



Academia



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Augustine School's Academic Newsletter

Welcome to a new issue of *Academia*! In this issue, I offer a strategy for memorization, explain how and why we assign grades in fine arts classes, introduce our honor roll, and provide samples of student work.

Blessings in Christ,
Seth Drown
Dean of Academic Affairs

Memorization Strategy

We do a lot of memory work here at Augustine School! Sometimes it can seem overwhelming. Below is a strategy I have found helpful in approaching memory work. It is most helpful when memorizing medium or long passages. I offer it simply for whatever help it may be worth.

- 1) Divide the assignment up into a number of smaller sections roughly equivalent to the number of days one has to memorize the assignment, minus one. So if one has 3 verses to learn in 7 days, then one would divide the 3 verses up into six roughly equal sections of about half a verse each.
- 2) Commit to learning one new section per night.
- 3) On the first night, begin by reading over the first section several times aloud. It is extremely important to do this *aloud*. Reading silently makes memory work *much* more difficult.
- 4) Then, look away from the sheet and recite as far as you can. Keep looking back at the sheet (as needed) and then looking away as you recite as far as possible—just trying to add two to three new words each time. Remember to stop when you get to the end of the section on which you are working.
- 5) Spend no more than 10 minutes doing this the first night (and not much more on subsequent nights), and do not go beyond the section you have designated for each night. Trying to do too much too quickly just leads to burnout and frustration.
- 6) Before you go to bed, say the part you learned 2-3 more times.
- 7) Say the part you already know whenever possible throughout the day (for example, on the way to school, on the way home, in the shower, etc.)
- 8) On the next night, begin by reciting the first section, and then add the second section.
- 9) Repeat steps #4-7 until the entire assignment is memorized.
- 10) Enjoy how easy it is to recite poetry and Scripture effortlessly!

Grading Fine Arts Classes

You may have noticed a grade for fine arts classes on the report card and wondered “Why do they grade fine arts?” Often the question assumes that whereas there are standards of excellence in math or grammar, there are not standards of excellence in music or visual art. The fine arts, people often assume, are primarily about self-expression and creativity, and this assumption often leads to the question “How can one grade self-expression and creativity?”

I would like to begin by challenging the assumption behind the question. The idea that art is primarily about self-expression and creativity (for its own sake) is a modern notion that would have surprised people of an earlier age, for the word *art* literally means “skill,” and a skill is an action that one can get better at through training and practice. Traditionally, the “fine” arts (from *finis* meaning “end”) have been understood as the skills of “re-presenting reality” for the purposes of delighting and instructing an audience. The artist “re-presents” not by giving us reality itself (which is available to all of us outside of art) but an artistically shaped version of reality in which each element is selected to highlight significant aspects of the reality represented (whether a person, place, feeling, idea, action, etc.). The reality that the artist re-presents need not be something that has actually happened or actually exists in the exact form it is re-presented, but it must be *true* to reality in some sense.

For example, as far as we know, there has never been a race between a tortoise and a hare, but the fable re-presents the truth about the need to pace oneself by telling a story of such a race. Likewise, Rodin’s sculpture *The Thinker* was more an attempt to visually re-present the invisible act of thinking than an attempt to record a particular person’s image. The point is that however entertaining or pleasing a work of art may be, it should also convey some truth about its subject matter.

The means by which the artist re-presents reality and truth depends on the artist’s *medium*. Musicians and singers use tone, melody, harmony, rhythm, etc. Visual artists use form, line, shape, color, texture, etc. Poets use language, rhyme, meter, etc. Dramatists, novelists, and story writers also use plot, character, dialogue, etc. It is this skill of learning to re-present reality through specific media that we teach, evaluate, and grade in our art classes.

As with any subject, some students have more of a natural aptitude and talent for art (or a specific art) than others. The same is true of the “liberal” arts (or skills) of math, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Our goal is to help each student grow towards mastery in these and other skills through training and practice. Our grading scale for fine arts (typically E/S/U) is just a simplified version of the A/B/C/D/F grading scale used in other skills and subjects. A grade of “E” or “A” is reserved for work that is truly excellent, work that surpasses our basic standard of competence.

I hope that helps clarify our reasons and methods a bit. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Honor Roll and Dean’s List

We are a school that celebrates and encourages excellence. Having an Honor Roll and /or a Dean’s List is a common way to do that. Because we are school that cares about the heart and character as well as the mind, we decided to factor in conduct as well as academic performance. In order to make the *Honor Roll*, a student must have a 3.5 GPA or better with no grade lower than a “C” and no conduct grade lower than an “S.” In order to make the *Dean’s List*, a student must have a 3.75 GPA or better with no grade lower than a “C” and must have “Es” in at least 4 of the 7 conduct categories with no conduct grade lower than an “S.”

Both lists are only for students in grades 3 and up.

We urge parents to remind students that both our talents and our progress in any area of life (academics, character, sports, fine arts, etc.) are *gifts* from God, and that we each have gifts in certain areas more than others. Reminding them of these truths should go along way towards keeping the students who *do* make the list humble and the ones who do *not* hopeful.

Here are the **Honor Roll** students for the first quarter of 2009-10:

Third Grade

- Riley Allison
- Daniel Green
- Lexee Morris
- Lucas Tilleros

Fourth Grade

- Jessica Welsch
- Lynde Leatherwood
- Adam Davis

Fifth Grade

- Abbey Holladay
- Caitlin Padgett
- Collin Revelle
- Alexis Underwood
- Tori Vintzel

Sixth Grade

- Will Choate
- Hunter Finan

And here are the **Dean's List** students for the first quarter of 2009-10:

Third Grade

- Tucker Bruns
- Cameron Huelin
- Ethan Hurst
- Rhen Milton

Fourth Grade

- Isaac Wehner
- Abigail Neel
- Amelia Lancaster
- Jeremy Huelin

Sixth Grade

- Molly Davis
- Maggie Jenkins
- Samuel Tilleros

Student Work

Here are two poems by two of our sixth graders, though they were written when the students were fifth-graders.

The Massey
By Molly Davis

Sun shining on rusty fender,
Dull red paint whose past was bright.
Letting out the clutch,
Holding my breath as it lurches forward.
Grasping the steering wheel,
Pushing the throttle,
Slowly, it moves.
Strong smell of diesel.
Loudly growling at the urban world.
Sun full in my eyes,
Wind in my hair.
Acres before me.
A fiery strength surges through me.
I am the lord of the pasture,
Queen of the field.

Jackson, My Home
By Samuel Tilleros

Small
Stormy
Hot
Quiet
Old

Jackson
I hear the siren yelling, "Come in! A storm is on its way!"
I hear the heat. I see the heat. I feel the heat.
The pool is a sanctuary.
A relief.
Quiet, yes everyday normal.
The quiet changing of seasons. The crisp of
fall, the air clear, the leaves crunchy. The
Barren winter months give birth to the
humidity of April. Then summer, hot and dry.
Old, very old. The ageing railroads find a way
through the town. The main attraction: The
Civil War. "Home of legendary Carl Perkins"
says the sign. And small, very small. The
smaller shadow of its father, Memphis. It is
common. It is a pit-stop between Nashville and
Memphis. The center of agriculture.

Small
Stormy
Hot
Quiet
Old

I feel a part of Jackson, Jackson my home.