



Fremont Christian School is committed to providing a progressive, research-supported education for our students. In 2010, we began implementing instructional changes across the curriculum. In grades K-12, this meant a paradigm shift from a system of lecture, isolated study, memorization, and regurgitation to one of high academic expectations, analysis, teamwork, communication, and creativity. As a private school, Fremont Christian School has the latitude to innovate and gauge what works best for our students so we can implement curricular changes as needed.

One of our goals at FCS is to provide a 21st-century education. We work with our students to develop modern-day skills — communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking — that go beyond the content and that students will be able to draw on throughout their schooling and future careers.

We at FCS recognize that, while well-researched textbooks are a great resource for teachers, they do not constitute the whole of a curriculum. What a teacher prepares, presents, and assesses is curriculum. This encompasses not only the materials that are used for instruction but also the overall plan for instruction, the instructional strategies and practices, the standards, and the underlying philosophies and ethos of the school. Teachers develop curriculum by using not just textbooks but also original documents, magazines, media, non-fiction, fiction, strategies, and design skills to create an engaging, challenging environment for every student. At FCS, there is freedom for a professional teacher within a professional learning community to investigate research-based methods and materials, innovate, and best serve his/her students. In fact, our expectation at FCS is that every teacher and administrator is himself/herself a critical thinker, communicator, collaborator, and creator in the school environment.

In addition to the state content standards, FCS draws from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to inform instruction in all subjects. We are phasing in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which California adopted in 2013 to replace the previous state science content standards. We are committed to having a standard for accountability purposes, but we are equally committed to continually encouraging students forward, to excel beyond state or national grade-level standards. Our students are learning, practicing, and applying the skills of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity in reading, science, math, history, writing, arts, biblical study, and more, while also assimilating worldview. These disciplines are all foundational to becoming a self-reflective member of society.

Instructional practice is the most important part of any curriculum. At FCS, we are committed to best instructional practices that lead to both content knowledge and development of 21st-century skills. Teachers (with the exception of music, art, physical education, world languages, etc.) receive ongoing professional development with Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design). This research-based model supports instruction across areas that are rich in content and high-level vocabulary, promotes higher-level learning and metacognition, encourages gradual release of responsibility, and embodies 21st-century learning. GLAD is a powerful instructional model that sets high standards and expectations for all students and fosters student engagement and learning with understanding across content areas. This teaching strategy is based on brain research, best instructional practices, and “backward design,” a concept introduced in the 1998 book *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. All FCS elementary teachers provide regular classroom newsletters that include both pictures and text to introduce parents to GLAD strategies at work in the classroom.

The GLAD model emphasizes solving one’s problems, respecting others, and making good choices. Students are expected to explain their thinking and to be metacognitive learners, meaning that they are aware of and understand their own thought processes. Metacognitive learners are able to think about their own learning: *Does this make sense? How am I doing? What am I doing well? What can I do better?*

Faith Teachings

Whatever the course, FCS affirms the metanarrative of Scripture: (1) God created all things good. At creation, all things were in harmony. (2) At the Fall (Genesis 3), the whole of created order fell into disharmony due to the disobedience of

man. (3) In the person of Jesus Christ, God began the process of redemption and renewal. (4) In the end, God will restore all things through his son, Jesus Christ.

We believe the biblical metanarrative is manifested in four key relationships of creation. (1) **Fellowship**: The relationship between God and man. God created man for relationship with Himself; that relationship was broken because of sin; that relationship is restored through Jesus Christ. (2) **Image-bearers**: Man was created as a whole and healthy being, as an image-bearer of God; sin brought disharmony and conflict into the life and heart of man. Redemption through Jesus Christ begins the healing process within man. (3) **Servanthood**: God created man for harmonious and loving relationships with other people; sin is the cause of disharmony and discord among people. Part of the restoring mission of Jesus Christ is to bring people back into harmonious relationship with one another. (4) **Stewardship**: God placed the whole of created order under the rule and care of His image-bearers (Genesis 1); with the Fall, the relationship between man and the rest of the created order was marred. In Jesus Christ, God continues to call His image-bearers to work to preserve and protect the created order.

As a Christian school, we believe in transformative education that addresses not only cognitive development but a child's spiritual, physical, and civic development. We seek to partner with parents to help children achieve their potential as well-rounded individuals. Our elementary and secondary students have been involved in charitable endeavors through such organizations as Operation Christmas Child and Interact, as well as with local outreach opportunities and projects that involve collecting books for schools in Tanzania and initiatives providing books, clothing, money, and farm animals to people less fortunate than themselves. We expect the best behavior from our students and try to administer discipline in loving yet firm ways that encourage our students to make just and equitable decisions. This learning environment that we endeavor to create for our students enables our teaching professionals to engage in an overall curriculum that promotes higher-level thinking and lifelong learning.

Elementary

FCS has adopted a math program based on Common Core State Standards (CCSS), focusing on depth rather than breadth, building conceptual foundations, and, most importantly, engaging in the process and application of math concepts. Designed to reflect the way children learn mathematics, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Math Expressions* curriculum provides a solid conceptual base grounded in more than 20 years of research. Students are expected to problem-solve, explain their thinking, and prove their answers. Each unit begins with an inquiry-based activity to activate thinking, access prior knowledge, and address preconceptions. Foundational to our mathematics instruction is the understanding that there are multiple paths to solving a problem. Providing a math-learning environment that goes beyond memorization, rote learning, and basic computation allows students to learn with understanding, which in turn leads to transference and the ability to apply learning in new situations.

The English language arts (ELA) curriculum reflects a workshop framework: students reading and writing across genres, making textual connections, and communicating ideas in various ways. Students read at their independent reading levels and engage in guided reading at their instructional level. They are expected to respond orally and in writing to the texts they read. This framework provides students with instruction in the many genres of texts, strategies for metacognition, and opportunities to practice these skills. Students set personal goals for becoming better readers and writers, which they actively worked toward through extensive and close reading, guided reading, conferring, and daily writing. This approach emphasizes skill development (phonics, comprehension, text structures, etc.) with a particular focus on vocabulary development (the greatest predictor of academic achievement) and collaborative learning.

Social studies and science curricula are based on both California and Next Gen standards, with GLAD strategies embedded. Both curricula are published by UpLevel. CCSS ELA standards play an integral part in the instruction. Of key importance in the UpLevel curriculum is that students learn how to learn, their learning capacity is increased, and they are able to more quickly comprehend new ideas and concepts. All elementary students receive a weekly issue of *Time for Kids*, which teachers use to discuss current events and further extend social studies learning. Field trips, projects, labs, engineering kits, STEAM nights, and other media and materials provide enrichment for these content areas.

Word study and grammar help students recognize patterns in the English language to inform their reading and writing. A vast difference from traditional spelling education, word study focuses on identifying the spelling patterns and meaning in the English language so that students can transfer this knowledge to previously unknown and unseen words. Grammar is taught within context so that students learn to recognize how grammar changes meaning.

The California CCSS language standards require students to learn to print legibly and, beginning in grade three, write legibly in cursive. We use a D'Nealian Handwriting program published by Scott Foresman, which begins with printing and, in later grades, transitions naturally into cursive. Even in this age of technology, it is important for individuals to be able to hand write legibly. In his 2013 article "Cursive Writing Makes Kids Smarter" published in *Memory Medic*, Dr. William Klemm, a professor of neuroscience at Texas A & M University, describes the many developmental and psychological benefits of learning cursive, including sensory-motor coordination; cognitive demand, which benefits thinking processes; the engagement of both hemispheres of the brain; and developing tactics for learning in general.

Beginning in kindergarten, *Building on the Rock*, published by Summit Ministries, focuses on both character development and understanding the foundations of a Christian worldview through the building of the House of Truth. The content of the curriculum affirms the aforestated metanarrative of Scripture.

In the interest of developing the whole child, all students receive twice-weekly instruction in both music (Kodály Method) and physical education. Chromebook carts, provided for every grade level, are used to integrate web-based applications into the teaching and learning, both in classrooms and at home. In third grade, students learn to play the recorder. In fourth grade, students may opt to participate in either symphonic band or hand bells, in addition to classroom music. All students in fourth and fifth grades learn to sing chorally and perform at different events during the year.

Secondary

Since FCS implemented CCSS ideals in 2010, changes in text resources and, more importantly, professional development have focused on our students' success in higher education and careers of the future. Fremont Christian High School graduation requirements exceed the University of California admission requirements.

FCS has adopted a math curriculum that focuses on depth over breadth, conceptual foundations, and, most importantly, process and application of mathematical concepts. The CCSS for mathematical practice are reflected in the secondary math courses. Students are expected to explain their thinking, demonstrate their process, understand that there can be multiple paths to the same solution, and make real-world applications. Mastery projects allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of math concepts and processes. Three Advanced Placement courses are offered in mathematics: Statistics, Calculus AB, and Calculus BC.

English courses continue to reflect the CCSS ELA standards through the reading and analysis of key literature of various genres. Students further develop their literacy skills, with a continued emphasis on vocabulary development and understanding the role of grammar in conveying the desired meaning. Teachers cultivate clear communication and critical thinking by providing opportunities for students to practice writing for different purposes and audiences. Frequent writing builds stamina, confidence, and skill while encouraging students to engage in thoughtful and meaningful discourse. Honors projects, the Honors Science-Fiction/Fantasy Literature class, and Advanced Placement English Language/Composition class provide additional opportunities for students to challenge themselves and hone college-level reading and writing skills.

California content standards and the NGSS inform content, but the CCSS ELA standards play an integral part in the instruction of social studies and science as well. CCSS literacy standards are embedded in content instruction through GLAD instructional strategies. Science instruction takes place in well-equipped labs. Advanced Placement courses include U.S. History, U.S. Government, Biology, and Physics.

A required element of our academically rigorous secondary program, Bible courses continue with a focus on worldview. Summit Ministries' worldviews curriculum explicitly informs instruction in sixth-, eighth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade Bible courses. Seventh-grade students focus on the Old Testament, ninth grade on the Gospels, and tenth grade on apologetics. Whatever the course, FCS affirms the aforestated metanarrative of Scripture.

Physical education, world languages (Spanish), and a wide variety of fine arts courses (choral music, instrumental music, visual art, and theater arts) round out the curriculum. Advanced Placement courses for electives include Art History, Music Theory, Studio Art 2-D Design, Studio Art Drawing, Spanish Language and Culture, and Computer Principles.

In addition to our core academic program, high school students engage in a two-week January Term (J-term) during the first two weeks of each year: seven days of elective courses culminating in a three-day off-site retreat. High school teachers, administrators, other staff, and sometimes parents create and implement high-interest mini-courses that reflect their extracurricular interests and passions. Courses in past J-terms have included photography, cooking, badminton, film,

science fiction, and many more. Class size is generally limited to 12 students, with each student enrolling in a morning and afternoon class. Internships are another option for interested students during J-term. We have found that in addition to offering diverse and engaging electives outside of the core curriculum, J-term fosters closer relationships among students and between students and staff.

Final Note

Every year, FCS evaluates its curriculum in regards to appropriateness and rigor, texts and materials, and instructional practices. While there is no perfect curriculum, the materials FCS provides to our faculty are meant as quality tools for providing instruction to our students. As professionals trained to instruct and educate children, teachers make instructional decisions to use the strengths of the materials and supplement the weaknesses to provide the most balanced, research-supported, and standards-based instruction to their students. In our continuing effort to improve on and provide an excellent education grounded in a biblical worldview, both the administrative and instructional staff at FCS are committed to best instructional practices and making the changes necessary to achieve this goal.