

# Ann Arbor Christian School



K-8  
Curriculum Guide  
Overview  
for Parents

# **Ann Arbor Christian School...**

In partnership with Christian families, Ann Arbor Christian School offers Christ-centered, academically excellent education that challenges students to live and act in society as committed followers of Jesus Christ.

As a Christian community, we at AACCS profess faith in God as our Creator, and interweave God's infallible Word — the Old and the New Testaments — into teaching all subjects. We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, and affirm Him as Lord in all areas of life. And, we believe the Holy Spirit is working among us, and encourage each student to discover his or her unique gifts and respond to God's guidance.

## **K-5 Curriculum Overview**

Elementary teachers at Ann Arbor Christian School have developed innovative ways for children to learn through an integrated approach to the curriculum. While benchmarks set by the state of Michigan generally determine science and social studies units, teachers develop those units in a way that integrates biblical truth, math, reading, and writing.

*"There are so many things that I like about teaching at AACCS. I think the first and most important thing is that it is an opportunity to help children not only know who Jesus is intellectually but experience his love personally. Moving from head to heart is what is a passion for me and what is a passion here at AACCS as a whole." -- Becky Jungkuntz, fifth-grade teacher*

At Ann Arbor Christian School, we want our students to embrace a passion for learning about God's world and a desire to know Christ. We do this through:

- An innovative curriculum that integrates academic excellence with Christian living and faith. Students learn to apply Biblical principles to all subjects, and to interactions with teachers and peers.
- Teachers and staff who challenge students to develop their God-given intellectual, spiritual, artistic, and physical gifts. Students are encouraged to use their gifts, knowledge of the Scriptures, and the strength of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to guide future decisions and ethical choices.
- An emphasis on excellence. By incorporating language arts into science and social studies units, teachers help students to develop critical thinking skills across the curriculum. This may be one reason that AACCS students test significantly higher than the national average in reading, math, social studies and science.
- Parents who are actively involved in the education of their children.
- Service and outreach projects that encourage students to become sensitive to others' needs and teach the importance of caring for God's world.

AACCS is accredited through Christian Schools International, which offers curriculum, teacher support, leadership training, testing, and other services to nearly 500 member schools in the United States and abroad.

### **Math**

Mathematics is one tool by which we better understand the way God designed the universe. Students come to value God's sense of order and precision as they learn to think mathematically. They are encouraged to be problem solvers while developing skills in number and operation, patterning, geometry, measurement, probability, and analysis.

Although our balanced math curriculum provides ample opportunities for hands-on experimentation and problem solving, teachers also ensure that students develop strong skills in basic mathematical operations. Application of mathematics knowledge is essential to our instructional methods.

## **Science**

*"I want my children to learn that science is about asking questions and searching for answers, not just memorizing information from a textbook. AACCS's curriculum and teachers offer a hands-on approach that motivates my sons to think critically about the world around them."-- Lorri Vander Roest, pediatrician*

At AACCS, students begin to develop a passionate interest in and sense of wonder about God's creation from the day they walk in the door. Teachers use hands-on activities and technology in new and innovative ways, and integrate reading and writing projects to reinforce the scientific concepts presented. For example, when the third graders study Light & Sound, they read a book together about Helen Keller, do a creative writing project about a person who is deaf, talk about what it means that Jesus is the "Light of the World," and observe the contrast of light and dark in a piece of art. Within this framework, children are encouraged to compare, contrast and explore relationships between subjects.

Science units include animals, plants and trees, insects, the human body, space, simple machines, and electricity. All students are invited to participate in the school's annual Science Fair.

## **Language Arts**

*"The balanced approach to teaching reading produces successful readers. By linking literature to other parts of the curriculum, our children are inspired to read, read, read! Our older children's success in middle school and high school is certainly directly related to the AACCS vision for loving to learn." -- Michelle Machiele, parent*

Language is a gift from God and should glorify and serve Him. Our language arts program balances both phonics- and literature-based approaches, which creates life-long readers, confident researchers, and writers who demonstrate clarity, logic, persuasiveness, creativity, and accuracy. By combining phonics and whole language, the curriculum addresses the needs of the new reader and the advanced reader and various learning styles. It provides opportunities for both kids who are still learning to decode as well as kids who are reading proficiently or above grade level. Students learn to use scripture as a basis for analyzing what they read, write, think, and say. This approach helps students appreciate the diversity of human experience, culture, and values, and to evaluate spoken and written messages.

## **Social Studies**

Students develop an understanding of how God's hand works in history, and how Christians can make a difference in their communities and the world. Language arts is integrated into social studies units, so students are often reading a book or writing an essay or story that relates to the subject area. The curriculum is designed to start with the familiar and expand beyond that each year. Therefore, students learn how a community functions, then about Ann Arbor, then Michigan, and are introduced to U.S. history by studying Pilgrims, the American Revolution, and Westward Expansion. Middle school students learn world geography, European history from the middle ages through the reformation, and U.S. History from 1789 to the present.

## **Bible**

Our main Bible curriculum provides a systematic study of the Bible that will lead students to discover that God, who manifested Himself in the Old Testament, is eager to manifest Himself today in the lives of children who will enter into fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. Students are led through the study of the Bible in a way that encourages them to process Biblical truths and apply Biblical principles to daily living. Students learn to depend on the Bible as perfect, complete, and as relevant today as when it was first written. In middle school, students study how the Bible can deepen their understanding of literature, history, science, and other subjects. They also are challenged to develop an informed Christian worldview, cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus, and rely on the Bible to provide a daily foundation for life. Our Bible curriculum emphasizes God's sovereignty, the authority of Scripture, our need for disciplined holiness, God's Kingdom, His covenant, the depth of our sin, God's amazing grace, and the Lordship of Christ.

But Bible learning is not just one lesson out of each day.

We profess faith in God as our Creator, and interweave God's infallible Word — the Old and the New Testaments — into the teaching of all subjects.

*"The neat thing about Ann Arbor Christian School is that faith pervades every aspect of our lives here. So we don't just have faith come out at devotions and tuck it away until later. It doesn't just come out in Bible class, but we really try to incorporate faith into every part of our lives and every aspect of what happens here at school each day."-- Kellie Steen, teacher*

## **Prayer and Daily Devotions**

In addition to an integrated approach to learning and faith, students are encouraged to grow in their personal relationship with Christ. Rather than teach the doctrine of any one particular denomination, we focus on developing the Christian character of the students, their knowledge of the scriptures, their relationship with their Lord and Savior, and their understanding of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Teachers lead students in a daily devotional time that is both interactive and relevant. Learning to pray for their own and others needs helps students develop spiritual sensitivity in response to God working in their lives.

## **Chapel /Chapel Families**

We are a Christian school that values community. Children have multi-grade-level chapel families with whom they praise and worship God on a regular basis.

Chapel is an integral part of our school curriculum. Each year, chapel focuses on a particular theme, which is reflected in individual chapels throughout the year. This year, the theme is "The Fruit of the Spirit." 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
- Let us Fix our Eyes on Jesus
- Fearfully and Wonderfully Made, We are the Body of Christ
- The Names of God

Through chapel, students learn how to pray and sing publicly and to participate in worship. Middle school students are actively involved in planning chapel worship. Chapels may vary in grade level format; K-5, 6-8, and K-8 are all incorporated throughout the year. Guest speakers talk to students about their Christian walk, or focus on an area relevant to a service project or another topical issue.

## **Art**

We believe in a creative God, who wants us to appreciate and nurture our creativity. The Ann Arbor Christian School art curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and evaluate the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in God's creation. Students explore different mediums for artistic expression, including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, textiles, and performance. The art curriculum is integrated with classroom units and uses art history, art making, and aesthetic criticism to help students evaluate, understand, and express their unique place in the world.

## **General Music**

Students are encouraged to recognize music is a gift from God and as such should be used to glorify Him. Through participation in performance, study, and application of scriptural principles applied to music, students will see the diversity of musical experience, culture, and develop in their ability to evaluate music for quality. Students engage in a variety of musical experiences and grow in their competence to demonstrate creativity, accuracy, appreciation, and expression in music. Students will work cooperatively and have opportunities to demonstrate leadership while giving value to others' work.

Music is integrated with other classroom studies, e.g. singing in language of culture studied.

Performance opportunities for singers and instrumentalists (often along with a bit of acting, too) abound. Singing takes place during the school day--in classrooms and at regular chapel services--and as part of special events like Grandparents' Day and the evening Christmas program. Typically, each spring, AACCS puts on an evening musical, alternating years between emphasizing middle-school performers and emphasizing elementary school performers.

## **Instrumental Music**

While fifth graders get a chance to try out various musical instruments near the end of second semester, 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. Elementary students do get to hear the middle school musicians perform during regular chapels and during special events like Grandparents' Day, the Christmas program, and the spring musical.

## **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 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 (rules, how to, why, written test scores).

A wide variety of offerings keep students of all skill levels interested in physical activity. Units may 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 with one nine week period devoted to health class.

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. The kids earn awards for the highest mileage girl and the highest mileage boy of the year and for meeting milestones like 25, 50, or even 100 miles!

## ***Middle School Curriculum Overview***

The AACCS middle school is dynamic and interactive. To prepare students for high school's demands, our team of teachers challenges students to take risks, think critically and use discernment, understand and apply their personal, spiritual, and academic talents, deepen their relationship with Christ, and make service a priority.

"We have high expectations for our students and our curriculum reflects that," says middle-school teacher Sue DeZeeuw. "We try to have a lot of open-ended opportunities so that we can challenge the kids who need a challenge, but support and encourage those who need that."

Middle school is about taking risks and expanding horizons. Having teachers you trust makes all the difference:

"The teachers really delight in the children and desire to know them inside and out, to know their strengths and their weaknesses, to best plan for how to help them learn," explains former middle-school teacher Xan Morgan. "The goal is to create a safe place here at our school, a safe place to make mistakes and to learn from them and to grow as followers of Jesus."

A 2008 ACT report entitled "*The Forgotten Middle*" says "students who leave eighth grade without the essential skills they need to be on target for college and career readiness too often leave high school not ready for any kind of meaningful future." AACCS recognizes that the middle school years are crucial to future high school success and our track record shows AACCS graduates do extremely well.

To help middle-school students develop responsibility and independence, AACCS offers Advisory Clubs. These multi-grade groups of about 15 middle school students meet with their adviser every day for 20 minutes to foster academic, social, and spiritual growth among students and teachers. These sessions focus on devotion time, teacher/student academic planning, life-skills lessons, and community building.

### **Bible**

Our main Bible curriculum provides a systematic study of the Bible that will lead students to discover that God, who manifested Himself in the Old Testament, is eager to manifest Himself today in the lives of students who will enter into fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. Students are led through the study of the Bible in a way that encourages them to process Biblical truths and apply Biblical principles to daily living. Students learn to depend on the Bible as complete and as relevant today as when it was first written. In middle school, students study how the Bible can deepen their understanding of literature, history, science, and other subjects. They also are challenged to develop an informed Christian worldview, cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus, and rely on the Bible to provide a daily foundation for life. Our Bible curriculum emphasizes God's sovereignty, the authority of Scripture, our need for disciplined holiness, God's Kingdom, His covenant, the depth of our sin, God's amazing grace, and the Lordship of Christ.

### **Prayer and Daily Devotions**

In addition to an integrated approach to learning and faith, students are encouraged to grow in their personal relationship with Christ. Rather than teach the doctrine of any one particular denomination, AACCS focuses on developing the Christian character of the students, their knowledge of the scriptures, their relationship with their Lord and Savior, and their understanding of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Teachers lead students in a daily devotional time that is both interactive and relevant. Learning to pray for their own and others needs helps students develop spiritual sensitivity in response to God working in their lives.

### **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 Fruit of the Spirit." 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," and "The Names of God."

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.

### **Math**

Building on the elementary school curriculum, the sixth-grade curriculum balances basic skill development and problem-solving strategies. Mental math, computation, and critical thinking skills are developed through hands-on activities and small group work. In seventh and eighth grades, students delve into pre-algebra and algebra. Students are expected to become adept at using symbolic operations to prepare them for higher levels

of analytical and mathematical thinking. Our graduates often are able to skip the entry-level freshman math in high school.

## **Science**

The middle school science curriculum encourages students to see scientific inquiry as one way to reveal the amazing complexity and orderliness of God's world, and what it means to be good stewards of God's creation. Through laboratory and outdoor exploration, the students learn the scientific method, and how to responsibly use and apply knowledge.

In sixth and seventh grades, students focus on Life Science with units on plants, animals, the human body, and ecology. They also cover Earth Science, learning to recognize God's hand in landforms, waterways, the sky, and space.

Eighth graders study Physical Science, focusing on matter, energy, electricity and magnetism.

All students are invited to participate in the school's annual Science Fair, with mandatory participation for middle school students every other year for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

## **Literature and Writing**

Literature offers a window into history and culture and also into human relationships. That's why we use the language arts curriculum to complement social studies units. Students learn to analyze what literature teaches us about history, God's world, and each other. They are introduced to a wide variety of literature, including oral traditions, poetry, informational texts, short stories, and historical fiction. Writing assignments are linked to projects in other subject areas, and build a foundation of usage and mechanics.

## **Social Studies**

The social studies curriculum emphasizes an integrated approach to learning that helps students develop a greater knowledge of God's plan for the world. Students are encouraged to take risks and use their creativity as they research and design long-term projects. In sixth grade, the students focus on World Geography and Ancient Civilizations. Seventh graders focus on European History (Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the Reformation). They study economic principles, geography, and how the Christian world was established in western Europe. Eighth graders focus on American history.

## **Foreign Language**

Seventh and eighth graders take Spanish. Seventh graders take Spanish two class periods a week. The eighth graders take Spanish three class periods a week. This two-year course is equivalent to the first year of high school Spanish.

## **Computers**

Computers are a fundamental part of the middle school curriculum. In sixth grade, students are required to take a course in computer usage. All middle school students learn how technology can be used to enhance learning in each subject area. Students are taught how to use the Internet for research, how to analyze information, and how to use the Internet safely and ethically. After learning various computer tools, including Microsoft Office, students apply their skills regularly through such projects as written reports and multi-media presentations. This course meets Michigan's middle school standards for technology.

## **Art**

We believe in a creative God, who wants us to appreciate and nurture our creativity. The Ann Arbor Christian School art curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and evaluate the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in God's creation. Students explore different mediums for artistic expression, including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, textiles, and performance. The art curriculum is integrated with classroom units and uses art history, art making, and aesthetic criticism to help students evaluate, understand, and express their unique place in the world.

## **General Music**

Students are encouraged to recognize music is a gift from God and as such should be used to glorify Him. Through participation in performance, study, and application of scriptural principles applied to music, students will see the diversity of musical experience, culture, and develop in their ability to evaluate music for quality. Students engage in a variety of musical experiences and grow in their competence to demonstrate creativity, accuracy, appreciation, and expression in music. Students will work cooperatively and have opportunities to demonstrate leadership while giving value to others' work.

Music is integrated with other classroom studies, e.g. music of the Middle Ages is studied while seventh graders are learning about the Middle Ages in social studies and literature class.

Performance opportunities for singers and instrumentalists (often along with a bit of acting, too) abound. Singing takes place during the school day--in classrooms and at regular chapel services--and as part of special events like Grandparents' Day and the evening Christmas program. Typically, each spring, AACCS puts on an evening musical, alternating years between emphasizing middle-school performers and emphasizing elementary school performers.

## **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.

Please be assured we do everything possible to ensure the success of all students in instrumental music.

## **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 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 (rules, how to, why, written test scores).

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 and basketball and boys soccer and basketball.

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.

## AACCS Unit Studies K-8

Grade	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Kindergarten	Color All About Me	All About Me Health	Health Thanksgiving	Christmas	Five Senses Safety	Safety Presidents	Science Experiments	Animals	Animals What's in My Backyard?	What's in My Backyard?
First	Taking Care of Me	Taking Care of Me	The Family	The Family	Our Father's World	Properties of Materials	Properties of Materials	A Good Steward of Environmental Issues	A Good Steward of Environmental Issues Weather	Weather
Second	Community	Community	Habitats	Habitats	Simple Machines	U.S. Heroes	Water	Water	Birds	Birds
Third	Insects	Digestion	Native Americans	Native Americans	Regions & Landmarks of the U.S.	Regions & Landmarks of the U.S.	Light & Sound	Light & Sound	Rocks & Minerals	Rocks & Minerals
Fourth	Trees & Plants	Space	Space Matter	Matter	Oceans	Skeletal & Muscular Systems	Skeletal & Muscular Systems	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan
Fifth	Animal Classification	Animal Classification	Exploration & Colonization	Circulatory, Respiratory, Central Nervous Systems	American Revolution	Electricity & magnets	Drugs & Alcohol	Westward Expansion	Westward Expansion	Westward Expansion
Sixth	SS: Geography Earth Sci.: T-storms/ hurricanes, water/watersheds, pollution/stewardship	SS: Middle East/ Mesopotamia Earth Sci.: Atmosphere/weather, soil, demo sci. project	SS: Middle East/ Mesopotamia Earth Sci.: Minerals/rocks, dynamic earth	SS: Ancient Egypt Earth Sci.: Dynamic earth, faults, quakes, volcanoes	SS: Ancient Egypt Earth Sci.: Sci. Fair, glaciers	SS: Ancient Greece/ Rome Earth Sci.: Weathering/erosion	SS: Ancient Greece/ Rome Earth Sci.: Astronomy	SS: ½ Ancient Greece/ Rome and ½ Caravans Earth Sci.: Land use (community project?)	SS: Caravans Earth Sci.: Rivers, Lakes, erosion	SS: Caravans Earth Sci.: stewardship, closure
Seventh	SS: Middle Ages Earth Sci.: T-storms/ hurricanes, water/watersheds, pollution/stewardship	SS: Middle Ages Earth Sci.: Atmosphere/weather, soil, demo sci. project	SS: Middle Ages Earth Sci.: Minerals/rocks, dynamic earth	SS: Renaissance Earth Sci.: Dynamic earth, faults, quakes, volcanoes	SS: Renaissance Earth Sci.: Sci. Fair, glaciers	SS: Renaissance Earth Sci.: Weathering/erosion	SS: Reformation Earth Sci.: Astronomy	SS: Reformation Earth Sci.: Land use (community project?)	SS: Reformation Earth Sci.: Rivers, Lakes, erosion	SS: Reformation Earth Sci.: stewardship, closure
Eighth	U.S. History: 1789 to present. Intro/Review Physical Sci.: Matter (mini research project ) Idea: Local musical "Molecules"	U.S. History: Constitution Physical Sci.: Chemical properties & interactions	U.S. History: Early Republic Physical Sci.: Chemical interactions cont' Carbon & climate, force & motion "Spheres" of universe	U.S. History: Expansion & Reform Physical Sci.: Force/motion, work/energy	U.S. History: Slavery Physical Sci.: Sound, exams	U.S. History: Civil War Physical Sci.: Light, conserving energy & matter	U.S. History: Reconstruction Physical Sci.: conserving energy & matter	U.S. History: Era of Transformation Physical Sci.: Nuclear Energy & radiometric dating, God & time	U.S. History: 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Physical Sci.: Tesla/ Science/Politics magnetism & electricity	U.S. History: 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Physical Sci.: Tesla/ Science/Politics magnetism & electricity