



Academia

Vol. 1 No. 1

Augustine School's Monthly Academic Newsletter

Welcome to a new monthly newsletter about academics and curricula at Augustine. I will use this newsletter to help make the Augustine community more aware of the impressive achievements of our students and faculty and to explain aspects of our classical Christian curriculum. Each month, I will also answer a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) about academics at Augustine. You may wish to save these newsletters and give them to friends who are considering Augustine School for their children. To make the newsletter more accessible to you and to others, we will be emailing it to enrolled and prospective families, as well as posting it on the website.

Blessings,
Seth Drown, Dean of Academic Affairs

Student Achievement

At Augustine School, we consider the study of the fine arts to be an integral part of our academic curriculum, so this week, I want to highlight the fact that **Bethany and Corey White** have landed roles in two annual productions in the Jackson Fine Arts community. Bethany will be in the Jackson Ballet Arts' 2008 production of *The Nutcracker* at the Carl Perkins Civic Center on December 12-14. Corey was in the Jackson Children's and Teen Theater's 2008 production of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* at the Carl Perkins Civic Center on December 2-3. Please join me in congratulating these two students on their fine arts achievements!

Academics FAQ

For this month's question, I have selected the following:

Is Augustine School weak in science compared to other schools?

No. The concern that we are weak in science is understandable. Classical education does place less emphasis on the early study of science than modern education does. However, we believe the historical record clearly shows that an early emphasis on thinking, reading, writing, analyzing, observing, and imagining is the best training for future scientists – or future anything-elses for that matter! In fact, the greatest minds of western science were classically educated and did not receive much formal training in science in the elementary years. Galileo was classically educated to be a

(Continued on page 2)

monk in a Jesuit monastery. Isaac Newton was classically educated at The King's School, Grantham, where the curriculum centered on instruction in Latin and Greek. Albert Einstein attended a Catholic school during his early elementary years and then transferred to the Luitpold Gymnasium where he was taught Latin, Greek, history, geography, and simple mathematics. He also studied violin from the age of six.

Of course, these men were extraordinarily brilliant and might well have been great scientists had they come from any number of educational backgrounds, but the fact remains that what separates the great scientist from the ordinary lab assistant is not that the former has more knowledge of the information contained in scientific textbooks than the latter. It is that the former is able to think, read, analyze, observe, and imagine at a much higher level. Notice that it is typically in the area of *skills* rather than mere *knowledge* that the great surpass the mediocre in any field. If one student spends five hours a day learning to think, read, write, speak, imagine, analyze, question, and observe while another student spends five hours a day memorizing facts out of a textbook, which one do you think will be most likely to be a great thinker and innovator in a given field?

Remember, that our primary goal is *not* to produce great *specialists* but great *generalists* (wise and virtuous young people) who can go on to be great specialists because they have learned how to learn and because they have the basic skills required to excel at the highest levels of education. That said, we recognize the fact that at least some familiarity with basic scientific concepts is helpful, so to that end, we have adopted a brand new science curriculum. Moreover, we are seeking to supplement that curriculum with a multi-year project to build an "outdoor classroom" where students encounter and interact with nature "in the wild," rather than just in the classroom. However, we do not believe that a new science curriculum or more time devoted to scientific study in elementary school is the key to producing great scientists or great generalists. It is, at best, a tiny piece of the puzzle—insignificant in comparison to the sense of awe, wonder, and respect for Creator and creation that is cultivated by a well-rounded classical Christian education.