



MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Achiever Middle School Philosophy is based on a Christian philosophy of education and the unique needs and characteristics of the young adolescent. In striving toward our potential, Achiever, in partnership with parents, will provide the following:

- Educators who are knowledgeable about and committed to the young adolescent.
- A curriculum that is biblically integrated, challenging, and exploratory.
- A positive and collaborative school climate.
- Flexible block master schedule.
- An interdisciplinary team organization.
- Varied teaching and learning approaches.
- Comprehensive student guidance and support services.
- Assessment and evaluation that promote learning.
- A high-quality, extracurricular program.

These nine distinctives will be integral to fulfillment of our middle school mission and vision.

ACS Mission

Achiever Christian School exists to partner with parents to provide an outstanding Christian education that will help students achieve their God-given potential. In challenging and training students to become fully devoted followers of Christ, ACS endeavors to develop a Christian worldview in students through a biblically integrated approach to academic instruction and extracurricular activities.

ACS Vision

The vision of Achiever Christian School is to continually grow toward our potential and become a biblically functioning school so that Christ's purposes can be accomplished in our students, their families, and our community.

Educators who are knowledgeable about and committed to the young adolescent

We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me. Colossians 1:28

Middle level students undergo more rapid and profound personal changes during the years between 10 and 15 than at any other period. Dissimilar rates of growth are common in all areas of development, including intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. Young adolescents reveal a growing capacity for conceptualization, for considering more than a single idea at a time, and for planning steps to carry out their own learning. One consuming aspect of young adolescent development is the search for personal identity. The range of developmental issues require that school personnel understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and use a range of instructional practices.

A curriculum that is biblically-integrated, challenging, and exploratory

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10

Our curriculum is the primary vehicle for achieving the goals and objectives of our school. Our usage of curriculum embraces every planned aspect of our educational program. ACS' curriculum is distinguished by the *integration of biblical truth*. The Bible is the true vantage point for all of life, including education. Education is designed to prepare students for life, and the purpose of life is to glorify God. Education instills in students an understanding of what is worthwhile, what is valuable, and what is good.

The middle level curriculum is further distinguished by emphases that stem from the unique characteristics and needs of young adolescents. *Challenging* curriculum actively engages the students requiring sustained interest and effort. Curriculum is *integrative* when it helps students make sense out of their life experiences and connects school experiences to their daily lives outside school. Our curriculum should not be simply viewed as certain courses or activities. Instead, it should be viewed as *exploratory*. It enables students to discover their particular abilities, talents, spiritual gifts, interests, values, and preferences.

A positive and collaborative school climate

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

A very significant study reported in the document *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, stated that, "...the student should, upon entering middle grade school, join a small community in which people – students and adults – get to know each other well to create a climate for intellectual development." ACS adds

the crucial element to the community: a climate for spiritual development.

Our school, as well as each classroom, is a group of persons living in community. Our staff will help students learn and practice ways of accepting one another, learning from one another, discerning how to express and accept differences, and bearing one another's burdens.

Flexible block master schedule

Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:16

We examined the use of time and structure as one variable which, when altered, can significantly affect the quality of our program. We went after a scheduling option that possessed greater flexibility over the traditional departmentalized schedule. Consideration was given to maximizing the potential to accomplish the following:

- Varying the length of time allotted to individual subjects based upon teacher and student need.
- Providing options for special activities such as chapels, assemblies, team meetings, field trips, and other activities without disrupting the structure of the entire day or disrupting other staff members.
- Permitting opportunities to group and regroup students without totally reorganizing classes or tracking.
- Developing opportunities to correlate subject matter and engage in interdisciplinary instruction.
- Allowing teachers and students to teach and learn according to their learning style preference for morning or afternoon.
- Ensuring options to organize students for both large-and small-group instruction.

Flexible scheduling refers to arranging classes to provide the instructional staff with options for altering or modifying the schedule on a daily basis. When a *block schedule* is in place, teachers and teams are able to use a greater range of organizational and instructional practices to serve students.

An interdisciplinary team organization

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. Ecclesiastes 4:9

“Rarely does a single person have enough knowledge or experience to understand everything that goes on in a process. Therefore, major gains in quality and productivity most often result from teams – a group of people pooling their skills, talents, and knowledge” (Peter Scholtes). Our staff is divided into interdisciplinary teams. The following are benefits of a team approach:

- A consistent set of classroom management procedures are established.
- Methods of assessing and reporting student progress will be most effective when developed cooperatively by the team and communicated to the students and parents.
- Teaming provides opportunities for teacher involvement in decision making and leadership.

Many, if not most, students view the curriculum as a set of disjointed and disconnected experiences. With ACS's interdisciplinary organization, teachers not only become aware of the content of various disciplines as a result of meeting with colleagues on a regular basis but they also make connections, leading to opportunities to integrate the curriculum.

Varied teaching and learning approaches

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he desired. 1 Corinthians 12:18

Teaching techniques should enhance and accommodate the diverse skills, abilities, and knowledge of young adolescents; cultivate the multiple ways students express their intelligences; and capitalize on students' individual learning styles. Since young adolescents learn best through engagement and interaction, learning strategies feature activities that provide hands-on experiences and actively involve students in learning. Direct instruction is still very important, but varied approaches are needed, including experiments, demonstrations, opinion polls, simulations, and independent study.

Teaching is itself an increasingly complex task. In an age when information is doubling every two years, teaching students how to retrieve, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information must become a focal point of the curriculum. When technology is expanding at an astronomical rate, being able to incorporate technology into the instructional program is a significant challenge but offers new pathways to learning.

Comprehensive student guidance and support services

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things. Philippians 4:9a

Each student will have one adult who knows and cares for that individual and who supports that student's academic and personal development. Advocates are not counselors, but they can identify behavioral changes in students that need to be brought to the attention of others who can provide appropriate support. As the link between school and home, the advocate is the primary person with whom the family makes contact when communicating about the child. ACS intends to demonstrate a continuity of caring that extends over these students' entire middle level experience.