

#paideialiving

A.D. 2018-2019 | November-December Newsletter | Paideia Classical Christian School | Gladstone, Oregon



Building a School Culture

In the book of Nehemiah, the people of God face a seemingly impossible task. They must re-build the walls of a broken down city surrounded by the enticements, taunts, and direct attacks of those who don't want them to succeed. In order that the building might go forward, Nehemiah gives this command: carry a shovel in one hand and a sword in the other. Be prepared to build and be prepared to fight.

Sometimes, our own calling as Christians seems just as herculean a task. How can we build the City of God (as Saint Augustine called it) in this world that is so radically bent on establishing the City of Man?

As Christian parents, we have an added layer of difficulty—we must train and equip our children to build with us. And not only must we teach them *what* they are to build, but we must train them to *resist* the forces of the world that want to halt our building project.

Ephesians 6:4 instructs parents, and particularly fathers, to bring their children up in the *paideia* of the Lord. The word *paideia* can be translated as “instruction,” but the original Greek connotes far more than that. In the

ancient world, *paideia* was the total enculturation of a young person in the society where he lived. To bring a child up in a *paideia* was to enculturate him in the books, customs, practices, arts, laws, sympathies, and loves of that society. Thus, the command in Ephesians to bring our children up in the *culture* of the Lord is far more than a command to bring them to church for an hour and a half each weekend. It is a weighty, awe-filled, and all-encompassing responsibility.

At our school, our mission is to help Christian parents in that task. We want to enculturate Christian children in the *paideia* of the Lord, to marinate them in the ways of God so deeply that it penetrates down to their soul and marrow. We want to immerse them in God's *paideia* so thoroughly that it slides off their tongue into everything they say and flows out of their fingertips into everything they touch.

One of our favorite descriptions of the purpose of education is this: to love what is lovely and repudiate what is worth repudiating. Students enculturated in the *paideia* of the Lord are students equipped to do this. They know what to love and they know what to repudiate. They know how to build and they know how to fight.

Soli Deo Gloria. Let us rise up and build!

—David and Rose Spears

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **Nov. 19-23**
Thanksgiving Break

- ❖ **FRIDAY, DEC. 7, 7PM**
Christmas Program
Bring cookies or finger food!

- ❖ **FRIDAY, DEC. 14, 7PM**
Elementary Play:
"The Great Cross-Country Race"
At Sellwood Church
Suggested donation: \$5/person

- ❖ **DEC. 15-JAN. 6**
Christmas Break

REFORMATION DAY: A Student Council Success

2018 marks the first year of our secondary Student Houses and Student Council. At the beginning of the term, students seventh grade and up were sorted into three houses: **Cair Paravel**, **Rivendell**, and **Camelot**. Each house elected two student leaders, administration appointed a third, and together these nine students make up our Student Council.

With an annual budget of \$600, Student Council is responsible for events such as Reformation Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, Valentine's Day, and the Talent Show. The end of October saw the first Student-Council-organized event as the secondary students put on a special Reformation assembly (with a Martin Luther play) and game booths for the elementary students. The Creation Story puppet show was a favorite as was the fishing game and the ring toss. The event was deemed a success by students and teachers alike.



Left to Right: John Barnard, Maggie Green, William True, Ezra Lortz, Austin Tahtinen, Hosanna Lacine, Susanna Poindexter, Jack Bradley, Liam Singleton



Third Grade's Reformation Day Costumes



Weekly Student Council Board Meeting

HOW WE TEACH: The Harkness Discussion

One of the fundamental principles of the Classical model is that it teaches with the grain of childhood development. Students in the Grammar stage love to sing, chant, recite, listen to stories, and in the elementary years we teach them accordingly. Students in the Logic stage love to debate, argue, take things apart, and fit them together, and they get their chance to do this when they enter seventh grade.

In our ninth and tenth grade classes, the students have entered the Rhetoric stage or, as Dorothy Sayers called it, the Poetic stage. Their skills at analyzing and evaluating have been sharpened by formal logic and they continue to hone these skills as they learn to present their arguments with politeness, poise, and polish.

In these high school grades we have started using Harkness discussions regularly. Harkness discussions are similar to Socratic discussions in that both require students to do most of the thinking and discussion. In the Socratic method, however, the discussion involves the teacher asking the students a series of questions to lead them to a desired realization. With the Harkness method, the students lead the discussion, asking questions of the text and themselves with minimal intervention from the teacher.

To prepare students for a Harkness discussion, I assign them a text to read on their own. (In our Ancient History class, we recently read a portion of the Egyptian Book of the Dead.) I tell the students some things they should be looking for in the text. (What is the Egyptian view of god? How does this compare to the Sumerian prayer we studied last week? How does it compare to what we learn in the Bible?) I encourage the students to make notes on specific places in their text as they are reading. (For books they are not allowed to write in, they use post-it notes.)

On the day of the discussion, I remind them what knowledge we are seeking to obtain and then seat myself in the background to allow them to discuss with each other. With a mature class, I rarely need to intervene in a discussion to get them back on track. Occasionally, I lob a new discussion question into their midst when a

subject needs to be further explored. (What would daily life be like in a culture that has this view of god?)

After the discussion is over, I provide the students with feedback. Here are some of the positive feedback points I give students:

- Asks good questions of the text
- Refers to text regularly
- Refers to text thoughtfully
- Connects ideas to previous learning
- Connects responses to other student comments
- Disagrees respectfully with another viewpoint

You will note the primacy of the text in this feedback. The mature student asks questions of the text until he makes the text comprehensible and then *uses textual evidence* to support his own assertions about the text. The students are good about policing each other in this area. A student who makes a blanket statement is prodded by his fellows to demonstrate where he is getting that from the text. A student who offers a shaky interpretation is challenged by her peers when she tells them what line she is basing her assumption on.

You will also notice the importance of subject integration in this feedback. The mature student is the one who can tie in what he learned last year in science and last month in Bible class to this week's discussion on Herodotus' *Histories*.

And finally, you will notice the importance of the group interaction. Learning is a communal activity, and it is the fellowship of the classroom that stimulates, nurtures, and enhances learning. Students learn that they can and *must* learn from each other as well as from the teacher. This group interaction can only occur when we ask questions of each other and respond with respect and fairness.

The benefits of the Harkness discussion method are legion. Not only do my students now understand the crushing weight of perfection prescribed by the Egyptian Book of the Dead in contrast with Biblical grace, they also understand how to interrogate a text, how to integrate multiple facets of the world, and how to hold civil discourse. The Harkness discussion leads students away from unsupported opinion and teaches them to journey together on the quest for truth.

—Rose Spears



Wreath Fundraiser

All together, students brought in 401 greenery orders and raised around \$4000. Well done!

Parents, please pick up all your greenery orders on Tues., Nov. 27.



Boston Tea Party

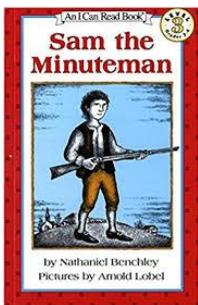
Under Mrs. True's direction, second grade has been rehearsing a play of the Boston Tea Party. Theater is a great way to make history come alive as we develop the curiosity and wonder of our elementary students.

“ Row, row, row your boat,
It is full of tea!

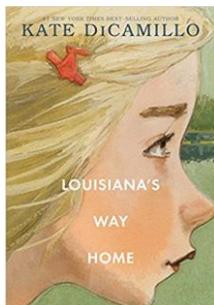
They are taxing, without asking—
This is tyranny! ”

Have your kids used our School Library?

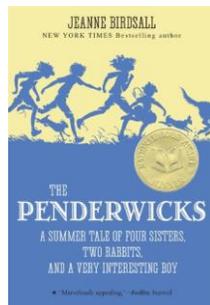
Located in the rear of the main office, Paideia has a small but growing collection of books available for students to check out. Some recommended titles are:



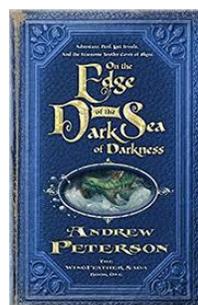
Sam the Minuteman
by Nathaniel Benchley
Level: 1st-2nd Grade



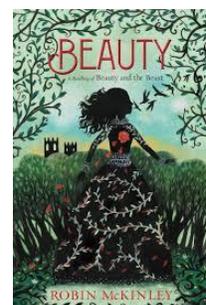
Louisiana's Way Home
by Kate DiCamillo
Level: 3rd-6th Grade



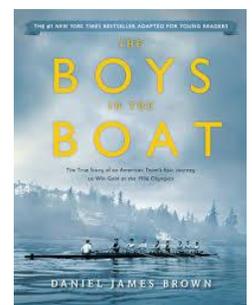
The Penderwicks (series!)
by Jeanne Birdsall
Level: 3rd-8th Grade



On The Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness (series!)
by Andrew Peterson
Level: 3rd-8th Grade



Beauty: A Retelling
by Robin McKinley
Level: 3rd-8th Grade



The Boys in the Boat (adapted)
by Daniel James Brown
Level: 5th-10th Grade