

THE  
GRACE  
ACADEMY

# ROSTRUM



VOL 5 SPRING 2017

# ANNUAL FUND UPDATE



# 58%

We are over half way to our goal.  
We still need to raise **\$127,106**.

# 18%

Only 18% of the Grace Academy  
community has given this year.  
Imagine what could happen if  
we all made a donation!

**We are grateful for gifts of ALL sizes.**

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**The Grace Academy Office**

In addition to cash donations, you also can contribute stocks, property (cars and boats) and other assets. They all count towards the Annual Fund! Keep in mind that many corporations offer a matching gifts program, allowing a doubling of your donation. Please contact your employer for information regarding this benefit.

For further information, please contact Chad Warren at (512) 966-6113. Thank you for your support of Grace Academy! Grace Academy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so your donation is tax-deductible as allowed by federal tax laws.

## GREETING *from the* HEAD OF SCHOOL



One of the wonderful things about classical Christian education is that all branches of knowledge are studied as unified under the lordship of Christ. Since God himself is ultimately the source of all that is, all truth is God's truth. All aspects of the universe, created by God, reflect his order and creativity. This means that all academic disciplines are part of a coherent pursuit of knowledge that ultimately points us toward God. Spelling and calculus, deer dissection and theology, all are aspects of a unified project of seeking truth and living in accordance with it. At Grace Academy, everything that we study is viewed as part of this coherent whole, and in studying God's creation students are continually pointed toward the knowledge, love, and worship of God himself.

In this issue of The Grace Academy Rostrum you will find articles on various topics such as the importance of handwriting, how we teach Texas history, developing a theology of doubt, outdoor learning, the value of learning logic, and one teacher's involvement in overseas mission work. Given the classical Christian understanding of knowledge and learning, these diverse topics are in fact all unified. They all explore facets of what it means to love the Lord our God with our heart, soul, and mind, and they all show that the life of the mind and the life of the heart are not wholly distinct. Rather all learning points us toward God and can better equip us to glorify him as we live lives of service to the world around us. I hope you enjoy reading what God is doing at Grace Academy!

*Soli Deo Gloria,*  
Dr. Diener



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## FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

You don't have to spend a long time with **ARLA ROSENBAUM** to discover her love for people and devotion to Christ. Both of these are clearly seen every day in her 5th grade classroom at Grace Academy and are the foundation of her successful twenty-one years as a teacher. However, if you dig a little deeper you will find that her passion for Christ and people extends beyond the classroom as well. Over the past several years, for example, Mrs. Rosenbaum has made multiple missions trips to serve in the Dominican Republic with Makarios International. Makarios is dedicated to meeting the spiritual, physical, emotional



Mrs. Rosenbaum with Makarios teachers in the Dominican Republic

and intellectual needs of impoverished people in the developing world through Christ-centered, sustainable education and outreach programs. Recently, Mrs. Rosenbaum shared about her experiences and what she has learned through them.

**1. How did you come to the decision to go to the Dominican Republic, and how many times have you gone?**

“One of my teaching colleagues, Laurie, was gathering a group of high school students to go on a mission trip to Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. These students would be working with a Christian school called Makarios. When Laurie described the trip to me, without much thought I agreed to go. Two months passed, and one day Laurie came by my classroom and said, “I need your money.” I said, “Money for what?” She said, “For the trip!” Then I remembered; she had taken me seriously about going on her mission trip. I told her I had not spoken to my husband about this and that we really

Opposite: Vierka de Nunez and Kaylee Howard with their kindergarten students in the Dominican Republic



Benjamin Nuñez, administrator at the school in the Dominican Republic, with students of Grace Academy

didn't have funds in the budget for me to jaunt off to the Caribbean, mission trip or no mission trip. Laurie told me that if God intended me to go, He would provide. I sent out a support letter, and the Lord raised the money through my family and friends for me to go and minister. As of last year, I have been going to the DR and working with Makarios for 10 years!!!!”

**2. What guidance would you give to those who are considering missions but are unsure?**

“God has continuously provided the funds for me to do His work. I am so blessed to have held many roles while on the mission field: cook, teacher, group leader, sponsor, counselor, guest speaker for teacher in-service, homeschooling teacher for permanent missionaries, mentor, friend, and sister in Christ. So despite my lack of the local language, the Lord has been able to use me in many ways. I know from this experience that He will use you too. So consider, even if you have barriers

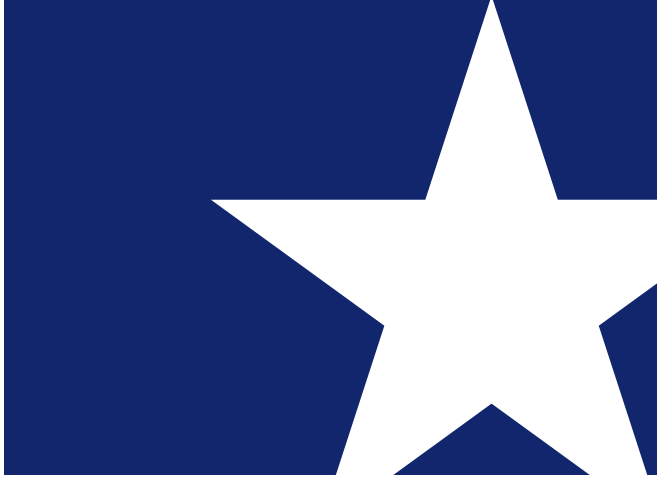
such as lack of language, fear, or financial restraints, God can overcome all of these to allow you to serve Him. I know God can use us if we are willing!”

**3. You've been to the Dominican Republic several times now. What encouragements would you give to Christians here in America?**

“Having grown up in the United States with the advantages we have and then having witnessed extreme poverty, I realize that all we really have to offer these people is the love of Christ. We will not be able to give them running water, consistent electricity, or generally elevate their standard of living. However, what we can do is show the love of Christ and hopefully lead them to a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not my place to judge their living conditions but to love them where they are because they really don't even know or care about “modern conveniences.”

**4. From your years of walking with the Lord and serving in short-term missions, what have you learned about God?**

“Through all of these years of service I have learned so much about the Lord. He will take what little we have to offer and use it to glorify Himself and His kingdom. He can change our perspective of people and places. He can take our fears and inadequacies to do some amazing things that without Him would not be possible.”



# TEXAS HISTORY

Texas History is alive and well at Grace Academy! Our students embrace their Texas heritage in study and song repeatedly throughout our k-12 curriculum. For example, first grade devotes the entire spring semester to the study of the Lone Star State. Each year these students learn to sing the timeline of Texas from the early natives and Spanish colonies to Texas independence to statehood, all to the classic tune of Davey Crockett. They love to sing this song as they march up the steps of the State Capitol during their annual field trip. On more than one occasion this impromptu performance has drawn the attention and praise of statesmen and visitors alike. Texas history is revisited in sixth grade and again in ninth grade as a unit within the study of American history. At these intervals the students add Texas literature to their studies of the Lone Star State. The sixth grade reads the short stories of Texas author O’Henry, well-known for The Gift of the Magi. The ninth grade reads the The Raven, the Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Sam Houston. Students then retrace parts of Houston’s journey through a visit to his home in Huntsville and to Washington-on-the-Brazos. Grace Academy students of all ages come together on the anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, to celebrate Texas Day with trail songs, historical reenactors, and BBQ. These festivities, organized by our National Honor Society chapter, take place amid a field of bluebonnets beneath the Lone Star flag. Yes, Texas history is alive, well, and cherished dearly at Grace Academy.

# HANDWRITING

*What place does handwriting, and particularly cursive, have in the modern world?*

It seems we are driven more and more each day to incorporate more technology into our lives. Once upon a time, handwriting was critical to excellent communication. We corresponded by hand-written notes. Penmanship was often a first impression. Then came the typewriter, replaced by the personal computer, then the evolution of email and texting. The pressures to keep up with the latest technology often find their way into questions of school curriculum as well. Should we require every student to use a laptop for classes? Should we include typing or keyboarding in the curriculum? Do we really need to insist on teaching children to write in cursive? Is handwriting still relevant?

The truth is that handwriting is just as relevant today as it has ever been and may even be more important in this age of technology. Even at its most elementary level, handwriting is an exercise in fine motor development. Handwriting requires a firm grip and steady control of the wrist, hand, and fingers. We are finding the task of teaching this skill has become more challenging in recent years.

Children are spending increasing amounts of time “gaming” on iPhones and iPads and less time drawing and coloring. Often the development of gross motor and fine motor skills is delayed by a lack of practice through free play – drawing, coloring, playdough, silly putty, watercolors, using sticks and blocks to build, etc. That means that the early penmanship lessons are a little more difficult, but also that they become very important as a means to help children develop fine motor skills. The focus and attention to detail required by lessons in handwriting also benefit our young students in developing focus and impulse control. In fact, it seems that the more we learn about the nature of handwriting, the more we see that such skills are essential to cognitive development.

The benefits of handwriting are indeed felt much farther up the neurological pathway than just fine motor skills. Multiple studies have confirmed that the fluid practice of writing in cursive increases skills in spelling and composition. The ceaseless fluidity of writing the letters seems to transfer into both the visual and language processors in the brain, generating significantly more brain activity than typing. This is true not only for young children, but for older students as well.

Some researchers compare the neural benefits of writing passages in cursive to learning an instrument. The diligent study of both stimulates our minds in a beautifully important manner. Moreover, handwriting is still a beautiful means of personal expression. The beautifully written letter and the hand-written note still make an impression that is very meaningful.

All this is not to say that students should not learn to type or should not use computers. Those are important and beneficial tools in the modern era. They are also an ever-changing form to which our students have had no problem adapting. Software for typing skills is readily available and easy to do at home. Many of our classes in the Rhetoric School require typed papers, and some encourage laptop use. Other classes may still require a final writing assignment in beautifully written cursive. As a classical school set in modern day America, we embrace the best of both worlds. Handwriting shows us that yet again some classical modes of learning are effective for reasons other than mere tradition. The classical tradition, including the teaching of handwriting, is based on a solid foundation of proven effective learning.





# OUTDOOR LEARNING

Cicero once said, “*si hortum in bibliotheca habes deerit nihil*” (If you have a garden and a library you will lack nothing). The assertion that might be here interposed is that man is intended for a life of learning and also for a life in the garden. The classroom and the library are full of wonderful knowledge for us to enjoy. Learning is not, however, confined to the pages of a book or the walls of a classroom. There is a great treasury of knowledge that waits for us in the gardens and fields outdoors.

*Cicero may have unknowingly touched here on man’s original design and placement, for we see in Genesis that God placed man in the midst of a garden.*

Not only did the Lord place him in the garden, but as our students learn in their catechism lessons He placed man in the garden “to rule over it and take care of it.” From the beginning of time we see man interacting with nature,

caring for the plants and animals around him, and learning from them. Thus, when God blessed Grace Academy with 35 acres in the beautiful rolling countryside of central Texas, our desire was to see the children work with the land, plants, and animals here as part of their formative education.

What has come to fruition is a program of “hands-on” learning like no other. Our Grammar students care for vegetable gardens as they study botany in 2nd grade. As they begin studying God’s flying creatures in 3rd grade they spend time with the purple martin houses and the butterfly gardens we have in various places around campus. These butterfly gardens are designed as migratory monarch stations with plants that sustain the monarchs through all stages of their metamorphosis. In the Logic School students assist science teacher Mr. Cauley in the care of the Grace chickens. The project begins with eggs and incubators donated from the Texas A&M agricultural department. First students patiently care for the eggs during incubation. The hatching season brings smiling children of all ages through the science lab for little “field trips” on campus to see the feathered nursery. After caring for

the small chicks in the science lab, students continue to care for the hens once they are moved to the campus chicken coop built by parents and volunteers. In the Rhetoric School Mr. Cauley assists biology and anatomy teacher Mr. Edwards in the annual deer lab. During this event the science-duo teach our young Texans to properly field dress a deer as they review the muscular and skeletal anatomy of the animal (with side notes on what meat is best for cooking fajitas). Our wide open fields also provide safe places for rocket launches and physics experiments with Mr. Arwine.

Outdoor learning is not, however, only for science. Multiple outdoor seating areas nestled under sprawling oak trees provide great places to sketch art, read Shakespeare and Vergil, or hold class discussions. The fresh breeze, warm sunshine, and soft song of birds awaken the senses and inspire the mind. Our prayer is that students would engage in learning beyond the walls of a classroom and study their Creator by engaging with His creation. Between our books and our gardens, we lack nothing for the joy of learning.

# LOGIC

*If the most recent electoral season highlighted anything, it was that the quality of our public discourse has become careless and shoddy: name-calling and equivocation; responses to questions that fail to provide answers; conclusions that do not follow from premises; arguments that run in circles.* Sometimes it was enough to make you want to log off, power down, and pull the covers over your head.

Rather than merely bemoan this state of affairs, what if we did something to change it? At Grace Academy we do something about it by teaching our students logic.

*“Wait,” you might say. “You teach teenagers logic? Teenagers?”*

At Grace Academy, we train our students to reason well so that they will write and speak truthfully, read and listen critically, and represent well our Lord and Savior who gives us the ability to reason and invites us to use our minds to glorify Him (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 17:1-3; 1 Peter 3:15). To that end, we offer two semester-length logic courses.

In 7th grade we introduce formal and informal reasoning. Students learn how to define terms properly, what kinds of relationships can exist logically between statements, and how to analyze and construct syllogisms. They gain skill in identifying fallacies in informal reasoning by creating a “Fallacy Project” in which they collect and critique fallacies in advertisements, magazines, and everyday situations. Most importantly, they develop a vocabulary for talking about truth and begin to reason in a structured and orderly manner.

Our 8th grade course adds a second story to the ground floor we have already built. Students now pick up additional tools for analyzing and formulating arguments. They learn truth tables and truth trees for evaluating the relationships between statements and the validity of arguments. They memorize patterns of valid reasoning, called rules of inference and replacement, in order to complete formal proofs. They explore the proper place of assumptions in the conditional proof and the reductio ad absurdum.

Does that sound too technical or abstract? For some parents, it might be the sort of material they wish they had covered in college, let alone in middle school. Our students are quite capable of learning logic, however, and by the end of these two courses they have not only learned symbols and rules; they also have applied their knowledge of logic by examining real arguments using plain language.

Our two logic courses provide the bones upon which our rhetoric sequence puts flesh. With the habits learned and tools acquired in logic, students are able in rhetoric to learn to write and speak truthfully and persuasively with eloquence and wisdom.





## An Interview with NICHOLAS PERRIN

*On January 26, 2017, Dr. Nicholas Perrin from Wheaton College spent the day at Grace Academy. Dr. Perrin is a New Testament scholar and the Dean of the Graduate School at Wheaton, and he also was the founding board chairman of a classical Christian school.*

During his short time in Georgetown, Dr. Perrin blessed our community in a number of ways. First he spoke to our Upper School students in chapel about what it means to have faith. Using the story of the paralytic man who is lowered through the roof to Jesus by his four friends, Dr. Perrin challenged students to put their faith into action, like those friends did, by loving classmates who are hurting, being aware of their friends who need help, and carrying those who are wounded to Jesus. That evening Dr. Perrin

gave a Grace Academy Forum lecture at City Lights Theatre on the topic of doubt. Drawing on three passages in the gospel of John about individuals who doubt Jesus, Dr. Perrin talked through seven principles of how Christian adults and the church can help young people walk through times of doubt.

In between speaking engagements, Dr. Perrin also sat down to talk for a few minutes about classical Christian education and the important role it plays in helping to form young men and women of strong faith and mind. Here are a few of his thoughts.

**Q:** *What is the role that classical Christian schools can play in preparing students for lives of study and service?*

“Classical Christian schools play a crucial role in the church and in society by their commitment to providing a space where young Christians can integrate their faith with the larger questions of life. Unless that happens, the church will never be taken seriously as a place where real-life questions are answered and the church can only hope to have a most superficial impact on society.”

**Q:** *Why is it important for young people to wrestle with doubts about their faith?*

“If God’s revelation is truth, then we shouldn’t be afraid to enter into questions of truth. One of the worst messages we can give to our young people is that there are certain “no-go” zones for inquiry. Young Christians today pick up on that very quickly and begin to conclude that something is being hidden from them. So, if we want to fully enfold the next generation into the church, we need to have full transparency about difficult issues with full confidence that God’s Word will be vindicated.”

**Q:** *Is there a way in which classical Christian education is uniquely equipped to help young people wrestle with doubts?*

“The vast majority of young people today, Christian and not Christian, are taught in a way that separates fact from value. The public square avoids talking about values for the sake of avoiding offense. This sends the message, however, that values aren’t important after all. The beauty of classical Christian education is that rather than being forced to live in this dual-compartment world, we can bring facts together with belief and see them as an integrated whole.”

## Sacraments & CELL PHONES

*The Grace Academy trip for the Medieval Humanities class to the Holy Archangel Greek Orthodox Monastery was filled with expectations met as much as it was with surprise.*

For the students who had been studying the monastic lifestyle, reality met them at the door when they realized that in some ways they hadn’t traveled back in time at all. In 2017 monks live with certain conveniences that some may have presumed would be absent. Cell phones, electricity, and running water all complement the lives of those who still seek God’s presence in an isolated environment. In a way, the experience led students to further questions than simply serving to answer the ones on their list prior to arrival. After their morning prayers, did the monks check their Facebook newsfeeds? Beards were a-plenty and worn with pride. They were more hipster than anyone walking down Congress Avenue.

Christian disciplines and sacraments at this monastery follow the traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church. Though the service durations varied, a chapel meeting was held

twice a day—typically in the morning and evening. The purveying thought stated repetitively during the service was, “Lord have mercy on me.” One may wonder if a form of asceticism is practiced on occasion among the saints here, as the disciplined life was evident. They upheld a certain standard of dignity in their atmosphere, even as visitors were present. The students were required to wear certain attire on the grounds—the boys all wore pants and the girls wore a headdress and long-sleeved dress shirt. The monks, as students anticipated, each had on their robes and formal garments. In conversation and throughout the services, speaking Greek seemed natural and comfortable within these walls.

Committed to the traditions of their Christian sect, the monks here were dedicated to serving the surrounding community in and through the context of Greek Orthodox expression. Weddings and funerals are some of the special ceremonies held on site. When children are born they are dedicated in the church, and in a similar fashion the dead are buried. Over a hundred feasts are prepared throughout the year in celebration of a variety of significant events—Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost to name a few.

Another important aspect of the monastery’s function is winemaking. Their winery was built due to a generous donation, and it serves as one of the monks’ sources of income. Monks here were committed to learning and sought to practice a variety of trades, including carpentry, plumbing, and woodworking. Upon entering the glory of their buildings, upgraded with marble from stone and hand-carved furnishings, visitors can vividly see the fruition of their expertise as well as the products of their income. Some wood carvings were even purchased and imported from Greece.

The witness of monastic living offered students a deep appreciation for a way of life not typically promoted. Some students were able to respect it so much they came home actively seeking to copy certain aspects of the monastic lifestyle in their own lives as well. Self-denial, interdependence on each other, and a commitment to pray without ceasing were tenets of the Christian faith that rooted convictions deep within this group of Grace Academy students.

A photograph of three students in a chemistry lab. Two male students in the foreground are wearing safety goggles and aprons, working with a test tube and a clamp. A female student in the background is also wearing safety goggles and an apron, holding a beaker. They are all smiling and appear to be enjoying their work. The lab is filled with various equipment like microscopes and shelves with books.

## Upcoming **EVENTS**

- 4.3 GOLF CLASSIC at Cimarron Hills
- 4.5 PROSPECTIVE PARENT OPEN HOUSE
- 4.13 GRANDPARENTS DAY
- 4.20 SENIOR THESIS PRESENTATIONS
- 4.28 FINE ARTS EVENING at Mainstreet Baptist Church
- 5.3 ALL-SCHOOL RECITATION
- 5.5 SPRING GALA
- 5.25 GRADUATION at Mainstreet Baptist Church

10th Annual

# Grace Academy Golf Classic

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April 3, 2017



  
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*Benefiting Grace Academy's Annual Fund*

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