

# CHRISTIAN LIFE SCHOOL

# ACADEMIC STANDARDS

*"We align our curriculum to Biblical and academic standards that actively challenge our students to become successful world-changers."*



## Introduction

Christian Life School is committed to preparing students spiritually, socially, and academically to impact their world for God. In a rapidly changing society, we believe that there are eternal truths and enduring understandings that will build unshakeable foundations for our children as they move on to college, career, community, and an eternity with Christ. Our commitment to preparing students in this way results in the philosophy that a truly Christian education reflects excellence in all areas of life. For this reason, the staff at Christian Life School has aligned their curriculum to

Biblical and academic standards that actively challenge our students to become successful world-changers.

The purpose of any standards set is to provide clear communication of student learning expectations from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. With hundreds of state, national, and international standards available, we have researched the options and adopted the sets that support our philosophy of education, our Christ-centered mission, and represent the rigor and depth necessary for a high-quality, college-preparatory learning experience. Albert Einstein once said, "Education is not the learning of facts, it's rather the training of the mind to think." The adopted standards at CLS reflect this philosophy as our expectation is for students to move beyond memorization and reach their potential to think critically and deeply about the world around them. The following standard sets represent the highest expectations in educational rigor and demand a depth of thinking that will challenge our students.



## Mathematics

In Math, Christian Life School has decided to align our curriculum to NCTM (the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). Founded in 1920, NCTM has grown into the world's largest organization dedicated to mathematics education. These standards offer a comprehensive mathematical framework for students in pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Valuing more than memorization, NCTM expects students to understand how and why mathematical understandings apply to relevant contexts and encourages students to persevere through challenges. Each grade level has age-appropriate standards relating to 5 content strands (Numbers & Operation, Algebra, Geometry, Measurement, and Data Analysis & Probability) and 5 process strands (Problem Solving, Reasoning & Proof, Communication, Connections, and Representation). Under these guidelines, teachers design activities where even young students can begin to learn logical thinking, formula application, and data representation. Special emphasis is placed on the depth of thinking required to analyze purpose, make predictions, and justify conclusions.



## Science & Engineering

Science curriculum at Christian Life is aligned to NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards). On the cutting-edge of science education, these standards were written as a researched-based effort to update student expectations in a way that prepares them for a world of rapidly growing knowledge and technology. Inspired by the National Research Council's vision for science education, NGSS takes a 3-Dimensional approach to learning by connecting every standard to 3 cornerstone principles (Science Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Disciplinary Core Ideas). These principles are meant to resemble the way scientists and engineers work and think as they require students to not only *know* science, but to *do* science through inquiry, collaboration, problem solving, and engineering. As Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students work through these standards, emphasis is placed on core concepts and practices that crosscut all science domains (Life Science, Physical Science, Earth & Space, and Engineering) and engage students in relevant application of their scientific insights.



## Historical & Social Perspectives

Our Social Studies curriculum is aligned to the new Wisconsin State Social Studies Standards. These standards are based on the work of NCSS (the National Council for the Social Studies), but have expanded their work with additional standards in the fields of psychology and sociology while augmenting the expectations for depth of thought and action. Moving beyond simple content knowledge and memorization, these expectations require students to develop skills in inquiry, application, and action. The underlying goal woven through the standards is to bring about a deep understanding of the historical narrative that will ultimately lead our students in becoming active civic participants in our global society. The standards center on 6 major strands (Inquiry Practices & Processes, Behavioral Science, Economics, Geography, History, and Political Science). Special emphasis is placed on critical thinking as students are asked to construct questions, research claims, make predictions, assemble arguments, and consider the broad implications of decisions and actions. As our social studies curriculum calls for this deep application, it will elicit valuable opportunities to connect to our Biblical worldview.

*"Higher expectations produce better performance."*

## English Language Arts

English and Language Arts at Christian Life aligns to a set of standards compiled by McREL International (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning). When states began publishing curriculum standards, McREL began a systematic approach to reviewing and analyzing these documents. Believing that higher expectations produce better performance, McREL is determined to articulate advanced standards that are clear and specific. Their research encompasses not only the work of individual states, but also the significant national and international experts in the content area. Through this research, common themes appear time and again for rigorous, high-quality student expectations in 5 recurring strands (Reading, Writing, Listening & Speaking, Viewing, and Media). When compared side-by-side with other prominent standard sets, these standards are found to not only focus on the skills necessary for reading and writing, but also require students to dive deeper into their thinking by analyzing purpose, evaluating influence, and reflecting on ethical responsibilities as it relates to 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy.





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## Spiritual Formations

Our Biblical standards are written by the Spiritual Formations Department at Christian Life School and based on a comprehensive review of the existing Biblical standards compiled by ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International) and other Christian organizations. ACSI is the accrediting body for CLS and is an internationally recognized organization whose mission is to strengthen and equip Christian educators worldwide. Aligning our Bible curriculum to these standards ensures continuity and a complete learning experience as students move between the elementary grades and into the Spiritual Formations department in the Upper School. This outline of Biblical standards represents our desire for students to not only know what the Bible says, but to understand the depth of its meaning and how it applies to their daily lives. Our goal is for students to move beyond scripture memorization and into a place where their personal faith narrative weaves throughout and influences their experiences in learning, doing, and being.

These Biblical and academic standards form the foundation of our curriculum and guide teachers in structuring the scope and sequence of each grade level and subject. Like charting a course, teachers define the objectives and pace for instruction and learning while standards provide the framework around which a student's education is built. It is for this reason that significant time and effort has been allocated to researching the standards, unpacking their objectives, and aligning the entirety of our coursework to this foundation.

By serving Early Elementary through 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a single building and leadership team, CLS is in the unique position to guarantee that our students' learning experiences are aligned to these standards without gaps or redundancies.

Also unique to CLS is our commitment to not only hold students accountable to these high academic standards, but also to weave God's Word and the development of a Biblical worldview into every classroom. God has blessed our students with incredible talents and learning capacity. Our goal is to cultivate these gifts by teaching students to become deep, independent thinkers who actively use their abilities to seek God and seek excellence in all they do.

