



Curriculum Guide

Western Academy At A Glance

Classrooms that open to wooded areas; teachers leading a nature walk or a football game; students sorted into houses under a great oak—the Sorting Tree; boys catching insects, climbing trees, reciting poems in a wood fort, sitting around a fire listening to ghostly Halloween tales, competing for their houses in Capture the Flag—welcome to Western Academy!

The school lies in a broad grassy and wooded setting. The campus includes a forested area with a variety of trees, a wood fort, and open field for play. It facilitates the integrated and interactive educational experience of Western Academy. For example, the boys explore the woods and learn of the various trees and birds on the campus. Students gather at the fort for classes, stories, and poetry competitions. The live oak has a sense of strength and adventure that can attract boys to the educational experience. The large setting has many niches and locations for quiet and calm observation necessary for a whole education and stirring the latent capacities of contemplation and intuition.

The boys are placed in small homeroom classes (no more than twenty students) and have one principal homeroom teacher. A homeroom teacher and small class sizes have many advantages in the education of young boys who are increasingly looking for male mentoring, encouragement, and example. Western Academy teachers provide models for cultured manhood: men who play sports, are friends, work diligently, and are genuinely interested in the world and ideas. Such examples are especially important for preadolescent boys who are more open to ideals and engaged learning of the world. The homeroom setting enables the teacher to gain a better understanding of each boy and the boy to be better understood. Homeroom teachers also further a more informed and cooperative relationship between parents and teachers.

Notable aspects of the Western Academy experience include the number of recesses and amount of time allocated for physical exercise, and the freedom the boys are given. There are three recesses per day: a short recess in the morning and a longer recess after lunch for play; the third break is for silent reading and journaling. Each grade also has a gym period four times a week. The recesses and physical education are necessary breaks in the intense academic routine and are also necessary for development of the virtues taught through sports - such as courage, discipline, working for a team goal, and good judgment. They also provide healthy occasions for less formal exploration or more imaginative play.

Freedom is a vital component of the play and overall tone of the education at Western Academy. This freedom may include climbing trees, fort building with sticks, tackle football, or freer exploration of the wooded areas. Freedom is necessary not only to develop authentic moral virtues, but also for authentic intellectual habits, since good behavior should not merely consist of exterior manners that please adults, but should connect with the interior, the heart of the person who truly desires to do good things. Similarly, learning is not a game of grades and getting ahead, but should involve genuine interest, wonder, and a search for truth and wisdom (though the boys are not necessarily aware of this at the lower-school level). Along with freedom the boys are given an emphasis on the personal responsibility inherent in true freedom.

An Overview

The Western Academy curriculum has four defining characteristics: it is detailed, connected, integrated, and alive. Details and little things are aspects usually loathed by boys but necessary for their education. Great emphasis is placed on the details of academics: grammar, handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, drawing, scientific classification, math drills and homework, historical and geographical data, the Ten Commandments, etc.; but attention to detail is also evident in orderly classrooms, composure, and neatness in dress. Detailed study becomes even more complete when connections are revealed; for example, the relations of birds, insects, weather, and animals are connected to the life of trees and the life that trees support. Similarly, the study of falcons is enhanced with writing a poem about them, and the study of live oaks is enhanced when they are connected historically with their use in frigates such as “Old Ironsides”.

Beyond connecting matters within a subject, and subjects with other subjects, there is a sincere effort to connect learning with present living and the self—this includes connecting emotions and reason, the heart and mind. This type of connection can better be termed “integration” as it strives to integrate what one learns of the world and reality with how one lives in and perceives the world and reality. Furthermore, through quiet and humble observation the boy can experience awe and wonder at the mystery and power of creation—proper

responses of the heart to the created world.

Efforts toward true integration necessarily involve action as a student applies lessons to his life—virtues don't become virtues unless one acts on what he sees as the right thing to do—whether this involves daring to reach out in friendships, or doing our work on time, or acting with compassion. Together these aspects of connection and integration, in perception and action, encourage the boy to be more creative, to be more “alive”—true personalities grow and a deep goodness takes firmer root. The goal of a Western Academy education is a man fully alive.

Education comes to life when it is connected to the world around us and genuine interests are fostered. The importance of the imagination for this end of helping the education come alive is clearly understood at Western Academy. Examples include writing historical journals (imagining oneself a colonial settler), writing nature poems in natural history, and imagining oneself in the mysterious scenes of Christ's life presented in the rosary. The connection between choice, action, and well-being is especially present in literature, as characters' choices can be seen along with their consequences for others and themselves. The small class size and homeroom teacher relationship enables this connection as the teachers get to know each student more personally and can observe the boys in many different settings, from quiet academic situations to more vibrant and competitive ones. Our teachers have an eye for details and the skills to develop study skills, use narrative across the curriculum, and teach in the field, which includes nature walks and a variety of field trips.

The Curriculum

The subjects of study are derived from the liberal arts: at Western Academy they include religion, natural history and science, math, literature, language arts and poetry, history, music, foreign language, art, and physical education.

On average, homework requires 45 minutes to 1.5 hours per night. Assignments are given to supplement and prepare for classes, but are limited so as not to detract from healthy hobbies and family relationships.

Grades indicate performance and not behavior. Interest, engagement, and academic habits are of real importance; grades, especially at younger ages, are not.

Natural History and Science

Natural History is a key component to the Lower School education. Along with detailed classification and regular notation in scientific journals, the boys actively engage in the natural surroundings on campus and nearby locations. The subject fosters a systematic and knowledgeable understanding of the natural world as

well as an ability for careful observation, appreciation, and greater awareness of the dynamic world surrounding us. Many of the subjects of study are similar across the grades, but the study increases in depth and detail with different focuses in each grade. The Middle School introduces earth science, life science, and physical science. Building on the foundation of the natural history curriculum students are led beneath the surface of things to the study of geology, chemistry, biology, and physics, developing an even greater appreciation for the order and wonder of the created world.

Grade 3

Texts: Roger Caras' *The Forest*, *Field Guide to Common Texas Insects* by Bastiaan Drees, *Golden Guide to Trees*, *Golden Guide to Insects*, *Golden Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians*, *Birds of Eastern and Central North America* and *Birds of Texas* by R.T. Peterson.

Grade 4

Texts: Roger Caras' *Panther and Custer Wolf*, *Golden Guide to Trees*, *Golden Guide to Insects*, *Golden Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians*, *Birds of Eastern and Central North America* and *Birds of Texas* by R.T. Peterson.

Grade 5

Texts: Roger Caras' *Monarch of Deadman Bay*, *Golden Guide to Trees*, *Golden Guide to Weather*, *Guide to Rocks and Minerals* by R.T. Peterson, *Birds of Eastern and Central North America* and *Birds of Texas* by R.T. Peterson.

Grade 6

Texts: *Earth Science* published by Prentice Hall, *Archimedes and the Door of Science* by Jeanne Bendick, excerpts from Aristotle. Topics: an introduction to the geological sciences and a preparation for chemistry.

Grade 7

Texts: *Exploring Life Science* by Prentice Hall, excerpts from Aristotle. Topics: environmental science and human biology.

Grade 8

Texts: *Physical Science* by Scott Foresman, excerpts from Aristotle. Topics: physics and chemistry—a wide survey of the laws of motion and matter.

Math

Western Academy uses a tutorial model for math instruction; the class meets daily. Students are placed under the guidance of an individual teacher in small

classes. The classes are then subdivided into smaller study groups. While Saxon's math texts provide rigorous training in mathematical concepts and reinforce those concepts in a spiraling technique, the teacher works with each boy individually and in small groups to give instruction. While each boy is required to do one lesson's problem set each day, a boy who is motivated to move at a faster pace is empowered to do so; and the boy who needs more instruction on a concept can receive it individually or in a small group from his teacher. In this model we have the flexibility to provide rigorous training and to allow your son to move at a more individual pace. For this reason we list the texts below without fixing them to particular grade levels.

Texts: *Math 54* by Saxon.

Topics: Addition, subtraction, fractions, decimals, multiplication and division (including memorization of times tables).

Texts: *Math 65* by Saxon.

Topics: Basic geometry, fractional and decimal operations, continued development of multiplication and division.

Texts: *Math 76* by Saxon.

Topics: Fundamental geometry, simple algebra, multiplication and division of fractions and decimals.

Texts: *Math 87* by Saxon.

Topics: Review and mastery of operations with fractions and mixed numbers, reciprocals, ratios, proportions, exponents, square roots, scientific notation, order of operations, algebraic addition, simple equations, perimeters, circumferences, areas, and volumes.

Texts: *Algebra ½*, *Algebra 1*, and *Algebra 2* by Saxon.

Topics: Converting decimals, fractions and percents; geometric area and volume of various shapes; averaging quantities; order of operations; changing rates; algebraic steps; ratios; word problems; probability; exponents; square roots; scientific notation; and distance problems.

History

History focuses primarily upon United States history up to the Civil War. Texas history will also be emphasized. Texts employing a strong narrative method, such as Joy Hakim's *History of US* published by Oxford University Press, are used in each grade. In addition, each grade also uses biography and historical novels to

bring to life the characters of the past such as *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes and *Rabble in Arms* by Kenneth Roberts. The great battles throughout history are emphasized, including the great American battles every boy should know—such as Antietam, Saratoga, and Normandy; through the battles we study the political and cultural conflicts, the historical contexts, the geography, the leaders—heroes and villains— and the choices people made. Various field trips and the use of outside sources and stories augment the program.

Grade 3

Texts: *The First Americans: A History of US*, Book 1 by Joy Hakim. Topics: Early native settlers to the explorers and early colonization.

Grade 4

Texts: *Making Thirteen Colonies: A History of US*, Book 2 by Joy Hakim. Topics: development of the first thirteen English colonies in Eastern North America.

Grade 5

Texts: *From Colonies to Country: A History of US*, Book 3 by Joy Hakim. Topics: The American Revolution and early development of the Republic.

Grade 6

Texts: *The New Nation: A History of US*, Book 4 by Joy Hakim. Topics: the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark's expedition, the War of 1812, Tecumseh's effort to form an Indian confederacy, Southern plantations, the beginning of the abolitionist movement, and the Trail of Tears.

Grade 7

Texts: *Liberty for All? A History of US*, Book 5 by Joy Hakim. Topics: Early nineteenth-century America with its mountain men, railroad builders, whalers and farmers, westward migration, the California Gold Rush, a war with Mexico, the Oregon boundary conflict, Texas and the Alamo.

Grade 8

Texts: *War, Terrible War: A History of US*, Book 6 by Joy Hakim. Topics: John Brown, Bull Run, Fort Sumter, Generals Lee and Grant, President Lincoln, West Point, Harriet Beecher Stowe, George Pickett, Harpers Ferry, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Emancipation Proclamation, Underground Railroad, and the Mexican War.

Literature

Literature includes the reading, aloud and silently, of short stories, folk tales, and novels, as well as the memorization and recital of a number of poems. Students also practice creative writing with poetry and short stories. Outside reading and book reports are required. Entertainment and the love and use of language are important aspects of literature, but emphasis includes heroism in epic stories; formation of the moral imagination; tapping capacities for wonder, especially through folk or "wonder" tales such as those collected by the Grimm brothers; as well as perceiving the connections between choice, action and well-being. (The following list is a sampling; books and poems may vary slightly.)

Grade 3

Texts: *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Graham, *The Great Quillow* by James Thurber, and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis, *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, *The Tales of Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris (as told by Julius Lester). Poetry includes "The Cats of Kilkenny", "The Daffodils" by William Wordsworth, "A Knight" by Geoffrey Chaucer, "Paul Revere's Ride" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Tiger" by William Blake, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" by Robert Browning, "St. George and the Dragon" by G.K. Chesterton.

Grade 4

Texts: *Farmer Boy* by L.I. Wilder, *The Horse and His Boy* by C.S. Lewis, *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry, *The Jungle Books* by Rudyard Kipling, *A Wonder Book* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Poetry includes "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll, "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Barbara Fritchie" by James Whittier.

Grade 5

Texts: *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Children's Homer* by Padraic Colum, *The Tanglewood Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Poetry includes: "The Bells" and "El Dorado" by Edgar Allan Poe, "Concord Hymn" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Pied Beauty" and "The Windhover" by Gerard M. Hopkins, "The Listeners" by Walter de la Mare, "The Donkey" by G.K. Chesterton, "Casey at the Bat" by Ernest L. Thayer.

Grade 6

Texts: *Souder* by William H. Armstrong, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, *The Golden Fleece* by Padraic Colum, *The Story of Rolf and the Viking Bow* by Allen French, *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls, and *Selected Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb. Poetry includes "The Three Ravens", selections from Emily Dickinson, and "Jim" by Hilaire Belloc.

Grade 7

Texts: *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Song of Roland*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* translated by J.R.R. Tolkien, and *The Black Arrow* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Select poems such as *Beowulf*, “Hiawatha” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”, “The Solitary Reaper” by William Wordsworth, various sonnets by Keats and Hopkins.

Grade 8

Texts: *Iliad* by Homer, *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, excerpts from Plutarch, various short stories from O’Connor, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Select poems such as medieval ballads, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Coleridge, “The Pulley” by Herbert, and various sonnets by Shakespeare.

Language Arts and Poetry

Language Arts includes handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, dictation, library instruction, reading comprehension, the mechanics of grammar and writing, and occasional journaling. Students regularly practice with attention to detail the above mentioned aspects of language arts, as well as putting the pieces together in regular writing. A love of language and writing is encouraged, though often through different subjects. For example, creative writing is taught in literature, while journaling may be assigned in language arts, history, and natural history.

Handwriting and calligraphy are part of classes in the lower school. The development of these motor skills has been shown to be salutary for the whole development of children, including the increased ability for sustained attention.

Poetry is also an important part of this class and the school’s curriculum as a whole. Grammar, diction, and usage can come alive in the context of a poem, especially when that poem is memorized.

Grade 3

Texts: *First Language Lessons for the Well Trained Mind Level 3* published by Peace Hill Press; *Spelling Connections, Book 3* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 3* published by Zaner-Bloser; vocabulary words selected from the literature texts and the *Wordly Wise* series, various poems.

Grade 4

Texts: *First Language Lessons for the Well Trained Mind Level 4* published by Peace Hill Press; *Spelling Connections, Book 4* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 4* published by Zaner-Bloser; vocabulary words selected from the literature texts and the *Wordly Wise* and *Vocabulary from Classical Roots*

series published by Educators Publishing Service, various poems.

Grade 5

Texts: *Grammar and Writing 5* published by Saxon; *Spelling Connections, Book 5* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Handwriting Book 5* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots* published by Educators Publishing Service, various poems.

Grade 6

Texts: *Grammar and Writing 6* by Saxon; *Spelling Connections* published by Zaner-Bloser; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots* from Educators Publishing Service, various poems.

Grade 7

Texts: *Grammar and Writing 7* by Saxon; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots* from Educators Publishing Service, various poems.

Grade 8

Texts: *Grammar and Writing 8* by Saxon; *Vocabulary from Classical Roots* from Educators Publishing Service, various poems.

Religion

Religion is taught two times a week and is mandatory for Catholic students. The main textbooks are part of the *Faith and Life* series published by Ignatius Press. Classes are supplemented with selected and interesting narratives from the Old and New Testaments, weekly attendance at Mass, as well as monthly chapel services and occasional devotional practices such as the recital of the rosary, which includes an imaginative and meditative exploration of the various mysteries. Themes that pervade the religion curriculum include the recognition and effort to live as a loved child of God, a more personal knowledge of Jesus, as well as the understanding of religion and worship as just and proper responses to the Creator.

Grade 3

Texts: *Our Life with Jesus*, Book 3; Sacred Scripture selections.

Grade 4

Texts: *Jesus Our Guide*, Book 4; Sacred Scripture selections.

Grade 5

Texts: *Credo: I Believe*, Book 5; Sacred Scripture selections.

Grade 6

Texts: *Following Christ*, Book 6; Sacred Scripture selections.

Grade 7

Texts: *The Life of Grace*, Book 7; Sacred Scripture selections.

Grade 8

Texts: *Our Life in the Church*, Book 8; Sacred Scripture selections.

Religious Education Note:

Opus Dei, a personal prelature of the Catholic Church founded by St. Josemaria Escriva, provides a chaplain who in turn administers the sacraments on a daily basis and oversees the religious education program.

We are very grateful to have been granted permission by Cardinal DiNardo to offer religious education to our Catholic students, to offer daily Mass and Confession, and to be able to have the Blessed Sacrament with us throughout the week.

One of our goals is to help our students to freely and truly become souls of prayer—young men who can experience “silent listening” deep within their heart and conscience. As the great thinker, Josef Pieper, reminds us: “...the world reveals itself to the silent listener and only to him; the more silently he listens, the more purely is he able to perceive reality.”

We are deeply aware of and in debt to the great traditions and benefits of Catholic education. We are a school started, owned, and operated by laymen. For this reason, we are and wish to be a private independent school accepting the full responsibility of our endeavor. While together the appointed chaplain and lay educators feel the responsibility of living and reflecting a Catholic Spirit throughout our school, professional laymen are responsible for the education and administration of the school, and the chaplain is particularly responsible for the religious education program.

Western Academy is a private independent school. It will be accredited by a private independent schools association and independently funded.

Western Academy is not a Catholic School, and is not under the supervision of the Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Office of Galveston-Houston.

Opus Dei, a Personal Prelature of the Catholic Church, will provide a chaplain to administer the sacraments and oversee the Religious Education program offered to Catholic students as monitored and supervised by the Archdiocesan Office of Continuing Christian Education.

Writing

At Western Academy writing is taught in several classes: the boys are encouraged to write in their journals in silent reading/journaling time; the boys are taught the fundamentals of grammar, diction, and usage in language arts and poetry class; they write paragraphs and longer compositions in their literature, history, religion, and science classes. Each grade also has a weekly class devoted to writing; this class focuses on the whole, the others on its parts. The boys learn the craft of writing through assignments that give them experience in various genres—narrative, persuasive essay, description, the fable, etc.

The goal we pursue is the skilled writer. The means we employ in Writing class combine experience in the writing process—the process of drafting, revising (revising again), and editing.

Music

Music is taught two days a week. The classes are a blend of theory and musical experience. Students learn rhythm and beat, notation and composition, and play music as well as compose songs with musical notation. Singing is taught throughout the curriculum.

Languages

Latin language and culture is introduced throughout the lower and middle school. The students begin by learning Latin words and roots of words and advance to more formal study with a weekly class in the middle school years. Spanish is offered two days per week throughout the lower and middle schools; it is a flexible program geared to introduce the language to beginners and to deepen the literary experience of native speakers.

Art

Art is taught one day a week for an extended period of one hour and fifteen minutes. The basic skill developed throughout the program is that of drawing. Students learn to draw basic three-dimensional shapes and move to more difficult assignments such as drawing the human person, the use of perspective,

etc. Other projects include learning about and coloring heraldic shields with a special regard to understanding the color wheel. There are also some light craft projects connected with various feasts throughout the year.

Physical Education

Physical Education is taught four days a week and involves training in the skills, strategy, and overall development of common team sports. The understanding of sportsmanship is emphasized.

Field Trips

Field trips and extended camping trips are important ingredients for the curriculum. Boys regularly explore nature as a classroom, and take field trips to enhance learning in a variety of subjects. All grades have an annual camping trip, which includes outdoor adventure, character formation, and field learning — from learning about geography and the nature of a specific landscape to visiting historical places and art museums.