

Educational Program Committee- Writing
October 26, 2015
3:10-4:10
Classical School, library

This rather lengthy document contains a summary of the Committee discussion at our first meeting on October, 26th, 2015. It also contains a first draft of a “working document” that will allow the Committee to **better identify and define skills being developed in our present writing program**. Once completed, this document will serve as the basis for further discussion about what, if any, improvements to the writing curriculum will be recommended by this Committee to the CCSA Board. This document also proposes next steps that were NOT addressed at the meeting and will need an immediate response from the Committee. Thank you in advance for your consideration of the attached material, willingness to serve on this Committee, and for your desire to maintain the high standards we have for our curriculum.

Roll Call: Nancy Fischer, Kathy Diedrich, Joanne Bielmeier, Tim Broeckert, Anne Tretinyak, Stacey Foley, Staci DeGoey, Bridgette Osorio, Ellen Holcomb, Tom Bowmann, Chris VanRyzin

Members Not Present: Sara Schroeder, Jessica Crownhart

Guests in Attendance: None

Committee Discussion Items:

- Dean Fischer presented an overview of our current writing program
- There was general consensus that the Core Knowledge Sequence provides little detail about the stages of a writing program or the specific skills that are being developed
- There was also group consensus that the components of our present program need to be defined and the progression of our program should be evaluated for continuity and effectiveness in reaching our stated goal of developing coherent writers
 - This could be accomplished by the close examination of other classical writing programs to identify our strengths and weaknesses
- There was a brief discussion about the connectivity of the writing and grammar programs (Shirley Grammar)

- Staff members wanted the Board to have reasonable expectations about “time” available to expand existing programs or accomplish greater connectivity
- Anne Tretinyak volunteered to put together a template or “working document” to better define the components of our present program by using existing programs for research/ comparison. Please see attached document.

Proposed Next Steps & Future Meeting Dates: *Please review the **proposed** next steps/ dates and feel free to **recommend changes or deletions** to the Committee Chair. All recommendations will be published anonymously to the Committee.*

I. Individual review/ notes

To be completed by _____?

- 1) Members review classical writing materials from Memoria Press and Classical Academic Press- Samples available online, hardcopies will be available in Dean Fischer’s office for review
- 2) Members provide program specific written information/ feedback on the “working document” under the Classical School column including but not limited to the following:
 - Classical writing skill taught in _____ grade or N/A
 - Modern interpretation of classical skill taught in _____grade or N/A
 - General description of exercise(s) used to teach skill
 - Materials used to support curriculum
 - Professional opinion about value of the development of writing skills in this particular area and when instruction should occur

II. Small group meetings

To be completed by _____?

- 3) Members engage in informal discussions with colleagues not on the Committee to solicit their input
- 4) Small groups of Committee members meet to discuss their findings. Small group discussion will include the following topics:
 - Should the Committee closely examine other writing programs to further define our approach/ curriculum
 - What insights did you gain about our existing program
 - What possible next steps would be in the best interests of students for the development of skills across the board

III. Educational Program Committee Meeting- Writing
Wednesday, December _____, 3:10-4:10

5) Educational Program Committee meets to discuss progress of review/ comparison process, share feedback, and determine a concrete plan for moving forward

Public Comment: None

Motion to Adjourn: Informal Motion to Adjourn made by Anne Tretinyak

WRITING COMMITTEE- WORKING DOCUMENT

Background information cut and pasted from classical writing program websites-

Classical writing programs have been around for over 2000 years and are based upon 14 exercises developed in ancient Greece and Rome called the progymnasmata. These exercises form the basis for classical and modern writing instruction programs.

“The word *progymnasmata* is Greek for ‘preliminary exercises.’ These exercises were taught in ancient Greece and Rome to educate boys in the art of speech writing... Public speaking was thus held in extremely high regard in ancient Greece, and mastery of language, mastery of speech making, was the thrust of ancient Greek education. First, boys would master the fourteen progymnasmata. As they progressed through the series, they would be asked to use their skills to write their own speeches. Training in virtue was part of this process, since a free citizen had a responsibility to uphold the good and the right of the community. These fourteen writing exercises are just as crucial for modern students as they were for ancient students.” Classical Writing, n.d. Web. <<http://classicalwriting.com/Progym.htm>>.

Benefits of implementing a classical writing program:

- Prevent writer’s block. Assignments are well defined- students will be able to delve into the writing immediately, rather than spending hours agonizing over what to say in a given essay.
- Systematic instruction with one concept building on the previous concept learned, also described as consecutive stages of skill development
- Writing exercises require theory + analysis + imitation + practice at each level
- Exposure to and connectivity with great works of literature already being taught
- Increases connectivity of knowledge of grammar rules and writing by providing numerous opportunities for application of rules/ practice
- Use of great works of literature helps young writers to identify what makes a good speech or what makes a persuasive letter
- Challenges student to think and write well

- Each writing exercise is sharply focused to build a specific and well defined writing skill needed to be a coherent writer
- Advanced exercises have connectivity with earlier exercises but are more complex and require higher level thinking by the student as they employ persuasive, expository and creative writing techniques to compose essays and speeches
- Classical Writing students learn to use proper grammatical constructions as the basis for their sentences
- They learn to arrange their writing in a logical and clear way
- They learn to express their ideas in the style best suited to a given audience and occasion

<i>Progymnasmata</i> Stages/Definition	<i>Program 1-</i> Present Classical School Writing Program	<i>Program 2-</i> Memoria Press	<i>Program 3-</i> Classical Academic Press
<p>I. Fable</p> <p>Retell a fable</p>		<p><i>Students learn to restructure facts to tell the same story or idea. They also discover that words are symbols representing ideas, and as writers they can communicate the same idea using a variety of words and sentence structures.</i></p>	<p><i>Fable, the first book in the Writing & Rhetoric series, teaches students the practice of close reading and comprehension, summarizing a story aloud and in writing, and amplification of a story through description and dialogue. Students learn how to identify different kinds of stories; determine the beginning, middle, and end of stories; recognize point of view; and see analogous situations, among other essential tools.</i></p>

<p>II. Narrative</p> <p>Retell a short story</p> <p>III. Maxim</p> <p>Amplify a saying</p>		<p><i>In the Narrative Stage, students continue to build invention skills as well as the ability to engage the imagination of an audience. They master the structures of thought that originate narratives and learn to create recognition by using figures of description. They develop the ability to communicate the same idea using a variety of words, sentence structures, and various perspectives.</i></p>	<p><i>Book one uses parable, myth, and other tales to... teach[] writing... Lessons include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beginning middle end</i> • <i>Written narration as well as oral</i> • <i>Longer writing assignments or corollary assignments, changing the order of the story</i> • <i>Main idea</i> • <i>Conflict (middle)</i> • <i>Adding dialogue to the amplification (and description)</i> • <i>Rewriting given stories</i> • <i>Speak it—oral encounter with the rewritten story</i> <p><i>In the second book new skill sets are introduced, including identifying the difference between fact and opinion and learning to</i></p>
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			<p><i>ask the five Ws of a historical narrative: who, what, when, where, why. Lessons include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How to define and identify types of narrative</i>• <i>How to outline stories</i>• <i>How to get a story off the ground</i>• <i>How the protagonist and antagonist develop the central story conflict</i>• <i>How to discern the difference between fact and opinion in historical narrative and legend</i>• <i>How to identify the Five W's of an historical narrative— who, what, when, where, why</i>• <i>How to summarize a longer narrative in writing</i>• <i>Rewriting: what happens when you change the point of view and the protagonist</i>• <i>How to apply storytelling skills</i>• <i>Elocution skills and oration</i>
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<p>IV. Chreia</p> <p>Amplify an anecdote about a wise person</p> <p>“The word chreia (cray-ă) comes from the Greek word chreiodes (cray-o-dees), which means “useful.” It is a short essay or remembrance that praises the author of a saying or proverb and shows why the saying is useful.” Classical Academic Press</p>		<p><i>Students gain the ability to create a story through the use of the narrative categories and variation through paraphrase. Students learn to demonstrate the truth of the Commonplace through what the ancient Greek writer Aphthonius calls ‘eight heads of development,’ and students deal more explicitly and thoroughly with what in modern composition theory are referred to as ‘support points.’ The ability to invent four specific types of narrative through these ‘heads of development’ and to paraphrase in two specific ways are the foundational skills to be learned in this stage.</i></p>	<p><i>This book... teaches students how to write a six-paragraph essay on the basis of a saying or an action. ... The six-paragraph essay using the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) is arranged this way:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Praise the person or saying of your chreia or proverb</i> • <i>Restate the saying in your own words</i> • <i>Explain why this is useful</i> • <i>Contrast your example with another person in history</i> • <i>Compare your example with another similar example in history</i> • <i>Epilogue—conclude your essay</i>
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<p>V. Refutation</p> <p>Argue against a particular version of a narrative story</p> <p>“A refutation is a short essay that attacks certain parts of a narrative.” Classical Academic Press</p> <p>VI. Confirmation</p> <p>Argue for a particular version of a narrative story</p> <p>“A confirmation is a short essay that defends certain parts of a narrative.” Classical Academic Press</p>		<p><i>These two sets of exercises, Refutation and Confirmation, would correspond to an argumentative essay in modern composition theory. The students are learning how to structure their thought, and thus their communication process, when given the task of arguing for or against an idea, thought, chain of events, method, or story. The categories of development (or paragraphs) that make up these essays are essential elements in the rhetorical process (they are identified as Heads of Purpose in later stages of the Progymnasmata) that must become second nature in the mental processes of our students.</i></p>	<p><i>[S]tudents will learn to identify and refute, or criticize, parts of a narrative that are unbelievable, improbable, unclear, or improper. When students see parts of a narrative that are believable, probable, clear, or proper, they will confirm them. After learning to identify the parts of a story that can be attacked or defended, students will practice writing refutations or confirmations using sound arguments to explain their opinions.</i></p> <p><i>Students will learn to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Write four-paragraph essays</i> • <i>Outline</i> • <i>Refute or confirm parts of stories</i> • <i>Understand comparison and contrast</i> • <i>Introduce and conclude an essay</i> • <i>Use narrative to further the purpose of exposition</i>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use direct quotes to support an argument • Deliver writing orally • Revise writing
<p>VII. Common Topic</p> <p>Elaborate on, praise, or blame a certain type of person, or a certain virtue or vice</p> <p>“<i>Commonplace</i> continues the development of the art of persuasive writing and oration.” Classical Academic Press</p>		<p><i>The students are learning how to amplify evil attributes. They will use all of the previous skills learned in the exercises – narrative, expository, and argumentative – but must now apply those skills in a more creative and natural way than the previous stages. The Common Topic exercises look more like an essay.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangement of argumentative composition • Write an argumentative introductory paragraph • Create multiple quality debate or essay points 	<p>Students will learn to create six-paragraph essays that are arguments against the common vices of people and arguments in favor of common virtues. For example, cowardice and boasting are criticized while courage and humility are commended.</p> <p>In addition to practicing skills they learned in earlier books, students will learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write six-paragraph essays • Support a thesis statement • Argue against certain vices • Argue for certain virtues • Use comparison and contrast • Introduce and conclude an essay • Use a rhetorical device known as “the contrary” • Invent soliloquies to support an argument • Deliver writing orally • Revise writing

<p>VIII. Encomium</p> <p>Praise a person &</p> <p>IX. Invective</p> <p>Blame a person</p> <p>X. Comparison</p> <p>Compare a given subject with another subject</p>		<p><i>These three stages continue to train the students in their ability to utilize and integrate heads of development and examples - that is, the general and the particular in communicating ideas - as well as continuing to train them in the use of heads of purpose (also called modes of argument).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learn to write expository essays</i> • <i>Learn to write a complex introductory paragraph</i> • <i>Learn to cohesively arrange a lengthy essay</i> 	
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<p>XI. Characterization</p> <p>Invent a monologue which a person might have made on a specific occasion</p>		<p><i>This stage is primarily concerned with the skills of style, although students continue to practice the skills of Invention and Arrangement. These exercises further develop the students' skills of sequencing, and is told as a soliloquy - further honing their narrative ability. This particular style is achieved through continued mastery of paraphrase and confining students to an abbreviated word count.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ability to write from unusual points of view</i> • <i>Innovative expression</i> • <i>Clear, concise, and colorful style</i> 	
<p>XII. Description</p> <p>Describe an event or place vividly</p>			

<p>XIII. Thesis</p> <p>Inquire into a debatable question that argues a general point</p> <p>XIII. Law</p> <p>Argue for or against a legislative proposal in general terms</p>		<p><i>The Thesis and Law Stages hone reasoning skills through the introduction of counterpoint and resolution, providing the students with a plethora of opportunities to create arguments (Invention) using the Heads of Purpose, and to demonstrate them using the Heads of Development.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Skills of Argumentation</i> • <i>Student will be prepared for the advanced skills of Rhetoric</i> • <i>Ability to write "Qualifying" essays for College Entrance Exams</i> 	
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