts and history presented in God's Word.

Generally, there is a memory verse or passage that connects to the unit. Our desire is that the students memorize various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages which students can apply to their own daily lives. Both individual-class service projects and whole-school service projects are part of the school year.

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other is a 6-8 chapel. In addition, eighth-grade students serve as leaders of a chapel family, with many and varied opportunities to worship with and direct this mixed-age group of students.

6th Grade Language Arts

There are three aspects to Language Arts instruction in sixth grade: literature, writing, and public speaking/listening.

Literature

The first aspect of the sixth grade Language Arts curriculum is literature, which is used to complement our social studies units. Elements from class novels are used in conjunction with the social studies unit to emphasize text to text, text to world, and text to self connections.

Sixth graders also practice oral fluency by reading aloud to parents during class novels as part of their homework. This is helpful both to the child and the student. Children are reading, but also parents are learning about what's happening in class

Class Novels for 6th Grade

The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis – Modern Middle East unit

The Golden Goblet by Eloise Jarvis McGraw -- Ancient Egypt Unit

The Bronze Bow by Elizabeth George Speare --The Ancient Roman Unit

Around the World in Eighty Days by Jules Verne -- World Geography Unit

Throughout each ancient civilization unit, students read myths and legends represented in each civilization and compare them to our understanding of the Bible.

Writing

The second aspect of sixth-grade Language Arts is writing. We continue to emphasize the five steps in the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing). Some of the skills taught include topic and concluding sentences, organizing the information, revising run-on sentences.

Part of the assessment for each writing project includes a rubric for each assignment and a student's self-evaluation, and a writing goal. Students monitor their own writing goal progress.

Students' writing is published and shared at Grandparents' Day, an Afghan poetry reading, student-led conferences, writing contests, and an option to submit them in the spring Fine Arts Festival. A writing portfolio is started in sixth grade and maintained throughout the three years of middle school.

Integrated Writing Projects for 6th Grade

- Coat of Arms—Personal Narrative
- Poetry Anthology—combining types and techniques
- Egyptian Pharaoh- First Person Monologue
- Greek Restaurant Review—Informational Text
- Letter to fifth graders—elements of written correspondence

Public Speaking and Listening

The third aspect of Language Arts in sixth grade is public speaking and listening. Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their public speaking skills. Students become comfortable sharing their work first with their peers in presenting informal country presentations during the fall geography unit to performing for all-school and family audiences with Greek plays in the spring. Opportunities are given for positive peer and teacher feedback.

7th Grade Language Arts

There are four aspects to Language Arts instruction in seventh grade: Grammar Instruction, Literature, Writing, and Speaking/Listening.

Grammar

The first aspect, grammar, has the children learning the mechanics of the English language as it relates to writing and oral language. From the types of sentences to complex clauses, seventh graders delve into sentence construction and learn the nuances of writing that help them develop into more confident writers and speakers.

Writer's Choice published by Glencoe McGraw-Hill is used to help the students practice and review a wide variety of grammatical and mechanical skills.

Literature

The second aspect is literature. Literature is used to complement our social studies units. Elements from the class novels are used in conjunction with the social studies unit to emphasize text to text, text to world, and text to self connections.

For seventh graders, summer reading projects are assigned at the end of sixth grade to provide opportunities for students to read quality literature throughout the summer and

introduce events, time periods, and cultural information relating to upcoming unit studies. The book selections compliment our Middle Ages Unit and will introduce the living conditions of that turbulent time. Students will be required to read at least two books from the list.

Class Novels for 7th Grade

Two summer independent reading novels:

Crispin: Cross of Lead by Avi—Middle Ages Unit

King of Shadows by Susan Cooper—Renaissance Unit

Writing

During seventh grade, we continue to emphasize the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing) with a special focus on adding concepts from daily grammar instruction. Some of the skills taught include: compound sentences, appositives, verb agreement, and complex sentences

Part of the assessment for each writing project includes a rubric for each assignment and a student's self-evaluation, and a writing goal. Students monitor their own writing goal progress.

Students' writing is published and shared in a variety of ways such as back to school night, Grandparents' Day, student-led conferences, and writing contests, and the spring Fine Arts Festival.

Integrated Writing Projects for 7th Grade

- My Roles of a Seventh Grader—Personal Narrative
- Viking Shield –Descriptive Writing
- Cathedral Poem—Informational Text
- Shakespeare Short Story—Fiction/Fantasy Writing
- Church Biography – Research writing

Public Speaking and Listening

Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their public speaking skills from informal class presentations on Viking life to dramatic performances at the medieval feast to more formal church presentations in the spring.

8th Grade Language Arts

There are four aspects to Language Arts instruction in eighth grade: grammar, literature, writing, and public speaking/listening.

Grammar

The first aspect, grammar, has students reviewing the mechanics of the English language learned the previous year. From the types of sentences to complex clauses, seventh graders delve into sentence construction and learn the nuances of writing that help them develop into more confident writers.

Along with the study of literature, eighth graders continue their grammar instruction using the Grade 8 Level text of *Writer's Choice*, which is the same curriculum used in seventh grade. Some students have already mastered the concepts that will be repeated in this year's text, while others will benefit from having the refresher course before they hit high school. To meet the goals of both groups, I am offering several options for your student.

First, students will have an option to test out of each unit or certain lessons by demonstrating mastery on a pre-test administered before each unit. The tests are usually 25 questions and assess content vocabulary, differentiation between use of concepts and application of content rules and formulas. If the student proves mastery, he or she will be excused from the daily work of the unit, but will be required to take the unit test with the rest of the class. Of course, the student will join the class during test prep and review.

When a student tests out of a unit, he or she will receive an independent writing assignment that reinforces and includes elements from the current grammar unit and will be graded by incorporating concepts from the unit, standard usage and mechanics. This is what's known as "Writers Group." There may be opportunities to submit writing for contests and publications. There may be times, in lieu of a writing assignment, I'll assign a novel to be read in a book club format, but I will always notify of you when this happens.

I anticipate the groups will change with each unit, and as the unit difficulty increases, the writers group will become smaller. If you want your child to tackle both the writing assignment and daily work, please let me know.

Literature

The third aspect of the eighth grade Language Arts curriculum is Literature:

Similar to sixth and seventh grade, selected readings in eighth grade are used to complement what is being taught in eighth-grade U.S. History. Elements from the book are used in conjunction with the social studies unit to emphasize text to text, text to world, and text to self connections.

For eighth graders, summer reading projects are assigned at the end of seventh grade to provide opportunities for students to read quality literature throughout the summer and introduce events, time periods, and cultural information relating to upcoming unit studies. Book selections for eighth graders will introduce readers to life in America between 1600 and the late 1800s. Students are required to read at least two books.

Different from sixth- and seventh-grade literature instruction, "Book Club" is used in eighth grade to promote independence in analyzing and responding to literature. In Book Club, students have a choice of reading two books that are similar in literary themes and historical events. While each group of students are reading their book, they will meet within their book club to talk about plot line and character development, but they'll also meet with other the readers of the other book to share insight to themes, perspectives and writers' craft. Whole class pre- and post-reading activities and use multi-genre texts supplement the students' reading experience.

Class Novels for 8th Grade

Book Club: *Ransom of Mercy Carter* by Caroline B. Cooney or *Indian Captive: the Story of Mary Jemison* by Lois Lenski –Early American Literature Unit

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane – Civil War Unit

Book Club: *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan or *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse – Depression Unit

Writing

During eighth grade, we continue to emphasize the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing) with a special focus on writing across the curriculum, non-fiction text features, and writing independently. Part of the assessment for

each writing project includes a rubric for each assignment and a student's self-evaluation, and a writing goal. Students monitor their own writing goal progress.

Student writing is published and shared in a variety of ways such as Back-to-School Night, Grandparents' Day, student-led conferences, writing contests, and the spring Fine Arts Festival.

Integrated Writing Projects for 8th Grade

- Individual Mission Statement—Personal narrative
- Class Mission Statement—Collaborative Writing
- Indian Captivity Essay—Compare and Contrast writing
- Indian Captivity Newspaper—Editorial and Informational text
- Red Badge of Courage Essay—Persuasive writing

Public Speaking and Listening

Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills in public speaking from informal sharing in class during book clubs to dramatic readings of Early American authors to leading chapels and participating in graduation ceremonies.

6th Grade Mathematics

The sixth-grade math curriculum is based on the Scott-Foresman text called *Math*. In addition to the textbook, AACS students are taught to think mathematically using various problem-solving and hands-on activities. It is both enjoyable for the students and helpful in preparing them for the more advanced algebraic, chemistry, and trigonometric concepts they will encounter later, in high school. Students continue to review and show mastery of various concepts dealing with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. Sixth graders work collaboratively to explore concepts dealing with coordinate planes and geometry as well as ratios, probabilities, and proportions. Students are challenged not only to think mathematically, but also communicate mathematically in a clear and effective manner. Evaluation of mastery is based on class work, homework, quizzes, and tests.

7th Grade Math: Pre-Algebra

The Pre-Algebra curriculum is based on the Prentice Hall text *Pre-Algebra*. Students continue to deepen their understanding of mathematical language as they learn to use variables to solve equations and observe patterns in numerical relationships. It is both enjoyable for the students and helpful in preparing them for the more advanced algebraic, chemistry, and trigonometric concepts they will encounter later, in high school. Students engage in small- and whole-group projects and discussions, sharing their thought processes with one another and working together to make conclusions about the problems presented. They continue to review and show mastery of topics including algebraic expressions, decimals, fractions, exponents, operations, and functions. Evaluation of mastery is based on homework, quizzes, and tests.

8th Grade Math: Algebra

The Algebra curriculum is based on the Prentice Hall text *Algebra*. Students utilize their knowledge from seventh grade to increase their understanding of how graphs, inequalities, and functions demonstrate experiences in their daily lives. Students engage in small- and whole-group discussions, sharing their thought process with one another and working together to make conclusions about the problems presented. Students prepare for high school as they take notes daily and make changes as they reflect on what techniques are helpful for their learning styles. In addition to the textbook, AACS teaches students to think mathematically and communicate their thinking with various hands-on, problem-solving activities. It is both enjoyable for students and helpful in preparing them for the more advanced algebraic, chemistry, and trigonometric concepts they will encounter later, in high school. Evaluation of mastery is based on homework, quizzes, and tests. Many AACS graduates are able to by-pass the first level of ninth-grade math in high school.

6th & 7th Grade Science

These two grades use a two-year cycle to permit improved study depth and hands-on lab frequency. In one year, both grades study life science and the following year, both grades study earth science.

Ann Arbor Christian School uses the texts *Life Science* by T. Eimer, B. Ferrier, and C. Hoogewind (Christian Schools International, Grand Rapids, MI 2002) and *Earth Science* by T. Eimer (CSI, 2004). These courses consist largely of teacher-created lessons which coincide with --and exceed--State of Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (of the Michigan Department of Education's Dec. 2008 edition) to prepare students for more advanced high school concepts. Hands-on lab activities are typically used weekly, chiefly during a double-class-length lab each week.

What follows is a listing of the study units for each year-long course. Concept topics provide cursory listings of content. Asterisks (*) indicate units of study that are unique to AACS, going well beyond any related content in the resource text and well beyond State of Michigan expectations. Biblical integration centers on recognizing God's creative mastery as well as identifying and motivating informed personal, moral choices. Proper lab technique and safety procedures are taught and practiced with standard equipment throughout the year.

Each year challenges the student with a highlight event: American Red Cross CPR-AED certification during the life science year and coaching in the preparation/execution during the earth science year of a formal science project according to international standards.

6th and 7th Grade Life Science

Ecology and the Environment

Students look at the expanding scope of populations, communities, habitats, and ecosystems. Small groups create biome posters. When studying freshwater chemistry and systems, students contrast population survey and water testing of school-yard surface waters (marsh drainage vs. retention pond). We examine relationships in food webs, interactions, rhythms, and balances. Students play a food-chain simulation game and chart biorhythms.

Students report as Adopt-a-Stream teams transect Horseshoe Creek (in cooperation with the Huron River Watershed Council)* Also, kids would take part in a possible school grounds tree-planting project.*

Life's foundations

Students study the characteristics, needs, and chemistry of living things. In a summer project, students' pre-season, summer homework is to try to create an ecosystem in a glass jar over the summer. They bring their "life pod" it to school in the fall and continue to observe it into the school year.*

Science students learn about cells: theory, structures, functions, energy, transport, growth and reproduction. Repeated labs help students to develop microscopy and observational skills, including digital projection for whole-class verification.

Introduction to plants

Our study of types of plants and their needs includes school site observations. We learn about the structures of seed plants, functions, growth, transport, energy, and reproduction. In the lab, we dissect flowering plants, including digital projection for whole-class verification.

Introduction to animals

We look at types of animals and their needs, including earthworms, ghost shrimp, and frogs. Lab teams observe living and preserved specimens. We compare structure/organs of animals, functions, growth, transport, energy, and reproduction. Students diagram and dissect animals; including digital projection for whole-class verification.

Our human bodies

Body organization and nutrition start us off. Group simulation of bodily processes helps bring lessons home. Also, lessons are personalized by students recording their own diet and calculating nutrition values. Video clips and detailed diagrams teach about the gastrointestinal tract. Group simulation of processes, video clips, and detailed diagrams help us cover the cardiovascular, respiratory and excretory systems. We even offer American Red Cross certification in Child CPR & AED.* Lab teams do mini projects and reporting on the nervous and sensory systems. We study the immune system through video clips and group simulation of processes.

Introduction to genetics and heredity

We study reproduction and heredity of traits using video clips. We observe birth family members in our study of dominant and recessive traits. We look at DNA coding; mitosis and meiosis with video clips and a giant paper-chain model. Mutations are part of our unit, too. A guest from local lab gives a presentation on genomes: plant, animal and human.

Students discuss applications of genetics and moral choices. Video clips and current-events research (most recently the protection of the unborn and stem cell issues) help us here. We have a guest presentation from a local agency. We meet state objectives on a range of processes for evolutionary theory. Of course, we also familiarize students with biblical responses to evolution theory. Parental dialog is incorporated along with a range of creation/intelligent design perspectives. This includes a guest presentation plus writing and role play practice.

6th and 7th Grade Earth Science

As part of this study, students learn formal scientific research methods as demonstrated in a whole-class project and then via individual science fair projects according to international standards. Students present their research in the Ann Arbor Christian School science fair in February. Coaching is available for participation in the regional fair, which is optional.*

Geosphere

In our study of mapping surface and sub-surface features, we demonstrate the use of topos and NASA products. In looking at earth structures and dynamics like earthquakes, volcanoes, the teacher introduces plate tectonics via video and software simulation. Students consider event scenarios to wrestle with warning system decisions.*

In the lab, we identify rocks and minerals. Students do a mini research project on mineral resources. When looking at weathering, erosion, and deposition, we pay special attention to Washtenaw County's features and research on glaciation.* To consider the age of the Earth,* we talk about the use/abuse of the geologic column and hazards of uniformitarian assumptions with video support and a special guest speaker from the University of Michigan campus chapel.*

Hydrosphere

We study features of fresh surface water and ground water. Field trip experience and diagramming terms familiarize us with streams and lakeshores. Students learn about watersheds and the water cycle.

Students learn about landfills, ground-water pollution, and fertilizer runoff as we look at the influence of human activity. One proposal is to do a school grounds tree benefits project.* In a lab tank, we demonstrate currents (convection & turbidity) of large water bodies.

Students get an update on underwater exploration, technology, and conservation. Field trips include entering water in waders to collect data for Huron River Watershed Council's Adopt-a-Stream program* and an informative tour of the Ann Arbor Wastewater Treatment Plant.*

Meteorology

Students study features and dynamics of the Earth's atmosphere, including diagramming and videos. Over several weeks, students observe and chart weather features and changes. Ten cloud types are identified via classroom models, photos and outdoor breaks. The class looks at climate types and influences, including human activity and pollution. The causes, features, and effects of storms like hurricanes, blizzards, and tornadoes are part of this class. Videos are used to discuss complication of safety measures* and promote school and home preparedness safety.

Astronomy

Students do mini project research and reporting on topics related to astronomy. The class explores solar system features like planets, moons, planetoids, and comets. A pre-season summer homework assignment is to observe/chart stars and planets.* We also chart moon motion and phases and use a serious telescope. Class covers galactic elements: stars,

galaxies, gas clouds, and their development. Local NASA personnel give presentations on solar weather and Mars probes during our study of space exploration.

8th Grade Physical Science

Eighth-grade science uses the text: *Physical Science* by T. Eimer and B. Ferrier (Christian Schools International, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2004). This year-long course consists largely of teacher-created lessons which coincide with--and exceed--State of Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (of the Michigan Department of Education's Dec. 2008 edition) to prepare students for more advanced high-school concepts. Hands-on lab activities are typically used weekly, chiefly during a double-class-length lab each week.

Biblical integration centers on recognizing God's creative mastery as well as identifying and motivating informed personal, moral choices. Proper lab technique and safety procedures are taught and practiced with standard equipment throughout the year. Each student must pass practical and written training and testing for lab safety before lab participation. Preparation for and execution of two semester exams also are part of the course. Field trips take advantage of regional attractions of value for scientific study like the Detroit Science Center and the University of Michigan.

What follows is a listing of the eighth-grade study units. Concept topics provide cursory listings of content. An asterisk (*) indicates units of study that are unique to AACCS, going well beyond any related content in the resource text and well beyond State of Michigan expectations.

Chemistry Introduction

Matter

Students learn about the composition and nature of matter as well as about atomic structure and the Periodic Table. The school's gathering space comes alive with a group simulation of atomic structures. Our study of chemical bonds uses video streaming clips when well suited.

Types of Substances

Our study of substances includes an introduction to metals, non-metals, metalloids, organic compounds, and other substances like ceramics. Safety gear includes a fume hood for reactions. We cover the conservation of resource materials, especially recycling (recycling for AACCS).* The class does a detailed study of the carbon cycle and effects of greenhouse gases.*

Interactions of Matter

Inquiry-based labs during our study of solutions help develop reasoning skills. Rates, equations, and energy direction are included in our unit on chemical reactions.

Physics Introduction

An introduction to physics includes video, discussion, writing, and parent dialogs in cosmology. The study of origins has shown remarkable correlation between physics research and the Biblical account of creation. We are preparing students for college challenges.

Matter in Motion

During our study of forces and motion, each lab team assembles a hands-on exhibit for the AACCS Science Fair as both application of class work and testimony of God's design. We also study work and energy from technical perspectives.

Energy at Work

Our study of thermal energy includes analyzing home energy use to reduce energy waste. Slinkys and a wave trough help with classroom models during our unit on waves. Wave study extends to sound and light.

Magnetism and Electricity

Our study of magnetism includes learning about Nikola Tesla, the overlooked pioneer of electrification and radio.* Students get to hear a featured guest speaker with national prominence for Tesla.* The electricity unit includes a circuits lab.

Nuclear Energy

Students learn about applications of power and radioactivity. A guest professor from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Mich.) discusses how radioactive dating has been developed and applied in conjunction with parent dialog and biblical perspectives on the age of the Earth.*

Units = Social Studies/History Topics

Ann Arbor Christian School uses thematic units with a Christian focus integrated in the curriculum with related literature, videos and other opportunities for hands-on activities, explorations and field trips. Units are not based on a textbook but rather on hands-on, teacher-created lessons which are correlated with reading and writing projects and coincide with State of Michigan benchmarks.

6th Grade Units

Introduction to Geography Unit

This unit introduces map-reading skills including types of maps, latitude and longitude, continents, five themes of geography, and geographical features. Projects include making a geographical features map. On a field trip to Leslie Science Center's Orienteering Course, students are given compasses, maps and instructions to find their way to hidden sites on the property.

Middle East/Mesopotamia Unit

Highlights of this unit include: Western/Central Asia country Location Map; Modern day Afghanistan history and culture research; comparing and contrasting monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students also learn to write their own names in Arabic calligraphy and in cuneiform; study elements of civilization; consider Ancient Mesopotamian culture's connection to the Bible; and build ziggurats.

At our Afghanistan Poetry Reading, parents are invited to hear their children read poems they've researched, written, and revised. Poems are entered in a poetry contest that sometimes leads to publication.

Ancient Egypt Unit

Highlights of this unit include making a Modern Africa country location map and a geographical features map of the Nile/Egypt. Students also simulate the mummification process by wrapping a favorite stuffed animal in toilet paper! Students learn to write their names in hieroglyphics and compare Egyptian wisdom to the book of Proverbs. Each student researches the dress and history of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Then, the students show off their knowledge by dressing up/speaking as the king during our "Egyptian Wax Museum," an event all school and family are invited to attend.

Ancient Greece/Rome Unit

Highlights of this unit include making a Mediterranean and Balkan Region country location map, the "God and goddess hall of fame," and Sparta and Athens vs. Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. Students get to taste Greek food, do a restaurant review, and create an ancient Olympics brochure. The class studies Greek and Latin roots and prefixes plus "Julius Caesar: The Good and the Bad." Students compare perspectives, culture, and beliefs of Romans, Jews and early followers of Jesus. Then, there's Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii!

Students perform re-written/adapted versions of Illiad and Odyssey Greek plays (adapted for kids but loosely based on the originals) for the school and their families. Some choose to write and perform "commercials" for "products" related to ancient Greece, like Pan's non-stick olive oil cooking spray!

A trip to the University of Michigan's Kelsey Museum of Archeology is a culminating event focusing on an excavation site in Karanis, Egypt, where Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman artifacts have been found. Students write concrete poetry in response to this trip.

World Geography Unit

We explore countries that are struggling with the basic necessities like clean water, education, and health care, and current event issues like war, pandemics, human rights, natural disasters. The main goals of this unit are to strengthen independent research skills, explore the countries and cultures that make up God's world, and investigate humanitarian organizations that are serving "the least of these."

Other goals are to improve confidence in weekly planned oral presentations that rely on improvisational skills, and, of course, explore the countries and cultures that make up God's world.

7th Grade Units

Middle Ages Unit

Highlights of this unit include students building miniature Viking boats and taking part in a trading simulation. The class studies feudal and church pyramids. Another highlight: "Top 10 list: medieval cities." Students do cathedral research and a poem and look at castle architecture.

After much research and preparation, students enjoy a Medieval Yuletide feast featuring authentic food and atmosphere, feast participants in costumes, student performances, and special guest entertainment –all make this event a treasured experience by many students and family.

Art class integrates their unit lessons by creating gargoyles and stained-glass windows.

Renaissance Unit

Highlights of this unit include making a Modern Europe country location map; studying Florence as the World Trade Center; exploring Mona Lisa and Renaissance Art; plus learning about Leonardo as an inventor and Michelangelo as a sculptor. We ask: Why is Galileo famous? Students display their Leonard and Galileo posters at the AACS Science Fair. The unit covers Elizabethan England and Shakespeare's influence on culture: past and present.

Reformation Unit

Seventh graders start this unit learning what was happening around the world during the European Renaissance, and then make their way back to Europe as students learn about the different types of Christian reformation happening in what is now called Germany, Switzerland, England, and Czech Republic. Students research important individuals of the reformation and counter-reformation, and class time is spent talking/writing about the ramifications of the reformers' actions. At AACS, we are fortunate to be an ecumenical community where many Christian beliefs gather and rejoice in Jesus' grace, mercy, and redemption. Through this unit and the church biography project, students will not only learn the differences among churches, but also celebrate our unity in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The culminating project, the church biography writing project, also develops the student's understanding his or her church's background and history, and helps them explore how their church might be connected to a global denomination or movement. For some, it might be learning about the combination of different denominations throughout their family's history that creates a unique Christian heritage or background.

8th Grade Units U. S. History

Students in eighth grade will explore the development of the United States from the Revolutionary War through World War II with the survey textbook *The American Nation*. This text is supplemented with primary sources, maps, hands-on units, and current events. Students will expand their ability to analyze information for bias, accuracy, and purpose.

Introduction

The primary objective of this unit is to create a base from which the rest of our studies will be built. We overview the importance of history, practice reading strategies for textbooks, look at different ways to study and analyze history, and explore some tools of history. In addition, students are exposed to basic economic systems and geographic classifications, and spend time learning to read and manipulate an electronic newspaper.

U.S. Constitution

Students briefly review the Revolutionary War period, focusing on the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. Influences on the Constitution and the development of the Constitution are studied, culminating in a simulated Constitutional Convention. We then take time to study the document itself, both how it is organized and how it establishes the structure of our government.

Early Republic

Through study of the first three presidents of the United States, students will understand and appreciate the fragile state of our nation during the first years of its existence. Significant precedents, events and people will be studied. At the end of the unit, an independent, in-depth research project on an aspect of the War of 1812 further increases the students' appreciation for the difficulties faced and addressed when establishing our nation.

Expansion and Change

The rapid growth of our nation as we enter the 19th century is seen in both physical expansion and changing views of life, business and politics. The presidency of Andrew Jackson is explored in some detail, including his impact on the economy and his treatment of Native Americans. Students work in small groups to develop a project based on a highlighted event of this era.

Slavery

The horrible reality of slavery is understood through reading primary source documents and tracking the political developments surrounding slavery. After the horrors of how slaves lived and were treated, we move to the work of those fighting against slavery, both black and white. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is studied in part. The unit concludes with the election of Abraham Lincoln and the ultimate escalation of differences – the Civil War.

Civil War

Students are guided to explore and understand various points of view during the war – soldier and civilian, northerner and southerner, slave and free. Key battles are studied as are the political developments. Students have the opportunity to participate in a mapping exercise, to taste the soldier's food, and to try their hand at war strategy.

Reconstruction

This brief unit shows the devastation in the South after the war, and the conflict felt in the government between restoring the states to the Union and abolishing once and for all the institution of slavery. We see how African Americans fared as freedmen and ultimately how rights fought for became rights lost through segregation, Jim Crow laws and a key Supreme Court decision.

Era of Transformation

The rapid change experienced by our nation after the Civil War until the turn of the century is studied through a focus on industry, immigration, and the settling of the West.

20th Century

Students select a topic such as sports or music that is explored for each of the first four decades of the 20th Century. Students work independently to research their topic and write a paper. At least one oral presentation is included with this project. Throughout the unit, students participate in whole class instruction and activities to study larger political developments such as World War I and II, and the Great Depression.

7th Grade Spanish

Spanish in seventh grade is an introduction to the basic sentence structure of the Spanish language. Students learn: the basic grammar of nouns/articles/adjectives/verbs, beginner's vocabulary words, to start simple conversations in Spanish and to understand simple dialogues and stories

Students take vocabulary quizzes and chapter tests and dialogue guidelines to help them talk in Spanish to one another. In addition, seventh graders listen to conversations in Spanish on Audio-CDs and do Audio-CD exercises, all to help them understand beginning Spanish.

Students also have the opportunity to learn some cultural aspects of the Spanish language throughout the year.

In detail for 7th:

During the first semester, 7th graders are learning:

Grammar:

The Spanish alphabet, punctuation, definite and indefinite article of nouns, plural of nouns, adjectives and their adjustments to nouns in singular and plural, subject pronouns, regular -ar verbs in the Present Tense. Also: ¿Qué, Quién, Quiénes?, ¿Cuántos/as?, hay, un/unos, and esto/estos

Words:

Greetings, words of items in a classroom, numbers from 1-30, days of the week, months, date, colors, animals, some descriptive adjectives (big, small, etc.), activity verbs (to speak, paint, swim, etc.)

During the second semester, 7th graders are learning:

Grammar:

To like sth or to like to do sth. (gusta), the verb "ir", telling time, going to do sth. (ir + a+ verb), regular er-verbs in the Present Tense, the verb "hacer"

Words:

seasons, words of activities (to play soccer, to ski, etc.), subjects in school, adverbs of time (today, tomorrow, etc.), food, weather

Culture throughout the year:

In addition, seventh graders learn where Spanish is spoken, the difference between Spanish in Spain and Spanish in Latin-America, about Spanish foods, Spanish Christmas and other cultural aspects as they come up throughout the year. They also have the opportunity to be introduced to some Spanish speaking countries and their people through age-appropriate DVDs.

8th Grade Spanish

Spanish in eighth grade is the continuation of the introduction to the basic sentence structure of the Spanish language. By the end of eighth grade, students can register for Spanish level II in high school. It is not a requirement but an option for them.

In eighth grade, Spanish is mainly focused on: learning more of the Spanish verb types regular and irregular in the Present Tense; more beginner vocabulary words; continuing simple conversation in Spanish; and better understanding simple dialogues and stories

Students take vocabulary quizzes and chapter tests and dialogue guidelines to help them talk more in Spanish to one another.

In addition, eighth graders continue to listen to conversations in Spanish on Audio-CDs and do Audio CD exercises, all to help them understand more beginning Spanish.

They also have the opportunity to learn more cultural aspects of the Spanish language throughout the year.

In detail for 8th:

During the first semester students are learning

Grammar:

Stem-vowel change verb "tener", verb "ser", sth. hurts (duele), how sth. fits (queda), ¿de quién es?, más que/menos que, possessive adjectives, -ito, ita

Words:

expressions with "tener", family members, parts of a body, clothing, numbers from 30 - 1,000, more descriptive adjectives, hair types, continents, countries, nationalities

During the second semester, 8th graders are learning:

Grammar:

Verb "estar", review of regular -ar and -er verbs in the Present Tense, new: regular -ir verbs, using all 3 Spanish verb types, more stem-vowel change verbs in the Present Tense (e to ie, o to ue, u to ue), tener que, ir a, acabar de, reflexive verbs in the Present Tense. Also some prepositions (cerca de/lejos de etc.)

Words:

parts of a house outside and inside, furniture in living room and bedroom, house chores, drinks and foods for breakfast, more words of activities, morning routine

Culture throughout the year:

In addition, eighth graders learn where Spanish speaking countries are located in the world, where Hispanics live in the United States of America, and about cultural differences like Hispanic houses versus American houses. They also have the opportunity to see more about Spanish speaking countries and their people through age-appropriate DVDs.

Middle School 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, photography, film, 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.

Middle School art provides opportunities for media experimentation and technical development as well as personal growth. We strive to foster and develop each student's individual strengths by providing differentiated learning opportunities where all students can succeed. We foster independence and self-awareness through self-assessments, reflections, and goal-setting activities. We encourage personal development and idea generation through brainstorming and creative questioning-- modeling the artistic process from idea to product. Students will contextualize art works by relating them to the cultural and historical climates that influenced them, encouraging interdisciplinary thinking. Exposure to a wide range of artistic styles and approaches will help broaden their perspective on the possibilities of art making. They will also learn to infer meaning from images and symbols and to discuss and evaluate contemporary and historical art philosophies and ethics as they relate to the role of art in society.

Middle School 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 middle school, we emphasize music theory and history. Our music classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop proficient 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 lives.

Sixth grade music skills include:

- Recognizing note intervals
- Sight reading
- Singing multi-part songs
- Instrument identification
- Perform major, minor, pentatonic, and chromatic scales

- Basic chord structure
- Performance etiquette

Seventh grade music skills include:

- Perform Latin songs with peers
- Composition of a Gregorian Chant
- Singing rounds, canons and partner songs on pitch
- Perform Renaissance dances
- Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque music history and instrument identification

Eighth grade music skills include:

- Reading an orchestral score
- Singing rounds, canons and partner songs on pitch
- Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary era music history
- Reports and presentations on music styles, composers, and pieces

Middle School Instrumental Music

Instrumental Music begins in earnest during middle school at AACCS and is a wonderful opportunity to explore the world of music with peers in a group setting. After having a chance to try out a few instruments at the end of fifth grade, students are encouraged to take private lessons over the summer and then may choose to take instrumental music starting in sixth grade. Sixth graders have their own beginner band, which meets twice weekly during the school year with opportunities for sectional work as well as rehearsals with the full band. The seventh and eighth grade band also meets twice weekly. This combined Concert Band has more challenging music which stretches the abilities of these young musicians. It is expected that seventh and eighth graders will commit to a full year in instrumental music.

All sixth- through eighth-grade instrumental music students are required to practice a minimum amount weekly and are encouraged to join the AACCS Praise Band or a similar musical group at their local Christian church.

Although learning and practicing a new instrument can be challenging for middle school students, support is provided to ensure the success of all students in instrumental music.

Middle School 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, 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. Middle school grades have P.E. at least once and often twice weekly. Plus, students are encouraged to take part in after-school sports like girls volleyball, basketball, and track, and boys soccer, basketball and track.

Middle school homework assignments include weekly "Fitness Logs," where students are expected to record physical activities outside of school hours. Parents review and sign the logs, which students turn in for grades monthly.

Chapel

As a Christian school that values community, school-wide chapel services are an integral part of our curriculum. Students experience corporate worship in chapels twice a month, once as a K-8 chapel and the other as a middle-school-only chapel. AACCS breaks students up into multi-age groups called "chapel families." Eighth-grade students serve as leaders of these groups, with many and varied opportunities to worship with and direct these mixed-age groups.

Grades 6-8 really develop Christian leadership by allowing them to mentor younger students in their "chapel family" and actively plan chapel worship. We challenge middle school students to know what they believe and why.

Each year, chapels focus on a particular theme, which teachers incorporate into their classroom activities. This year's theme is "The Names of God." Previous themes have included "Serve the Lord with Gladness," "God so Loved the World," "God Keeps His Promises," "Walking in the Light," "Our World Belongs to God," and "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made, We are the Body of Christ."

Through chapel, students learn how to pray and sing publicly and to participate in worship. Guest speakers talk to students about their Christian walk, or focus on an area relevant to a service project or another topical issue.

6th Grade EACH

In sixth grade, students meet two to three times per week in a class called EACH. EACH is an acronym standing for Economics, Advisory preparation, Computers, and Health. Students begin the year with an introduction to our laptop cart and an Internet Safety unit. Students also are prepared for differences between middle school and elementary through the introduction of unique procedures, Advisory groups and student-led conferences. Health units on healthy choices, building relationships, nutrition, and safety are then presented, exploring how we seek to fulfill God's desire for us to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The year ends with a mini-unit on economics focusing on personal finance, budgeting and choices.

6th through 8th Grade Advisory

Current research suggests that pre-adolescents benefit from receiving one-on-one time with a specific teacher and belonging to a consistent group of peers working toward common goals. Advisory clubs, as they are called, have had great success in many middle schools across the country. Using resources from the National Middle School Association and Project Wisdom, the AACCS middle school team has created an advisory program that fosters academic, social, and spiritual growth among students and teachers. With monthly themes such as "Making a Difference" and "Contagious Compassion," the daily, 20-minute session incorporates a devotion time, study and "recharge" time, writing and skill practice, individual student and teacher interaction, and team building.

As your child meets with his or her advisory teacher, a record of progress and goals will be made in all learning areas. This is preparation for student-led conferences held in the fall and spring. In lieu of traditional 10-minute middle school conference, these 15-minute conferences will be held with you, your child, and the advisory teacher. Your child and the advisory teacher will be able to share accurate academic progress for every subject through a portfolio that's being managed by the student.

Advisory and student-led conferences in middle school are leading our kids in the right direction toward self-assessment, responsibility, and independence. It is the middle school team's privilege to partner with parents to provide each child with a middle school experience that assists him or her to become who God intended.

5th Grade through 8th Grade Fine Arts Festival

Hosted by Ann Arbor Christian School from time to time, the Fine Arts Festival brings together several area Christian schools to celebrate the arts. The Fine Arts Festival gives our students an opportunity to share their artistic abilities with parents, teachers, and peers and to receive recognition for their gifts through evaluation and awards. Each student is evaluated against basic criteria and may receive either first-, second-, or third-place ribbons. Students participate in two events of their choice that include art work, short stories, music performance, dance, and speeches. Students also sign up for a workshop, designed to give hands-on experience with various forms of the arts.

6th through 8th Grade Independent Academics

In middle school, students have the choice between Instrumental Music and Independent Academics. For students electing to take Independent Academics, time is given twice a week to do independent reading, increasing comprehension and fluency. A quarter goal is set and measured through the Accelerated Reader program. Additional incentives are provided to encourage all middle school students to read over and above their goal. Progress is monitored to ensure students are reading at their reading level and meeting comprehension goals. Students may choose to read outside of class and use the class time to complete homework. This can be advantageous at times as support from teachers is more readily available.