



Grammar School
Curriculum
And
Traditions

Dear Parents,

Whether you are a parent new to The Academy or an old-timer, this packet is designed to help you become familiar with the curriculum and traditions at our unique school. As you know, our mission is to assist parents in shaping students' affections for The True, The Good, and The Beautiful for the benefit of man and the glory of Jesus Christ. This is a unique mission for a school, and it requires a unique set of tools.

One of our most important and transformative tools is the curricula that we employ. The books and instructional materials that our education team has chosen become the starting point for our teachers as they engage your students in the quest toward learning. We think it is helpful for parents to understand why we have chosen these curricula and how we use them. You can find out all about every subject in the first section: Curriculum. We have also included in this section information for blended parents about grading on home-days.

Another equally important tool used in the shaping of affections is the traditions of our school community. These are so unique to our school (often with unusual names) that we thought it would be helpful to offer a brief explanation of what to expect throughout the year.

Hopefully, the brief explanations offered here are only the beginning of your journey into classical education at The Academy. Our teachers, administrators, and parents love to talk about the unique aspects of our school, and we welcome questions from all parents, new or old!

Part 1: Curriculum

Language Arts at The Academy

The mission of The Academy is to assist parent in shaping students' affection for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, for the benefit of man and the glory of Jesus Christ. Our students' development of skills in Language Arts allows students to read, interpret, and express the richness of God's creation.

To this end, there are several curricula that are used in the development of Language Arts at The Academy:

1. **Spell to Write and Read (Primary Phonics/Reading/Spelling curriculum)**
2. Explode the Code (Supplemental PK)
3. Abeka Handwriting (K-1st)
4. Classically Cursive (2nd-3rd)
5. Shurley English (1st-5th)
6. Institute for Excellence in Writing (PK-3rd)
7. Writing with the Ancients (4th-5th)
8. Literature – Various texts (PK-5th)

The components of The Academy Language Arts program (Phonics, Reading, Grammar, Writing, and Literature) and each of the implementation of each of these curriculum are described below.

Phonics

At The Academy, we believe that phonics study is the classical approach to spelling, reading, and writing. The phonics approach begins with aural awareness and then gives names and symbols to the sounds we hear around us. Once the sounds and symbols (types) are learned, students begin to employ them in the difficult and miraculous process of reading and spelling. This entails “playing” with the grammar or building blocks of language and eventually comparing words and sounds to one another to build a cohesive understanding of the way the English language works.

Spell to Write and Read Curriculum Implementation

Spell to Write and Read (SWR) is the **primary phonics/reading/spelling curriculum** used at The Academy. All other materials used for these subjects are *supplemental* and are modified to fit with the general philosophy of *SWR*. To that end, this is the way that this curriculum should be implemented in each grade. (see also “Reading at The Academy”)

- 1) **P3-1st** will spend a **great amount** of time **all year long** playing phonemic awareness games even after they move on to learning phonograms and dictating spelling lists. These include:
 - A. Glue/Unglue Word (compound words, sounds within words)

- B. Syllable counting games
 - C. Letter play with movable letters
 - D. Rhyming Words
 - E. Beginning Sound Isolation
 - F. Ending Sound Isolation
 - G. Middle Vowel Isolation
 - H. Make-and-Break word work (playing with movable letters to make a word and change it one letter at a time to make new words; i.e. cat, cap, tap, top, etc...)
- 2) Once a good foundation of phonemic awareness has been laid, the single-letter phonograms are taught (or reviewed).
 - 3) Once single-letter phonograms are learned, the first spelling list may be dictated.
 - 4) In class, spelling lists are dictated using the following steps. This process engages the children visually, aurally, and kinesthetically.
 - A. Read word and sentence
 - B. Ask for syllables
 - C. "Think-to-spell" with fingergrams
 - D. Students repeat with fingergrams
 - E. Students write word as they sound it out
 - F. Students dictate back to teacher who writes on the board
 - G. Students check against teacher's
 - H. Teacher asks for markings, students make markings in red.
 - 5) The following lists are covered at each grade level.
 - A. PK – List A (In four parts)
 - B. K – Lists A-G (beginning with lists of 5 words per week and increasing to 10 words per week)
 - C. 1st – Lists A-K
 - D. 2nd – Lists K-N
 - E. 3rd – Lists N-Q
 - F. 4th – Lists Q-U3
 - G. 5th – Lists T-Z
 - 6) Teachers will dictate the Vowel/Consonant Page (in the *Learning Log*) prior to beginning the first spelling list of the year. Other pages in the log will be introduced throughout the year. Spelling words that belong on these pages will be added each week. This cataloguing of words helps students compare and contrast the many spelling rules they encounter.
 - 7) Spelling words will be practiced in class using games and activities, AND teachers will give instructions for students to practice spelling words at home regularly. Spelling tests will be given weekly.

Explode the Code Curriculum Implementation (PreK Only)

Because part of the SWR curriculum requires students in the pre-reading phase to learn single-letter phonograms and “play” with them in various ways, this is our emphasis in Pre-K. While some Pre-K students may learn to read by the end of the year, **this is not an expectation for our youngest scholars.** In addition to playing the phonemic awareness games in class, students need opportunities to learn to form these letters and identify their sounds in various written and play activities.

Explode the Code Books A, B, and C meet a need in the PreK classroom because they:

- Have fun and age appropriate activities that can be completed both at home (blended) and at school (blended and traditional).
- Provide practice in writing lower-case single-letter phonograms and exposure to upper-case. Students will learn to write upper-case letters in Kindergarten, so it is unnecessary to spend a lot of time practicing writing upper-case letters.
- Provide review of previously learned phonograms. Teachers will introduce clock letters first, and some pages will be saved for review after all single-letter phonograms have been learned.

Vowels will be introduced using select copied pages from Book 1 with the emphasis being on beginning sound and writing the letters.

Reading

As stated earlier, *Spell to Write and Read* is our primary phonics/reading/spelling curriculum. Wanda Sanseri, author of *SWR*, has this to say about teaching reading.

“Teaching someone to read is one of the greatest joys in life. A child’s success will largely depend on mastery of this vital skill. Reading is the foundation to all academic subjects. The late Richard Wurmbbrand once showed his son a poem by one of the best poets of their fatherland and asked his son what he saw. The boy replied, ‘Black letters on white paper.’ We teach the code that brings life to written symbols. Someone who knows the keys to the language never needs to be forced to read.”

A formal reading curriculum is not required. Sanseri recommends that teachers focus on the mechanics of spelling until students can read their spelling words fluently. We don’t have to teach a student to spell every word before he can read it. We teach the “formation” of words not just the “information” needed to learn a few specific words. Some will learn to blend words faster than others. Once they grasp that foundational skill, they will quickly start to read material way above their level.” (*SWR* p. 126)

So at The Academy, we generally follow Sanseri’s instructions, letting students progress naturally from phonemic awareness, to phonogram knowledge, to blending words, to reading. By 3rd grade, we expect that students have largely moved from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

Students in **Pre-K** at The Academy will not be expected to read. The focus of the teacher's efforts will be on reading aloud to students, playing phonemic awareness games, and teaching students to recognize and form single-letter phonograms. In some cases, teachers may work with some students who are showing readiness to begin reading and give resources to parents of students who are ready and excited about reading; however, teachers will not spend a great amount of time on reading instruction in the Pre-K classroom.

We know that all students are different and will move toward reading at different rates. It is somewhat controversial as to whether reading should be taught in **Kindergarten**, but because we serve students who have generally had good home support in pre-reading behaviors, we feel that in Kindergarten, it is important to teach pre-reading skills and help students to move forward with reading as they are able and ready. Following is the basic focus of each quarter in the phonics/spelling/reading program for kindergarten.

1. First Quarter: Writing Name, Writing Letters and Numbers, Single-letter Phonogram Sounds, Phonemic Awareness.
2. Second Quarter: Beginning of Spelling Lists (Spell to Write and Read indicates spelling first); Begin learning multi-letter phonograms as indicated at the top of each spelling list. Read spelling words and other words related to spelling words.
3. Third Quarter: Continue learning multi-letter phonograms, begin reading using spelling words, original sentences and *SWR* practice pages. The DRA (Diagnostic Reading Assessment) is also given during the 3rd quarter, and students will begin reading selected leveled readers for practice at home and at school.
4. Fourth Quarter: Build confidence in sounding out words; finish learning all multi-letter phonograms; once all phonograms are learned, there is no limit to the words a child can read; children who are not already reading are set to begin reading in 1st grade. Students will continue reading leveled readers at school in reading groups and at home with parents with the goal of ending the year with a DRA Level 4; however, students are not required to be reading at the beginning of 1st grade.

Students entering **1st grade** at The Academy may or may not be reading fluently; however, students are expected to know ALL 26 single-letter phonograms and MOST multi-letter phonograms. Teachers will continue to have students practice phonemic awareness skills and will begin formal reading instruction. Many opportunities will be given for reading practice, including...

1. Original sentences.
2. *SWR* practice pages
3. *Shurley English* word banks and classroom practice pages.
4. *Abeka Handwriting* words and sentences
5. Leveled readers provided by teachers.
6. Student/parent selected books read at home. (All students should be asked to read at home daily for practice and enjoyment. A reading log can be required for a grade.)

Students in 1st – 5th will be given the DRA reading assessment twice each year (Kindergarteners will be assessed midyear and at the end of the year.) This will help document progress in reading, help teachers identify students who are needing extra help in reading, and will also help teachers and parents select appropriate reading material for students. Once reading level is identified, students should be encouraged to read books from that level independently.

Teachers will have access to many books at many different levels and reading lists will be given to parents so that they can find appropriate reading material for their children at home. **Note that this leveled reading material is different than the literature used in class, which may be above the reading level of students. This means that students may or may not be able to read the grade-level literature books independently. This is fine, and parents or teachers can read these books aloud to students.**

Teachers have the goal of helping students gradually increase their reading level over the course of the year. Parents may assist in this goal by providing reading material at the appropriate level and setting aside time each evening for reading.

Handwriting

Why Handwriting is Important

By: Louise Spear-Swerling

Contrary to the view that handwriting is a trivial skill, handwriting actually is important for a number of reasons.

One involves the concept of mental resources to which I have alluded in several other columns, in relation to reading and mathematics as well as writing. Just as effortful word decoding may impair reading comprehension, or lack of automatic recall may reduce the mental resources available for learning advanced computational algorithms in math, labored handwriting creates a drain on mental resources needed for higher-level aspects of writing, such as attention to content, elaboration of details, and organization of ideas.

Because handwriting is a basic tool used in many subjects — taking notes, taking tests, and doing classroom work and homework for almost every content area as well as in language arts classes — poor handwriting can have a pervasive effect on school performance.

Moreover, when handwriting is perceived as arduous and time-consuming, motivation to write may be greatly reduced, leading to a lack of practice that may further compound difficulties with writing.

*Finally, handwriting in the earliest grades is linked to basic reading and spelling achievement; for example, when children learn how to form the letter *m*, they can also be learning its sound. Attention to the linkages among handwriting, reading, and spelling skills can help to reinforce early achievement across these areas.*

At The Academy, we also know that anything which involves the "works of our hands" comes with a biblical and joyful injunction to attempt beauty. By teaching handwriting, both manuscript and cursive, we are equipping students to create beauty in not only what they write, but in how they write.

PreK-1st Grade

In the early grades at The Academy, students are taught to write in manuscript. There are several reasons for this. First of all, we recognize that students develop fine-motor skills at various rates and feel that manuscript letters are easier to form. Students at this age are also

learning to read as they learn to write. Therefore, we have chosen to use print similar to what they will be reading. Finally, because many students at The Academy participate in the Blended Model, we have chosen to teach traditional manuscript which most parents will be in the habit of writing. This ensures that modeling of correct letter formation will happen at home and at school.

PreK will use *Explode the Code* and teacher-created materials to practice handwriting. Also, a *major* emphasis in PreK will be on large motor skill formation of letters (sky writing, tracing with finger on carpet or sandpaper, “writing” in fingerpaint, shaving cream, sand, etc...) Students do not need to spend a great deal of time writing with pencil and paper to become familiar with the correct formation of a letter.

Kindergarten and 1st grade will use *Abeka – Writing with Phonics*. (Note: While the primary purpose of this curriculum is handwriting, the focus on blends and multi-letter phonograms is a nice complement to *SWR*. Students could be asked to read the words and phrases they write for extra reading practice.)

Handwriting instruction involves two primary skills.

- 1) Letter Formation and Phonemic Recognition (this should be the emphasis in Pre-K and K): As students are introduced to the letters, they should learn to form the letter separate from the fine-motor skills required to hold a pencil. By writing the letter in the air, on various textures and with multiple mediums, students should learn to form letters with the correct strokes and produce the phoneme as they move.
- 2) Fine-motor Sills: To avoid undue strain on the arm, shoulder, or hand, and to promote ease of writing in the future, students should be taught to hold their pencil correctly. A good explanation can be found on p. 34 of *SWR Red Book*. Students who have difficulty holding a pencil correctly can benefit from writing with very small pencils or little pieces of crayon or chalk. Using such small pieces prevents students from gripping the writing utensil incorrectly. Teachers and parents should carefully check their student’s pencil grip and correct it to prevent poor habits from forming.

2nd-5th Grades

Cursive instruction begins in 2nd grade at The Academy. Formal instruction continues in 3rd grade, and students are required to write in cursive throughout 4th and 5th grades. *Classically Cursive Books 1 and 2* will provide practice for students learning cursive. In addition to teaching cursive writing, these books also include rich Scriptural content.

Research shows that learning to write in cursive offers brain benefits to students that they don’t get from printing letters or keyboarding. Learning to write in cursive is an important tool for cognitive development. Specifically, cursive writing trains the brain to learn functional specialization, which is the capacity for optimal efficiency. When a child learns to read and write in cursive through consistent practice and repetition, he or she must effectively integrate fine motor skills with visual and tactile processing abilities. This multi-sensory experience supports cognitive function and development.

Following is a guide to integrating cursive writing...

2nd Grade:

- As soon as all lowercase letters are learned, cursive should be required for Phonics.
- By 3rd quarter, cursive should be *required* on all final drafts of writing and all Phonics assignments.
- By 4th quarter, cursive should be *encouraged* in all subjects (except math and grammar) and should be *required* in Phonics and final drafts of writing.

3rd Grade:

- Students should be *encouraged* to write in cursive for all subjects except Math and Grammar.
- As soon as all lowercase letters are learned, cursive should be *required* for Phonics and *encouraged* in all subjects.
- Starting 3rd quarter, cursive should be *required* in all subjects except Math and Grammar.

4th and 5th Grades:

- Cursive is *required* in all subjects except Math and Grammar.

Grammar

Shurley English Curriculum Implementation

English Grammar is important to a Classical Education in that it teaches us how to talk about our language. By learning the different parts of speech and sentence constructs, students are able to think about and discuss their writing in new ways. Grammar is not taught in isolation at The Academy. Teachers are careful to reinforce concepts learned in Grammar as students write in every other subject.

Shurley English is used in grades 1-5 to teach parts of speech, types of sentences, and important grammatical concepts. (Note: We do not use the Writing portions of the *Shurley English* curriculum.) The following portions of the curriculum are emphasized when teaching Grammar.

- 1) Jingles: Jingles are learned as indicated in the curriculum and should be reviewed regularly both at home and at school.
- 2) Sentence Classification: Question and Answer Flow should always be used to classify sentences in school, and students and parents should know that homework completion should also incorporate the Question and Answer Flow. (Students should NOT classify sentences from left to right.) The Question and Answer Flow for home-day work can be found in the back of the Answer Key that blended

parents keep at home. The following methods may be used for sentence classification during class.

- 3) Time should be spent on Vocabulary (words in the Word Bank). For vocabulary words students can make vocabulary cards, keep words in a journal, or write them on a piece of paper kept in their binder. Words in the Word Bank (1st grade) can be read and used for sentence writing and “Make-and-Break” word work.
- 4) Skills – Each Chapter will introduce new skills. These will be explained in “References” in both the Teacher and Student Textbooks. Parents in the blended model may refer to the references to learn how a new skill was taught

Writing

Writing is one of the most important ways that we express ourselves, so it is important that students at The Academy learn to write well. Rather than focus on student-directed or creative writing, we teach a systematic approach to writing that allows all students to achieve success. The following techniques and curriculum will be incorporated at the respective grade levels.

PK-K: Reading aloud is an important component of each day, and every effort should be made to choose well-written, time-tested "classics". After hearing a story (or poem), students are encouraged to describe a favorite part, draw a scene, act out the events, sequence the plot, spend time "thinking out-loud" about the passage, finding words that mean the same thing or have similar meanings (nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the story), and creatively altering the original writing. These important pre-writing skills will greatly enhance student's writing in later grades. Parents could easily incorporate these activities into their reading at home.

1st-3rd: Teachers use Level P of Institute for Excellence in Writing Curriculum. These activities will largely be done as a class working together. As students advance in their skills, they are encouraged to write independently.

4th-5th: Teachers follow the lesson plans and use the student packet for *Writing with the Ancients*. This curriculum was written by our own, Todd Wedel. Through imitation, students learn to write fables, parables, folk tales, summaries, and chreias (9-paragraph persuasive essays.)

Literature

Engaging with the “great human artifacts” is one of the primary ways that students at The Academy engage with the larger world. Through books, students are drawn into God's creation and His story in ways that mere study of facts will not achieve. Reading “classic”, time-tested literature, Academy teachers continuously point students to the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.

While there are particular books that have been placed on The Academy booklist for reading throughout any given year, teachers are encouraged to bring a multitude of reading materials into their classroom for free-time reading, “read-alouds”, or extension of curriculum.

For Literature books on the blueprints, teachers should engage students in discussions about plot, characters, setting, and conflict. Students should be encouraged to draw connections between the books they read, their experiences, and what they are learning in History, Bible, and other subjects. For some books, students may answer comprehension questions. For others, they may write short summaries of chapters, draw pictures of their favorite scenes, collect new vocabulary, or simply read for enjoyment and to prepare for class discussion. Most of the time, the completion of a novel will coincide with a final project like a diorama, a dramatic presentation, or a final writing assignment.

Literature lists by grade:

Pre-K

Read-aloud:

- *Nursery Rhyme Treasury* (Shearing)
- *Treasury of Children’s Literature* (Eisen)
- Teacher-selected books to support curriculum

Kindergarten

Read-aloud:

- *20th Century Children’s Book Treasury* selected by Janet Schulman
- *A Child’s Book of Poems* by Gyo Fujikawa
- *A Bear Called Paddington* by Michael Bond (in class only)
- *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne (in class only)
- *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (in class only)
- *The Wizard of Oz* by Frank L. Baum (in class only)
- Teacher-selected books to support curriculum

Read by students:

- Teacher selected readers read in reading groups
- Parent/student selected books (teacher will provide a book list)

First Grade:

Read-aloud:

- *Hero Tales*
- Science curriculum books
- *Child’s Story Bible*
- Teacher-selected books to support curriculum

Read by students (or read aloud to students who need support):

- *Frog and Toad Storybook Treasury* by Arnold Lobel
- *Tut’s Mummy: Lost and Found* by Judy Donnelly
- *Bears on Hemlock Mountain* by Alice Dalgliesh

- *The Courage of Sarah Noble* by Alice Dalgliesh
- Read Aloud Poems selected by Gloria Hale

Read by students:

- Teacher-selected readers read in reading groups and sent home to be read to parents
- Parent/student selected books (teacher will provide a book list)

2nd Grade

Read aloud:

- *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*
- *Detectives in Togas* by Henry Winterfeld

Read by students (or read aloud to students who need support):

- *Nate the Great* by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
- *The Boxcar Children* by Gertrude Chandler Warner
- *Pompeii: Buried Alive* by Edith Kunhardt Davis
- *The Trojan Horse* by Emily Little
- *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
- *Aesop's Fables* (Abeka)
- *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi
- *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Teacher-selected readers to be read in reading groups and sent home to be read to parents
- Parent/student selected books (refer to The Academy Leveled Booklist)

(Note: The literature books in 3rd-5th grades largely correspond to the history studied. They are intended to be enjoyed and interacted with as literature, not necessarily to be primary reading practice for each student. They are often above the reading level of the students in those grades, and so it is acceptable that parents read these books aloud to their students. In these cases, students should be reading other on-level material in addition to listening to these books.)

3rd Grade

- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo
- *The Adventures of Robinhood* by Roger Lancelyn Green, John Boyne
- *The Door in the Wall* by Marguerite D'Angeli
- *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg
- *Little Pilgrim's Progress* by Helen Taylor

4th Grade

- *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* by Jean Lee Latham
- *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth Speare
- *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth Speare
- *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson

- *Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson

5th Grade

- *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls
- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkein
- *Across Five Aprils* by Irene Hunt
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling
- *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Tenboom
- *Ann of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery

Poetry

Students at The Academy read and enjoy poetry at all ages. Because memorization is the finest way to learn poetry, one poem will be memorized each semester at each grade level. Poems will be chosen by the Literature chairperson, and will cover well-known poets from or about the historical time period studied. These poems are learned for a grade but are not required to be presented to a large group. They may be recited by students in *The Academy Speech Meet*. In this way, students become intimately acquainted with poetry and poets throughout their time in Grammar School.

Math at The Academy

Parents and teachers often hear (and stress about) how students in other countries perform better than American children in math and science. With that in mind, The Academy, after a thorough investigation, has implemented an approach to teaching grammar-level math using Singapore Math and the *Math In Focus* curriculum. Singapore Math refers to the teaching methods and *Math In Focus* the actual curriculum used for kindergarten through eighth grade (PreK uses a different Singapore curriculum.)

Singapore Math is unique in its emphasis on place value, mental math, and word problems. Children learn, not only how to “do” math, but also gain true mastery of numbers and math concepts. With a deeper understanding of each math skill, children will perform well when they encounter any problem.

Using the concrete manipulatives and pictorial representations to assist students to learn abstract concepts is vital. The sequence of topics in Singapore math has been carefully constructed based upon child development theory. The means to mastery is problem solving, and the beauty of the approach is that the majority of students are well prepared to tackle increasingly difficult topics, such as fractions and ratio, when they are introduced in the third through fifth grades. Those students are also then typically ready for algebra in logic school.

Singapore math also relies heavily on visualization. In typical American math teaching, the teachers use a concrete-abstract approach. An instructor will teach about multiplication by starting with physical objects and demonstrate how to multiply, then move to the abstraction of lining up numbers in a multiplication equation. Singapore, on the other hand, introduces a middle step between the concrete and abstract called the *pictorial approach*. It asks students and teachers to draw a diagram of the concepts going on. This is not an idea that’s exclusive to Singapore, but it’s so well expressed in a coherent way in the Singapore curriculum, it enhances the comprehensive understanding of each concept.

Students also learn to use model drawing to solve all word problems. Instead of trying to picture the problem in their heads, then writing out the equation to solve it, students in Singapore Math diagram the elements of the word problem. Model drawing provides a tool to help students decode those sticky word problems.

Singapore math instructors encourage parents to be open-minded. Singapore math is not what most parents in the United States studied in school, but that doesn’t mean they need to resist it. While parents may want to help their child learn to “do math” the way they did, they should also consider this different approach. While some may understand the “goal” of math to be a correct answer, teachers at The Academy embrace the higher goal of deep understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of math.

When students encounter difficulty in math, parents have several avenues by which they can help their students. First of all, parents should question a student about what they already know and understand and how the concept was taught at school. Blended parents may utilize the online resources provided by *Math in Focus* for hints about how the concept is

taught. Finally, parents should not hesitate to contact the teacher. Together, teachers and parents can find the best way to teach and excite students about math.

Although math fact drill is not explicitly prescribed in the Singapore curriculum, teachers will use various methods to encourage fact practice throughout the school year.

Bible at The Academy

As a Christian school, The Academy seeks to understand how Christ informs all subjects. Alongside a Christ-informed study of all subjects, the study of God, his Word, and Christian doctrine make up a key piece of our curriculum.

In addition to the Bible, the following books and curriculum are used in teaching Bible and Christian doctrine at The Academy:

- *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones (PreK and K)
- *The Child's Story Bible* by Miriam Vos (1st-2nd)
- *Veritas Press Bible Cards* (1st-5th)
- *The Academy (Revised) Children's Catechism* (Pre3-2nd)
- *The Academy (Revised) Shorter Catechism* (3rd-5th)

In the grammar school, there is an emphasis on the Bible as God's overarching story of creation, fall, and redemption. To best convey this most important of true stories, The Academy has implemented a chronological study of the Bible. Pre-Kindergarteners and Kindergarteners read through the entire Bible with the focus of Christ's presence in each story. Then, beginning with 1st grade, students systematically study the events of Creation to Joshua (1st grade), Judges to Kings (2nd grade), Chronicles to Malachi (3rd grade), Gospels (4th grade), and Acts to Revelation (5th grade.) Students will again study the entire chronology of the Bible in both Logic and Rhetoric school.

While various texts and cards are used in Biblical study at The Academy, a great importance is also placed on reading the Bible itself. Each day, a Psalm is read during morning prayers, scripture that corresponds to each card is read during class, and scripture is regularly memorized at each grade level.

Finally, in order to give our students a sound grasp of Biblical teaching, students at The Academy will memorize the Children's Catechism and Shorter Catechism throughout their time in grammar school. Our theology professors have eliminated or adjusted some questions and answers in order to keep the catechisms thoroughly *trans-denominational*. Our teachers introduce catechism questions at each grade level using the following schedule:

The Academy Children's Catechism

PK – 1-30
K – 1-50
1st – 1-75 (Review 1-37)
2nd – 1-124 (Review 1-75)

The Academy Shorter Catechism

3rd – 1-30
4th – 31-65 (Review 1-30)
5th – 66-105 (Review 1-65)

Both catechisms can be found in the school resources section of Renweb.

History at The Academy

Western Civilization

The focus in our history curriculum, Pre-K through 12th, is mainly on the story of the West. This is neither elitism nor exclusivity. Instead, our desire is to equip students to engage honestly, openly, and humbly with their own story so they may engage with the stories of others. The commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself; without a proper self-love - not narcissism, but not self-abnegation—one cannot love another. Without a proper knowledge of one's own story, one cannot enter into the stories of others.

Often, the modern push towards World, not Western, history at a young age only leaves students with a confused mixture of ideas and events. Lacking a coherent narrative, students do not receive a framework for locating themselves and engaging with others.

As students in a Classical Christian school in the United States, the children at The Academy are children of the West both by virtue of two truths. They live in a Western nation, one formed by events of Western Civilization, formed and founded upon principles developed in that tradition, and continuing based upon that foundation. They attend a school that finds its roots in the Classical tradition and is seeking, by virtue of an educational framework and pedagogy, to rebuild the ruins.

PK-K

In the early grades, students will focus on their own personal story, understanding how they fit into their family, their community, their state, their country, and the whole world. PK teachers will incorporate themed studies in these areas with the goal of helping students understand their place in the world and the way communities work together to fulfill God's call. Kindergarteners will study world geography and traditions around the world, increasingly focusing on the United States, Oklahoma, and their own communities in which God is working. There will also be an emphasis on understanding the concept of history as a narrative of God's working in and among people for his purpose and glory.

First-Fifth grade: Story of the World

In first grade, students will study Creation through the Fall of Egypt using the Veritas Press cards, supplemented by Story of the World Volume 1. The emphasis in this year is still on narrative, but formal use of Story of the World will not begin until second grade.

Story of the World tells the story of the dominant cultures and civilizations of the world. However, it is not necessary that we read or have students memorize or function out of this framework. Instead, for each grade, there will be chapters that will not be central to the curriculum. Of course, parents are free to have students read these for exposure, or teachers may do so in class, but the focus will be on the narrative arc of Western Civilization.

History is a narrative, the story of humanity and God's revelation of Himself in His interaction with people.

One of the primary challenges with teaching history is the tension between students needing to know facts (names, dates, events) to know history and the teaching of disconnected facts (trivia). Facts matter, but only because they are the grammar structuring the story, allowing the story to be clearly and beautifully told, cogently, and with joy appreciated.

Students must know facts to tell a story, or it is a story inaccurately, imprecisely, and poorly understood and recited, but a knowledge of the facts without the arc of the story prevents the beautiful scope of God's grand narrative to be clearly internalized and expressed.

A grammar history curriculum, then, must introduce students to the narrative of history, internalizing the narrative richly populated with people and events concretely known and expressed.

This does not negate the need for the memorization of facts. Students still answer questions for comprehension, engage in activities to reinforce and internalize these, and are tested and evaluated on their comprehension.

History Song

The song cycle for memorizing the dates of significant events is an important element of a grammar curriculum, and we have developed a series of eight songs incorporating over 100 of the most pivotal dates in the study of Western Civilization. These songs, 2-3 per year, to be learned in second-fifth grades are set to music from or reflecting that time period. In addition to helping students create a framework for memory, these songs will also expose students to musical styles throughout history. *These songs can be found in the School Resources section of Renweb.*

While students will not be given written quizzes to assess memory of dates and events, teachers will occasionally give oral examinations to assure the dates are learned.

Geography

At the Academy, we desire for grammar students to learn their place in this world and appreciate the diversity of God's people and places. To this end, it is important that students become familiar with major sections of world geography. Geography will be taught using jingles and maps. Grades will learn songs associated with the areas of the world they are studying in history as indicated on the grade-level blueprints. In kindergarten through second grade, students will be assessed orally for participation grades. In third-fifth grades, students may be given a participation grade for oral recitation of songs and/or a quiz grade for a written assessment of country locations.

Science at The Academy

“The essence of science is simply observing and describing God’s creation. When scientists make a new discovery, they are seeing another part of creation revealed. Romans 1:20 tells us that His attributes, power, and divine nature are clearly seen what has been made...”

Noeo Instructor Guide

Our goal at The Academy is that students “be immersed in the sciences so that ‘His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature’ will be clearly seen” and understood. At The Academy, each grade will focus on one science unit per month. Each unit will contain the following components of the NOEO Science curriculum:

Reading: Teachers should spend time in class reading portions of the books supplied by the curriculum.

Vocabulary: Important vocabulary should be highlighted during science class in some way. Perhaps words can be collected on a class wall and reviewed occasionally. Some teachers in older grades may choose to have students record important vocabulary in a notebook.

Experiments: Experimentation and familiarity with the Scientific Process is at the heart of this curriculum. Each unit will incorporate several hands-on experiments or activities.

Curriculum guides for 1st-5th grade have been developed by Academy instructors. These guides provide mimetic structure for about 90 minutes of Science instruction per month with extension activities should time be available. For each month, students should learn the Question and Answer (catechisms). These short questions and answers constitute the information we hope students will carry with them into upper-level science instruction.

Written work in the form of Notebook Pages, Narrations, Vocabulary Lists, and Science Journals are **not** the primary focus of NOEO at The Academy. Very little (if any) home-day work or homework will be given in Science. It would be fine to assign a project to be completed at home or at school at the end of a unit of study, but this is not required. There will be no written tests in Science. Grades will be primarily participation.

Classical Music at The Academy

The purpose of music at The Academy is to bring the beauty of God's creation directly to students. Beginning with the earliest years, the teacher guides the voice, the most expressive instrument, in a way that lays the foundation for any future music participation whether in performance or as a skilled listener.

We want students to learn to listen well to music. By exposing students to great works of music, both sacred and secular, students will learn to distinguish tone, color, timbre, proportion, line, and pattern in musical works. This enables participatory listening wherein the mind and heart are truly engaged in the music, not simply letting it serve as background to students' lives.

Musical creation is the culmination of our studies. The practice of making music helps to correctly align our desires to create a beautiful whole with others. Students are exposed to the best music, ancient to contemporary. They are guided into creating beauty, rare glimpses of who God is and how he has created us.

J.R.R. Tolkien presents us with a lovely metaphor of the purpose of music in the Christian life. It is recounted as follows in the essay, "Cosmos, Kenosis and Creation" by Tyler Hart. "Iluvatar (the creator in Tolkien's Elvish creation myth) propounded a great musical theme, and invites the Valar (the angelic first-created) to join in the music-making, each adorning the main theme with his own, to the end of a great and glorious harmony sounding forth. The creativity of Valar, therefore, is at once wholly unlike Iluvatar's own creative act, while yet constituting an extension, development of and participation in it. While each of the angelic creatures is free to fashion his own individual melody, the skill or "art" of the matter lies not in any sheer creativity *ex nihilo*, but precisely in the harmonious development of a theme that Iluvatar himself has already propounded and that determines the form of the overall work. We are told, Iluvatar will 'sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.'"

Classical Art at The Academy

Just as classical education is based on a Medieval model of education, so is Classical Art based on the traditions of European ateliers, art schools, and the apprentice system. These studios and schools grew out of the earlier guild tradition, a time when the artist was viewed as a laborer. Classical art study was, and still is, drawing-based, seeking to realistically translate what is seen from life to the paper, canvas, or sculpture. The art student spent his or her beginning stages with graphite or charcoal, working through shape and form in the still life, portrait, landscape, and human form. The student drew from life, using natural and manmade objects in still life along with the copy of casts, which gave the opportunity to draw life-like form without having a live model or animal in front of them. After drawing was mastered, the student began to study color and sculpture.

Just as we teach our students notes and scales as the basis of mastering music; and letters, words, and grammar as needed disciplines to master the written word; so we teach line, shape, value and form as the foundation for artistic competency. Drawing is a skill - like music and composition - that is learnable. There are many ways to teach children to draw, and classical art certainly doesn't stand alone in attempting to teach the beginning student to portray realistically what is seen. But classical art is a system in which that goal is foundational. It is a vehicle used to teach the student to "look" and "see" the created world in which we live and to produce a record of beauty and visual truth. It can be the critical support for an individual to successfully communicate visually their own vision in their own competent style.

Here at The Academy of Classical Christian Studies, we have an opportunity to begin training our students the skills of visual art. This training follows beautifully the stages of the trivium. For the youngest of our students, we begin teaching how to handle art tools properly, how to use a paintbrush, where art supplies are stored, and age appropriate elements of Art. At the grammar stage, we begin the year looking at an apple and using a technique called "charcoal reduction" to draw the apple we see. Each year, the projects students work on in class build upon prior learning. The goal is that students strengthen their abilities so they are able to portray the truth of a subject using various mediums while incorporating their own God-given creativity, to produce a work of beauty and meaning.

End of Year Recognition Awards

At the end of the year, the following awards are given to grammar students at the Closing Ceremony.

Athanasius Bible Award PK-5: Awarded to all students who memorize and recite all class scriptures with 100% accuracy throughout the school year.

Augustine Catechism Award PK-5: Awarded to all students who complete catechism recitations perfectly in one sitting at the end of the school year.

Durer Art Award: Presented to one student in each cohort (Bach, Mozart, Traditional) for PK-K; 1-2; and 3-5 grades who demonstrated consistent attentiveness to detail, diligence and care in the preparation, and execution of their work throughout the school year.

Bach Music Award: Presented to one student in each cohort (Bach, Mozart, Traditional) for PK-K; 1-2; 3-5 grades who best reflected joy, diligence, preparation, excellent presentation, and careful musicianship in all assignments and projects over the course of the school year.

The Academy Standards for Marking Homeday Work Blended Grammar Parents and Teachers

Math, Grammar (Shurley English), and Latin

- Parents use key to grade each math exercise or grammar classroom practice or Latin assignment. **Place a red circle around every incorrect answer.** Some questions have many parts and may have several circles. Count the total number of circles for that exercise, and **put the number missed in red on the top of the first page** of the exercise. *When marking with a circle does not make sense, place an X or otherwise indicate what is incorrect.* (This is also how teachers should mark grammar tests.)
- Students make corrections on all homeday work. **DO NOT** erase incorrect answers. Just rework the problem off to the side and circle the corrected answer. This helps teachers recognize where students are misunderstanding. (Students receiving below a 70 on any test should be allowed to make corrections or retake the test for partial credit or an average of the two tests.)
- Parents re-grade. Work with the student until all answers are correct and student understands the problems missed. **Parent mark (in green) “OK” next to corrected problems.**
- Next to the number missed, **parents write (in green) “Corrected” and their initials.**
- **Parent initials indicate that students have all correct answers.**
- When recording grades in his/her grade book, the teacher will award half credit back for all missed problems that were corrected. For example, a page that has “-5, Corrected and Parent’s initials” will receive a grade corresponding to -2.5.
- If a parent doesn’t grade (or grades incorrectly), the teacher may send the assignment home to be graded and corrected, and it will receive a late grade. The teacher may also choose to correct the assignment him/herself and give a late grade. The student forfeits the opportunity to regain points but should still make corrections at home to be sure they understand the material.
- Homework in these subjects will receive an actual grade rather than a completion grade.

Phonics (Spell to Write and Read)

- After a phonics assignment is completed by the student, a parent should grade for spelling, **circle every misspelled word in RED, and write the number of spelling words missed at the top of the page in RED.**
- Student corrects **all** misspelled words by writing the word correctly above the misspelled word.
- If a student misspells a **spelling word** on a spelling assignment, have them write that word three times correctly off to the side or on the back.
- When this has been done, parents should mark, **in GREEN**, “OK” next to the corrections, write “Corrected” next to the number missed, and initial at the top. The parent initial indicates that all words are spelled correctly, and misspelled spelling words have been rewritten 3x.
- Phonics will also receive an actual grade rather than a completion grade.

- In kindergarten and first grade, teachers will administer spelling tests and phonogram quizzes.
- In second – fifth grades, teachers will occasionally administer phonogram quizzes, but parents will administer all spelling tests. When giving spelling tests, parents should only read the word (and possibly a sentence), and students should write the word on the test paper. (Do not fingerspell or “think to spell” when giving a test.) The parent should circle missed words and write the number missed at the top of the paper **in RED**.
- All Phonics Tests and Quizzes will receive an actual test grade; although, quizzes will be weighted less.

Handwriting

- Parents should look carefully at their students’ handwriting. Indicate mistakes in RED. Help your student fix incorrectly formed letters, reversals, misspellings, etc. Initial in GREEN when student has made necessary corrections.
- **Parents should often (daily in lower grades) watch students compete their handwriting homework** to ensure that they are using correct pencil grip and forming letters with the correct strokes.
- Teachers will sometimes record a completion grade for handwriting homeday work. They may also sometimes use a handwriting rubric to assign actual grades in handwriting (“test” grades).

Bible, History, and Literature

- Parents grade using a key if available, using the method outlined above (marking incorrect answers and number missed in RED, students making corrections, writing OK in Green, writing Corrected at the top of the page and initialing in Green).
- If no answer key is available, be sure answers appear to be thorough and use complete sentences when required. Make comments for your student about what needs to be fixed. Once the paper is corrected to your standard, put your initials at the top of the page. **Parent initials indicate that you think your child has satisfactorily completed work on this assignment.**
- Teachers may choose (by grade levels) which assignments will be completion and which will be for a grade. Please understand, however, that a completion assignment (or any assignment can be returned if it does not meet the teacher’s expectations. Even homework that receives a completion grade should be graded and initialed as described above.

Science

- Science grades at The Academy are largely participation grades. Students will do some work (in class and at home) requiring either completion or actual grades, but the emphasis will be on participating in discussion and experiments. There will be no science tests.

Part 2: Traditions

Traditions at The Academy

As a Classical Christian school, The Academy seeks to cherish our shared history, build community, celebrate our faith, and simply have fun together. This is done daily through our traditions of Matins (morning prayer) and Evensong (afternoon prayer), Chapel, lunchtime conversation, and recess times. We want to be purposeful in cultivating our larger community through bigger class, school, and district events. These established traditions become a cherished avenue for shaping students' affections for The True, The Good, and The Beautiful.

Many of our community events are organized through the house system. Read on to find out more about the House System and how it creates an organizational fabric for our school.

The House System

"We love the house system! We love the culture of togetherness that it brings to our school, with students of all ages interacting daily, informally mentoring one another and forming lasting friendships." -- Scott and Lisa Lesley, parents

House systems have a long history in English schools, especially English boarding schools, but they have also come to be a common aspect of school culture in many classical and Christian schools.

House systems organize students in a vertical integration. Without such integration, classes often develop their own identities and cultures. While this is natural and good in many respects, the classes can develop cultures often different, distinct, and separate from other classes. These identities are driven not just by the personalities of those in the class but by the natural inclinations and aptitudes, both academic and moral, pertaining to ages and stages in development.

Thus, while students bond together, they maintain a separation by age level, capitalizing on neither of two desired dynamics in any community. The first, a sense of natural leadership, service, encouragement, yes, even admonishment, from elder to younger. The second, a sense of natural reception of encouragement and service and a striving for emulation of those qualities of Christ-like leadership from younger to elder.

Among the benefits of this type of arrangement are:

- Camaraderie among all levels and ages of students
- Cultivation of responsibility in the leaders
- Opportunity for the strong to be patient with and assist the weak
- Opportunity for younger students to cultivate respect for the older ones

House Names

Houses are named after ancient church fathers and mothers. Each house has a motto, colors, and a crest. Each campus has correlating brother/sister houses. Related houses are listed parallel to each other.

<i>North Campus Houses</i>	<i>South Campus Houses</i>	<i>Central Campus Houses</i>
Augustine	Ambrose	Monica
Basil	Benedict	Hildegard
Chrysostom	Francis	Brigid
Gregory	Jerome	Teresa
Athanasius	Ireneaus	Hilda

Characteristics of a House and House Leaders

Prefects are selected by the staff from among the two upper classes on the basis of their application, interview, academic responsibility, and demonstrated ability to lead.

Prefects (D&R) or Servant Leaders (Grammar) are supervised by the principal who will meet with them as a group as needed, training, encouraging, and advising them. Each house will also include teachers who will sit with their respective houses, help student leaders facilitate house activities that happen at school, and monitor house tables at lunch.

The houses, then, function much as families within a larger church body. They are a place for specific, intentional relationships and activities, ranging from games and competitions, physical and academic, to service projects, festivals and feasts. Those are the formal activities; the informal are more the goal: to help foster a vibrant school community of mutual respect, service, and love.

Points

Our house system has a concrete way of attaching recognition to the culture of kindness, excellence, and community that we hope it inspires. Students can be awarded 1-5 points for initiative, high levels of responsibility not only for themselves but for the well-being of those around them, inspiring improvements in their work or behavior, or other marks of growing maturity deemed worthy of recognition by the teacher.

The spirit of given points is neither to inspire greed nor fear, but to give an opportunity for benefiting a group greater than the student alone. Likewise, points can also be deducted as per teacher discretion, should a certain behavior lack the love and consideration that we expect of all Academy students. Totals are kept and announced each week and a house cup is awarded at the end of school year.

Example criteria for earning house points:

- offering to help a teacher or classmate
- respectful attitude
- pulling weight on classroom chores
- punctuality
- neat desk/notebook
- attendance at extra curricular events

Example criteria for taking away house points:

not participating in class
hesitation to obey teacher
failing to pull weight on classroom chores
consistent dawdling
talking in class/silly responses

Points can also be earned by houses during the Greek Olympics, Field Day, D&R Dodgeball Tournament, and other competitions.

Following are several traditions/events that involve the larger community or the house system:

House Feasts and Service Project Lunches

Each house will have one feast each year, which will be coordinated by the House Parents. The feast will celebrate the life of the Church Father of the House. In addition, in the spirit of the service and giving of each Church Father, the house will conduct a service project on the same day. These are usually scheduled on a Friday at lunch and involve a pot-luck meal provided by parents. Students eat, play games directed by prefects, and do a service project to benefit the larger community. These are low-key events with minimal decoration. The focus is on building friendships and serving our community. Feasts will usually be scheduled near a feast day related to the house father. Consult your school calendar for specific dates for each feast.

House Meetings

House meetings will occur at the discretion of the campus principal. Houses will meet together for the purpose of fellowship, discussion, and planning. Prefects and Servant Leaders will lead the House Meetings with the assistance of the House Teachers.

House Sorting

Each campus will hold a House Sorting prior to the start of school. It is expected that all returning students will attend to welcome new students as they find out what house they will be in. Immediately following House Sorting, students AND parents will attend their first house meetings of the year. During student meetings, new students will learn about their houses and meet new friends. During the parent meeting, parents will learn how their house will serve the Academy community throughout the year. House Parents, prefects, servant-leaders, and principals will work with the community coordinator to plan this event. Siblings are typically sorted into the same houses; although, exceptions will be made at the request of parents following the sorting.

Opening Ceremony

Academy students begin the school year with a short ceremony that features the awakening of the houses, prayer, and welcome. Parents are welcome but not required to attend.

Christmas and Resurrection Feasts: Each campus will celebrate these two major Christian holidays with a large feast. The food and decorations for feasts are organized by

parents with the support of the community coordinator. Parents also help with set-up, serving, and clean-up. The principals will coordinate with upper-school teachers to plan entertainment for the event.

Recitation Days: Each cohort at each campus will present one Recitation per semester. Each grade level will share a recitation on a topic chosen by the Headmaster and the Education Team. The Fall Recitation will coincide with the Symposium, an event featuring several speakers on a given topic, a student play, and activities for all ages. One Recitation Day per cohort will be designated as “Grandparent’s Day.”

Grandparent’s Day: Grandparents will be invited to eat lunch with their grandchildren, attend a special presentation about our school, and watch their grandchildren during their recitation.

Lessons and Carols: This is an evening musical performance in December celebrating the birth of Christ. Each grade sings a musical selection and individual students read scripture passages. Parents will be involved in transporting students for a rehearsal, and parents will work with the Community coordinator to provide a reception following the performance. Teachers attend to coordinate and supervise their students during the performance.

Field Day: This is an all-school event in the spring where students compete against one another as houses. Parents and Teachers help coordinate transportation, games, snacks, safety, and fun. The culminating event is a jog-a-thon to raise money for The Academy.

Some our traditions are specific to grade-level or class. These are coordinated by homeroom moms.

Grade Level Festivals

Practically, parents should know that each Grade level has one major festival, which is linked to a unit of study and usually includes a performance for the parents and the school and a feast (with decorations) prepared by parents. By grade, these traditionally have been the festival themes (although these are subject to change at the discretion of the teachers in conjunction with the principals.)

Pre-K: Q&U Wedding/Nursery Rhyme Festival

Kindergarten: Around the World Festival

1st Grade: Passover/Egyptian Festival

2nd Grade: Greek Olympics

3rd Grade: Renaissance Festival

4th Grade: Harvest Festival

5th Grade: Durin’s Day Festival

Creative Curriculum Components

Teachers will also incorporate less elaborate festivities and activities that go along with their curriculum. Usually parents are only needed to help in small ways with these events, and do not always need to plan on attending them. Following are some examples of these creative times; although, each teacher has freedom to choose which activities he/she will incorporate. Teachers will inform their parents each year about all creative curriculums that will happen throughout the year and the role parents will play.

PreK: Nursery Rhyme Recitation, Stone Soup, Tomb Reenactment

Kindergarten: Mad Hatter's Tea Party, Land Run Day

1st Grade: Bears on Hemlock Mountain cookie party

2nd Grade: Charlotte's Web Breakfast

3rd Grade: Narnia Day

4th Grade: Founding Father's Play

5th Grade: Chreia Day

Field Trips

Students in the Traditional Model will take field trips on school days to highlight and supplement their curriculum. Parents will help with transportation, and some trips will involve a small cost for the student. Teachers will inform parents at the beginning of the year and as the date of the trip approaches so that all necessary arrangements can be made.

Students in the Blended Model will not take field trips on school days. Rather, parents are asked to work together to coordinate field trips on home days. Blended teachers should let parents know what field trips will highlight and supplement their students' curriculum.

Class Parties

Because we have so many other events, Academy classes have a limited number of class parties. Parties should take up a small amount of class time, and should be cleared with campus principals prior to planning. Typically, classes will have Christmas parties and one or two other parties at the discretion of the teacher. Parents are often but not always asked to help with these.