

Introduction

Parents are charged with the primary responsibility for raising children in the faith: “You shall teach [God’s words] diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:7). “For all authority flows and is born from the authority of parents. Where a father is unable alone to educate his . . . child, he uses a schoolmaster to teach the child” (Large Catechism I 141).

Lutheran schools play a decisive, supportive role in this vital endeavor. These Lutheran Academic Standards serve this educational endeavor by providing parents and schools with tools to ensure theologically faithful engagement of content in each subject area. They equip the teacher to teach not only the “how” and “what” of academic disciplines but also the “why” that comes with understanding that the whole of creation attests to divine creation, ordering, and purpose (Psalm 19:1).

Lutheran education is concerned not only with academic excellence but also with nurturing a child’s Christian faith. Jesus’ admonition to “let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14) is a reminder that no child is too young to learn the comforting, life-giving truths of God’s Word. These Lutheran Academic Standards embrace this admonition and are provided to help ensure that students’ faith is built on a firm foundation (Matthew 7:24–25), thus equipping them to face the challenges of earthly life, sure of the new life before God they have freely received in the waters of Holy Baptism.

It is not uncommon for Lutheran schools and homeschooling families to use non-Lutheran curricula that fail to uphold biblical truths. This is true not only in subjects like biology and earth sciences but also in subjects such as English literature, geography, and history. “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). These Lutheran Academic Standards provide a biblically faithful articulation of these disciplines that affirms and equips students to hold on to and grow in their faith as they study and learn.

Lutheran education in all subject areas must reflect what is good, true, and beautiful (Philippians 4:8). As Luther teaches in the Small Catechism’s explanation of the First Article of the Creed, God is the Creator of all things, and we honor Him by recognizing His work in the goodness and beauty of creation. This commitment is grounded in the conviction that all knowledge originates from God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Proverbs 9:10; Colossians 2:3). Holy Scripture is not only the foundation of faith but also the framework for understanding every discipline. As Paul writes, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Lutheran education is a sacred calling to teach students in ways that honor God’s Word and shape their understanding of the world through a biblical lens. The Lutheran Church has historically rooted itself in the rich teachings of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, in which we see and hear the deep thought and profound application of God’s Word to the various challenges of the church as they were manifested at the time. In this rich heritage dwell the three solas of the Reformation: (1) Scripture alone, (2) by grace alone, (3) through faith alone. The three solas remain, as do the Confessions themselves, to influence and shape future generations of Lutheran students

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through their teachers and parents. Lutheran Academic Standards ensure that every subject, from science to history to literature, is taught in alignment with God’s truth, thus equipping students to discern His will (Romans 12:2).

In a culture increasingly influenced by secular ideologies, Lutheran education equips students with the Gospel to stand firm in their baptismal identity. As the apostle Peter writes, “Always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). By embedding apologetics and a biblical worldview into all learning, Lutheran Academic Standards prepare students to engage the world as faithful witnesses of Christ, as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) fulfills its mission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), beginning with the students entrusted to its care.

The Lutheran Academic Standards form the foundation of a school’s measures of success, complementing existing standards that may already be in use in each setting. In this way, the teachings of Luther’s Small Catechism, for example, are not simply relegated to a single religion class but have a profound influence on every subject. While the Lutheran Religion Standards provide level-specific guides for the content subject of religion, these Lutheran Academic Standards serve as an overarching Portrait of a Graduate for content subjects that do not necessarily include faith integration when taught outside of Lutheran schools.