

Instilling *Wisdom*



Inspiring *Worship*

## Academy Handbook 2020-21

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).*



True education begins with God. He is the beginning and the end of all things, as well as the environment in which all things live and move. Truly, God is the great *context* in which all things must be understood. Therefore, to make sense of our world and ourselves, it is first necessary to understand God. This makes *Christian* education necessary.

**Spring Branch Academy** is a Christian high school with classical methods, a liberal arts curriculum, and experienced teachers. The academy exists to bring glory to God through *instilling wisdom* and *inspiring worship* in each student.

### Distinctive Traits

First, the academy seeks to promote *the knowledge of God* in everything. Just as your room and your hobbies express your personality, so does God’s world and God’s works. God is personal. He can be known through the consistent character of His thoughts and ways. However, since His thoughts and ways are higher than ours as “the heavens are higher than the earth,” we need help. We need His word, the manual of interpreting God; we need His Son, who fully displayed His Father’s character to us; and finally, we need His Spirit, to enlighten our minds. Therefore, in keeping with these necessities, the academy encourages the use of Scripture and prayer in the classroom, both at the start of each day, and as the teacher is led by the Spirit. Moreover, each student enrolled must at least audit a theology class.

Second, the academy is committed to *parental authority*. Parents select the classes, review the curriculum, monitor progress, and even add some electives to the transcript. In turn, students do most of their work at home, under the supervision of their parents. Classes meet once or twice per week in a college-style scheduling. Through this combination of freedom and deadlines, students are trained to manage their own lives under God.

Third, the academy teaches *the liberal arts* from a *Christian perspective*. The liberal arts include foreign languages (Greek, Latin), the languages of nature (mathematics, science), a core of history and literature, and a capstone of theology, all based on the word of God, who is the One Source of wisdom (Proverbs 2:6). Regarding pagan literature, the academy seeks to avoid works that turn sinful content in entertainment. In general, assigned works are carefully critiqued, with virtues applauded (Philippians 4:8) and vices exposed (Proverbs 7).

Fourth, the academy aims to be a *gospel ministry* that promotes *discipleship to Jesus Christ*. Pastors are encouraged to participate, and teachers are encouraged to be pastoral. In turn, students are taught what the lordship of Christ looks like in all aspects of life—from the highly philosophical and cultural aspects, to the home-oriented and practical ones.

Finally, the academy seeks to promote *the fear of God*, which is the beginning of wisdom. This reverence for God leads to faith in Christ, which results in love to God and man. Lord willing, these spiritual graces will fill the atmosphere of our school! We want these graces to affect how we read His word, sing His songs, value His people, and manage His world. At the core, the academy stresses the lordship of Christ and the worship of Christ, which together form the basis of Christian unity and the direction of Christian living (see Psalm 16).

## Mission Statement

Spring Branch Academy exists to bring glory to God through *instilling wisdom* and *inspiring worship* in each student.

## Objectives

The academy has four subservient aims:

1. To assist *parents* in giving their children an excellent high-school education for college and for life.
2. To train all *students* to become worshipers and to fulfill their God-given roles as disciples of Jesus Christ.
3. To extend the *pastoral ministry* of the church into more homes and into more areas of a student's life.
4. To glorify God, by making His Son more visible in the *community* through this excellent good work.

In addition to these aims, the academy has the following specific goals:

1. To ensure that the final responsibility for educating the child rests upon the parents.
2. To keep the cost of education affordable, especially for large families. The amount of tuition may be set each September by the parents, on the principles of Jesus, who directed His disciples to give freely and to eat whatever was put before them (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:8). All parents should give something, however, even as the Holy Spirit directs those who are taught to share with those who teach (Galatians 6:6).
3. To provide an excellent alternative to the public school system—an alternative that will provide a valid option for concerned parents and also bring glory to God and to Jesus Christ in this community.
4. To teach a full curriculum in the liberal arts—theology, history, literature, science, foreign language and mathematics.
5. To meet the core requirements for graduation in the state of Michigan. The entire program gives 24 credits, which is based upon either the completion of a purchased curriculum or about 150 hours of coursework per course. Parents are solely responsible for any elective credits (music, athletics, etc.) added for graduation. Electives may be obtained through home activities, apprenticeship, local organizations and teams, or through other schools, such as the local public high school (e.g. band, music, physical education, and career center).
6. To prepare students for college, even if this is not God's will for their lives. Juniors and seniors who excel should explore the possibility of earning college credit through dual enrollment.
7. To instill wisdom, both unto salvation through the knowledge of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15), and unto right living in this evil age through a guided exposure to the thought and culture of Western Civilization.
8. To nurture leaders, who will lead their family, community, and church in God's word and in wisdom.
9. To be a ministry of gifted men, where teachers have a pastoral heart to fulfill a ministry, rather than an institution, where positions need to be filled. Moreover, to have male teachers as model leaders and female teachers as module specialists.
10. To be financially responsible as a business, relying more on tuition than donations, and remunerating teachers on a level comparable to the local public school system.

Regarding these goals, let it be remembered that none of them can succeed apart from the grace of God. Therefore, the academy is committed to prayer, both in the academy and for the academy. This commitment to prayer is vital for humility, faith, and love, because without God's grace, knowledge will puff up, lead astray, and promote selfish ends.

## Course Descriptions

*Theology* All Christian education should have at its heart a quest for knowing God. Formally, this quest involves theology. Since theology pertains to all of life, as God Himself does, the theology course often matches topics in the humanities and science. This allows for fruitful cross-pollination. Each theology course has three sections—philosophical foundations, the faith itself, and family.

*Humanities*  
(two credits) Heftier than theology, this course combines history and literature with lots of reading and writing. The aim is to tell the story of God working throughout Western Civilization and American history. The history is often taught through a lecture, rather than a textbook. Reading involves many primary sources, which let the era speak for itself. Writing consists mainly of essays and book reviews. Basic facts are often learned with an introductory grammar, like a catechism. Each course proceeds chronologically, keeping on center stage the works of God, whose deeds are great and just.

Seniors take a two-credit “Public Policy” course, which covers the main topics discussed in the American public square—politics, economics, and medicine/bioethics. Coupled with earlier years, this course fulfills the Michigan requirement that each student must have a half-credit of civics.

A biblical history and literature course, which reads the entire Bible in two years, is offered to middle school students and to high school students who need help in raising reading proficiency.

*Science* Freshmen take a Nature course. Instead of aiming primarily for understanding causation with an eye towards technology, the naturalist strives for appreciating nature as it is found—alive, with all its wonder! By God’s grace, the naturalist gains a vocabulary for wit and fuel for worship.

The backbone of the science sequence is the traditional trio of biology, chemistry, and physics. In each course, students complete a rigorous academic textbook. Coursework also includes labs and the history of the science. Overall, the goal is familiarity and intelligent interaction for a lifetime.

*Language* The academy offers Greek and some Latin, which are the core languages of Western Civilization. These languages give students a better comprehension of scientific terms, English vocabulary, theological concepts, and ancient culture in general. Almost all biological terms come from Greek; and Greek is especially precious to a Christian, because it is the language of the New Testament. Once students master the alphabet, usually within a few weeks, it differs little from other languages.

Greek is taught first, then Latin. This reverses the standard order of classical education. Teaching Greek first encourages fruitful cross-pollination in geometry, biology, and the history of the early church. Teaching Latin roots and phrases aids the upper-classmen in logic and rhetoric. Latin grammar is not taught, due to its extreme similarity to Greek—an unnecessary redundancy.

Juniors take logic and seniors take rhetoric. If the first teaches how to think well, the latter teaches how to speak well. In the end, seniors listen to classic American speeches and deliver speeches.

English requirements are met through the reading and writing in humanities and through rhetoric.

*Mathematics* Math is the language of symbols applied to concrete reality. The beauty of God’s mind is often seen in the simplicity of mathematical phrases matching the underlying order of the universe. Such a match testifies to the Creator. The academy offers pre-algebra, algebra, trigonometry, and precalculus, so that students at various levels can find a fit. The academy also offers geometry, which differs greatly from the algebra-based sequence. In a sense, geometry is a rational science, seen by the mind but never seen in the material world—like logic come to life, a mental weight room for practice thinking. The academy also plans to offer the history of mathematics soon.

Science, language, and math classes meet twice a week. Tests are taken and graded at school, not at home. Often two lessons in math are assigned per day. Math placement tests occur in the start of the year. The final exam must be passed in order to pass the course, regardless of the other grades.

## Curriculum Schedule

The following table describes the normal sequence of courses. New students with existing credits are encouraged to seek counsel for specialized plans that will satisfy graduation requirements.

### Freshman

Theology	Theology I <i>Foundation:</i> Creation by Fiat: The Case for Orthodoxy against Evolution <i>Faith:</i> The Doctrine of the Bible <i>Family:</i> Work as Vocation
Humanities I	Western Civilization I: Ancient/Medieval
Science	Nature
Language	Greek I
Math	Algebra I

### Sophomore

Theology	Theology II <i>Foundation:</i> Pluralism: The Absolute Faith in a Multicultural Age <i>Faith:</i> The Doctrine of God <i>Family:</i> Personal Finances
Humanities II	Western Civilization II: Reformation/Modern Europe
Science	Biology
Language	Greek II
Math	Geometry

### Junior

Theology	Theology III <i>Foundation:</i> Social Order: The Hierarchy of the Universe <i>Faith:</i> The History of Redemption <i>Family:</i> Marriage
Humanities III	American History & Literature
Science	Chemistry
Language	Logic
Math	Algebra II

### Senior

Theology	Theology IV <i>Foundation:</i> The Gift of Language: Postmodernism, Epistemology, and Hermeneutics <i>Faith:</i> The Doctrine of Salvation <i>Family:</i> Parenting
Humanities IV	Public Policy Government (Civics) Economics Medicine (Bioethics)
Science	Physics
Language	Rhetoric
Math	Precalculus/Trigonometry
<b>Elective Options</b>	Public School Non-Core Elective (e.g. art, band, music, physical education) ISD Career Center (e.g. construction trades) Dual Enrollment (e.g. calculus) Online Course

## Enrollment Status

In Michigan, parents have three legal options for educating their child: public school, private school (called a “nonpublic school”), or home school—designated either as “home school” (section f) or as a “nonpublic school” at their home (section a). (For details, see “State Regulations for Private and Home Schools” in the appendices.)

In the home school option, the child is taught a standard set of subjects “at the child’s home” and “by his or her parent or legal guardian,” which today may include external aids such as virtual school or dual enrollment. In the private school option, the child is taught “in a state approved nonpublic school, which teaches subjects comparable to those taught in the public schools,” such as “mathematics, reading, English, science, and social studies,” along with half a year of civics. The academy qualifies as “a state approved nonpublic school,” meeting all the core requirements.

The state also allows a blend of home school and private school (section 4). This option allows for homeschooling families to take classes at Spring Branch Academy a la carte, as need requires. Parents truly have all options open.

Under state regulations, the academy will only assume responsibility for the education of students who are enrolled in *all* the required courses. If parents do not *fully* enroll their child in the academy, then the status of the student will be considered home school and parents must assume the *responsibility* of supplying the missing requirements and also the *risk* of noncompliance with the state requirements for homeschooling.

Therefore, upon enrollment, each child must be designated as *full-time* or *part-time* student. Full-time students are eligible for an academy diploma, which may be given by parents at a graduation ceremony. Part-time students must graduate from their home school, with parents responsible for providing electives, maintaining a transcript, and issuing a diploma. For part-time students, the academy merely furnishes a report card each year.

Transfer students are eligible for an academy diploma only if they have completed at least two years of full-time status at the academy. All other transfer students fall under home school status, according to the stipulations given above.

Full-time students, as those enrolled in a private school, are reported to the local public-school superintendent, according to state regulations. (For an enrollment form, see the appendices.)

## Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements are based on the Michigan Merit Curriculum, which are not required for nonpublic schools, but which provide a helpful benchmark. Full-time students must meet the following requirements to graduate from Spring Branch Academy:

Theology – one credit for each year of enrollment

Humanities – six credits (Social Studies and English count as transfer credits)

Public Policy – two credits (satisfies the state’s civics requirement and includes a health class component)

Mathematics – four credits

Science – three credits

Foreign Language – two credits (Hebrew or Greek; other languages count only as transfer credits)

Logic and Rhetoric – two credits

Physical Education Elective – a half credit for a complete season in an extra-curricular team sport

Art Elective – one credit (drama, music, visual arts, industrial arts)

Online Experience – an elective or as part of another course

Total Credits = 24½ credits for four-year enrollment

Electives happen in various ways. First, the state allows any student to take non-core electives at the public school, such as art, music, band, and physical education. Seniors may also take a career-center course through the local ISD. Second, participation in 4H, sports teams, and local theater also count, as long as it has an end-goal (a project or season) and is provided mentoring by a competent master. Once completed, the student types up a summary, receives a “Pass”, and is awarded credit based on the hours involved (one credit per 120 hours, half credit per 60 hours). An athletic season counts no more than half a credit. Other possibilities include dual enrollment and online courses.

## Released Time

The state of Michigan allows public-school students up to two class hours per week to be released from class for “religious instruction” off-site, as long as the student has the “written request of the parent” or guardian. Theology courses from the academy qualify as religious instruction; therefore, all public-school students are invited to enroll. Theology classes meet once per week, for about an hour and a half.

## Yearly Schedule

The school year essentially lasts from Labor Day to Memorial Day. There are three terms—fall, winter, and spring. Each term includes ten weeks of classes and at least one reading week.

- Fall Juniors and seniors meet on the Thursday before Labor Day, in order to take Monday as a holiday. Full classes begin the Tuesday after Labor Day and end the Thursday before Thanksgiving. Fall Term has at least one reading week. Special meetings include a Parents Workshop and a Reformation Day Party (Gospel Defense).
- Winter Classes begin the week after Thanksgiving and last until the last week in February. Christmas break lasts at least two weeks. An additional “Snow Week” of classes allows for snow cancellations.
- Spring Classes begin in early March and finish the week before Memorial Day. Spring Term has at least one reading week, which (unfortunately) does not often align with Easter. Special meetings include an Honors Supper and a St. Patrick’s Day Party (Gospel Missions). The academy may have a graduation ceremony or assist with a ceremony at an open house.

## Weekly Schedule

Classes meet once or twice a week, usually for an hour or for an hour and a half. Full-time students receive a thirty-minute break for lunch and recreation. The weekly schedule for freshmen and sophomores is as follows:

<i>First Day</i>	Theology	<i>Second Day</i>	Humanities (History/Literature)
	Science		Science
	Mathematics		Mathematics
	Language		Language

Juniors and seniors meet three times a week, in order to allow for half-day participation in the ISD career center.

Each week, students are expected to work about thirty hours (class time included), which is about how long a public-schooled student spends in the school building. During reading weeks, there are no classes. The extra time is spent with extra reading. (Parents should keep this extra reading load in mind, when planning a vacation.)

Assuming that students read about twenty pages per hour, the amount of reading per class is approximately as follows:

### *In-Class Weeks*

Class-time	1 hour
Writing	1 hour
Reading	3 hours x 20 pages per hour = 60 pages per week

### *Reading Weeks*

Reading	5 hours x 20 pages per hour = 100 pages per week
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Since the humanities course includes both history and literature, the reading load is double the amount given above. Slow readers may receive credit for the reading assignments, if they log in a minimum number of reading hours.

***For specific dates and times for this school year, see the calendar and weekly schedule in the appendices.***

## Credit

The academy assesses a high school credit in two ways. First, if a standard textbook curriculum is *substantially* completed, one credit is earned. (A teacher may eliminate some material due to larger course goals.). Second, if the course is structured around time spent in class and studying at home, as in Theology and Humanities, one credit is earned for at least 150 hours of work in one school year, based on the Carnegie Unit system as interpreted by HSLDA for core classes.

## Grading

Each class has its own criteria for determining a term grade. For example, a theology class may have 30% for reading assignments, 40% for writing assignments, 10% for quizzes and 20% for the final exam. In addition, perfect attendance and good classroom participation adds 1% to the overall term grade, which may bump the grade up a letter. The final grade for the course is the average of the grades for the three terms.

All high school classes count towards a high school transcript, even if they were completed during the middle school years. The overall GPA (grade point average) is based on the weighted average of the course grades divided by the number of credits earned (or attempted). The following scale assigns a numerical value to the letter grade:

Ten-Point Scale

Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A+ (98-100)	4.0	B+ (87-89)	3.3	C+ (77-79)	2.3	D+ (67-69)	1.3
A (93-97)	4.0	B (83-86)	3.0	C (73-76)	2.0	D (65-66)	1.0
A- (90-92)	3.7	B- (80-82)	2.7	C- (70-72)	1.7	F < 65	0

\*The grading scale (modified) is taken with permission from Trinity Academy of Raleigh ([www.trinityacademy.com](http://www.trinityacademy.com)).

## Cost

Monthly tuition is determined by each family before the Lord, according to the scriptural principle that a worker is worthy of his wages (1 Corinthians 9:11, 14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). For those interested in some guidelines, the academy estimates that each course is a \$40 per month value for full-time students. Teachers are almost the sole beneficiaries of monthly tuition.

In addition to tuition, there is a one-time enrollment fee of \$100 per family, regardless of the number of classes involved or children enrolled. This fee allows for all the families to share evenly the capital expenses of keeping this school in existence as an option for our churches and community.

Parents are also responsible for transportation and books. Carpooling is often an option, as is book swapping among families. Every summer, a book list is sent out, which gives instructions on obtaining the books needed for each course, whether through purchasing (new or old) or through borrowing (church library, school library, and interlibrary loan at the public library).

## Location

Classes meet at Countryside Bible Church, northeast of Jonesville, Michigan at 1651 E. Litchfield Road. The church facility is equipped with pleasant classrooms, a kitchenette, and a gym for midday recreation.

The academy meets in the back of the church, so as not to disturb the church staff. The presence of the church staff adds to the overall security of the building. In addition, more than one teacher is scheduled to be with the student body at all times. Ultimately, the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself is our strong comfort and accountability.

In consideration for the church and its ministry, parents are encouraged not to leave children unattended before or after class. In case of emergencies, the church secretary can be reached at (517) 849-9338.

## **Admissions**

Interested parents should contact the director, Mr. Bob Snyder, at (517) 849-7035 or at sbacademy1210@gmail.com. Usually prospective parents sit down with the director for a face-to-face discussion about the academy and the prospective student. Parents are encouraged to ask many questions and to feel the liberty to make their decision before the Lord, regardless of expectations. Ultimately, the Lord must be the guide for each child, because He made each one individually and no one mode of education works for all children.

Class size is limited to twelve students. Electives may be an exception.

## **Faculty**

### ***Mr. Bob Snyder, Director***

Spring Branch Academy was founded by Mr. Snyder, who desired to see his own high school children taught with others in a classroom setting. He has over fifteen years of pastoral experience. He also taught at two Christian schools in Kentucky before successfully teaching four years of this curriculum in Hudson, Michigan. Both graduates from Hudson went to college, one to Taylor University and the other to Hillsdale College. Mr. Snyder's educational background includes bachelor degrees in mechanical engineering and mathematics, a master of divinity degree, and a Ph.D. in church history from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In addition to education, he brings to the academy several years of industry experience, as well as over twenty-five years of family experience as the husband of one wife and the father of six children.

### ***Mr. Keith Keana, Teacher***

Mr. Keana comes with a considerable amount of experience teaching chemistry in the United States Air Force, including the academy in Colorado. Equipped with both a bachelor degree and a master degree in chemistry, he also brings to his teaching a passion for God's wisdom and ways in science. He and his wife are currently raising two children, both of whom take classes at the academy. He also teaches some upper-level mathematics.

### ***Mr. Aaron Darlington, Teacher***

Pastor Aaron Darlington serves as one of the associate pastors at Countryside Bible Church and teaches second-year Greek. He brings quite a bit of language background to the class, having traveled as a missionary for three years in about twenty countries and also having been trained in English, linguistics, and the biblical languages. For three years, he taught at a classical school in the Los Angeles area.

## **Website**

For more information on the academy, including some important documents and publications from Spring Branch Book House, visit our website at [www.sbacademy.us](http://www.sbacademy.us).

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“A good liberal arts high school, if it does nothing else, ought to produce graduates who are competent analytical readers.”

Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed.  
(New York: Simon and Schuster, Touchstone, 1972), 29.



## **Appendices**

Statement of Faith  
Philosophy of Education  
Academy Policy  
State Regulations for Private and Home Schools  
Recommended Books on Parenting and Education  
Writing an Essay  
A Standard Style for a Book Review

## Statement of Faith

The following statement of faith delineates the beliefs of the academy and of its teachers, who are required to adhere heartily to this statement and to teach in accordance with it without mental reservation. Enrollment does not require that every parent or student adheres to these beliefs, but only that each student exhibits some fear of God and respect for authority. By God's grace, each student will receive a clear presentation of the reality of Jesus Christ, and have ample opportunity to respond to this life-changing, life-giving message.

- Scripture* We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired word of God—inerrant in its original autographs, infallible in its prophecies, and providentially preserved in trustworthy translations (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17; Jn. 10:35; 17:17). Therefore, the Bible is the supreme, final, and sufficient authority in all matters of faith and practice (Isa. 8:20; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:17), as well as a reliable witness in matters of history and science (e.g. 1 Chr. 1-9; Job 38-41).
- God* We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Dt. 6:4; Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
- Creation* We believe that God created everything from nothing in six days (Heb. 11:3; Ex. 20:11), and that He made man in His own image, giving him upright character and worth (Gen. 1:26-28; Eccl. 7:29).
- Sin* We believe in the fall of man—that through Adam's sinful choice, man forfeited his upright character and became a slave to sin, thus deserving God's wrath and eternal punishment (Rom. 5:12-19; Jn. 8:34; Rom. 3:9-12; Eph. 2:3; Mt. 25:46). Nevertheless, in light of his original creation, man on earth retains worth and should be treated accordingly (Gen. 9:6; Jas. 3:9-10).
- Jesus Christ* We believe that God loved the world and sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (Jn. 3:16-17; 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10). This Son, JESUS CHRIST, was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, worked true miracles, was crucified and died for our sins, was buried but then raised bodily from the dead on the third day, after which He ascended into heaven, where He is now seated at the Father's right hand until the day He returns bodily to judge the world (Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:35; Isa. 53:9; Mt. 11:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; Eph. 1:20; Acts 17:31). Jesus Christ is Lord, fully God and fully human, the only mediator between God and men, and the only way to heaven (Rom. 10:9; Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 2:5; Jn. 14:6).
- Salvation* We believe in salvation by grace alone—that through faith alone, a repentant sinner is securely united to Jesus, whose blood justifies him from sin and whose life guarantees to him eternal life (Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:30; Acts 20:21; Rom. 5:1, 9-10; 6:1-14; 8:1; Heb. 7:23-25). Unless a sinner is justified and made alive by the Holy Spirit while yet on earth, he cannot enter heaven (Rom. 3:19-20; Jn. 3:3, 5).
- Holiness* We believe that every believer should unite with other believers in a local church (Heb. 10:25), and should strive by God's power to live a holy and exemplary life in preparation for the Lord's imminent return (Heb. 12:14; 2 Pt. 1:3-11; 3:8-14). Through a life of faith, love, and obedience a believer shows that he is truly born of God (1 Jn. 2:29; 4:7; 5:1).

## Secondary Doctrines

Secondary doctrines are those teachings that are necessary for salvation and that form differences between evangelical denominations—those that believe in the Gospel. Examples include differences over baptism, miraculous gifts, and church government.

Since secondary doctrines by and large created the denominations, they then pose a peculiar problem to a community Christian school, which is not governed by one church or denomination, but serves many. To maintain unity and to be of service to all, it is tempting to prescribe silence, saying, “We teach the Bible, not doctrine.” While understandable, such a policy is not desirable for three reasons. First, silence is often impossible in practice, for some secondary doctrines are inseparable from certain secular issues (e.g. church/state relations), while others are unavoidable because they pertain to children themselves (e.g. covenant theology and infant baptism). Second, silence is risky, for heresies that deny the Gospel itself often involve the corruption of secondary doctrines (e.g. the Mass and baptismal regeneration). Third, silence is contrary to discipleship, for ignoring differences between the denominations really means ignoring part of Jesus’ teaching (contrary to Matthew 28:19-20). How can “the truth” or “the faith” be divided, even though some commandments are admittedly “least” and some are “greatest” (Matthew 5:19; 22:36-40; 23:23)?

Instead of silence, the Bible teaches that mature unity is achieved through *speaking*—specifically, through “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). Correctly understanding this approach will help reduce some of the evils associated with “doctrine.” First, let all teachers know and teach *the truth*—not their philosophy, opinions, or hobby-horses, but Jesus Christ from the true intention of each passage of Scripture, for “all Scripture is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16). Second, let all teachers truly *love* their students. Since love is giving, a loving teacher will earnestly desire to give students as much truth about God and His glory as possible, keeping in mind the following two considerations. Since love is both patient and kind, loving instruction will remain sensitive to timing and to the needs of individual students (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 4:29). Moreover, a loving teacher will consciously seek peace along with holiness (Hebrews 12:14), remembering the apostolic injunctions, “Respect what is right in the sight of all men,” and, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:17b-18). By such means, in prayerful reliance on Christ for the Holy Spirit, a community Christian school can grow in both unity and maturity.

## Philosophy of Education

### **Mission: *Instilling Wisdom, Inspiring Worship***

Spring Branch Academy is an educational ministry under God that seeks to use all that He has said and done in Christ—  
His words in Scripture and His works in nature and history—  
to create worshipers for His glory,  
who will be wise in this world  
and who will live for Christ and the next world.

### **Method**

Spring Branch Academy is a pastoral ministry, which seeks to disciple God-fearing high-school students through a Christian classical education in the liberal arts.

### **Educational Philosophy**

Education is more than the transfer of knowledge or training in vocational skills. Similarly, Christian education is more than adding chapel or a Bible class to secular education. True Christian education (*paideia*) involves the formation of the human being by divine grace. Because the human being is primarily spiritual, true education is essentially religious:  
*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* (Proverbs 1:7).  
Consequently, true education is *pastoral* in nature—leading the student to God through worship.

### **Summary and Principles**

Christian education aims not at mere knowledge or vocational skill, but at *wisdom*, which arises from the word of God and leads to salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus (Psalm 19:7 and 2 Timothy 3:15).

1. The Christian education of a child is the responsibility of his parents, especially his father (Ephesians 6:4).
2. Ultimately, Christian education consists of training, which includes both development and correction (Proverbs 3:11-12, Heb. *musar*).
3. Correction is usually reproof; the rod is reserved for rebellion (Proverbs 29:15).
4. Parents should seek to work together in the education of their children, for God delights in love more than isolation (cf. Psalm 133; Hosea 6:6).
5. Teachers can assist parents by offering both knowledge and a sample life of holiness (2 Timothy 3:14-15); however, teachers cannot replace parents, for education is more than academics (e.g. Deuteronomy 8:3-5).
6. The church and her pastors should provide teachers to come alongside and to assist parents, for the ministry exists to equip the saints for service (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12 and 6:4).
7. A child's submissive attitude to authority, especially to God's authority, is absolutely necessary for true education, for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).
8. Each day of learning should begin with worship, both in prayer (for wisdom is from God, Proverbs 2:6) and in praise (for sacred music is instruction, training both the spirit and the understanding, Colossians 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 14:15).
9. The child must be motivated to seek wisdom for himself or it will not be acquired (Proverbs 1-9, *passim*).
10. The teacher should make instruction both delightful and true (Ecclesiastes 12:10).
11. The core curriculum of Christian education is the Bible, which is inspired, inerrant, and relevant for all cultures and for all time (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
12. Though the Bible holds ultimate authority as the foundation of all faith, Christian teachers both past and present should also be heard, for teachers are as much Christ's gift to the church as are apostles and prophets (cf. Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11).
13. The liberal arts of history (what has happened) and literature (what typically happens) provide a controlled laboratory of life for young believers to witness wisdom and folly in action.
14. While the goal of education exceeds mere knowledge and skills, certain skills and knowledge are necessary to achieve wisdom (Proverbs 2:1-4).
15. The study of language and communication facilitate the acquisition of wisdom (Proverbs 1:2-6).
16. Commonplace books and memorization accompany wise learning (Proverbs 22:17-21).

## **Academy Policy**

### Spring Branch Academy

Just as we have been constituted by God with soul and body, so the academy is designed for interpersonal education in an organized environment. In Scripture, spirituality and structure are fully compatible: “*All things* should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Even New Testament benevolence had a policy, with specific rules (1 Timothy 5:3ff). This policy covers building usage, finances, student behavior, and academic expectations.

#### **Building Usage**

The academy is a ministry of Countryside Bible Church and has the privilege of meeting in their facilities. In response, the academy desires to honor the church and be a good steward of these facilities before God.

#### *Coats and Boots*

The academy uses the south entrance of the church. Coats should be placed here on the coat rack, with boots either cleaned well or left at the entrance (other shoes then must be worn). All shoes must be clean of mud or snow. Excess baggage is placed on the table nearby. *Please note:* The back door to the playground shall not be used.

#### *Lunchroom Arrangements*

The academy has its own kitchenette, with refrigerator, microwave, plastic utensils and a water cooler. Students must use this facility, not the church kitchen. All food and utensils from home must go home at the end of the day. The academy will regard as disposable anything left outside the refrigerator at the end of the school day. The refrigerator itself will be completely cleaned out from time to time. Condiments are compliments of the academy. Also, the lunch area is at the *north* end of the gym. If necessary, students shall set up tables for lunch. Snacks are *not* allowed in class or in study hall, but only in between classes and in the gym. Students are allowed a water bottle in class. The academy provides no cups, so students must bring their own water bottle to school.

#### *Library Usage*

All books in the church library are available to students and families. Simply sign a book out and return it within a month. Due to inappropriate use in the past, the library computer is not available, except under the direct supervision of a teacher. The copier is available for printing, if compatible. The cost is five cents per page. The money is put in a jar on the table. Office computers are for church staff only.

#### *Classrooms and Study Hall*

The academy mainly uses two rooms for class: the new addition (southwest room) and the east room (near the school entrance). Students are either in class or in study hall, which meets in the new addition under teacher supervision. Students in study hall must keep quiet and are encouraged to use this time for schoolwork and grading papers. (Noisy or disruptive students will be given assigned seating.) Only two students are allowed per table, with no male-female pairs (except for siblings). Students may not leave study hall, except with the permission of the supervising teacher.

#### *Gym Usage*

The use of the gym is limited to before school, lunchtime, and breaks, except on days of church events (e.g. Women’s Connection). In consideration of office and pastoral staff, doors must be shut (library, foyer, kitchen) and noise levels should be kept reasonable. Balls must be put away at the end of each afternoon.

#### *Cleanliness*

Students are expected to keep their area clean. If they make a mess, they must clean it up to the satisfaction of the teacher. At the end of the day, students are also expected to help clean up and set up for church.

#### *Snow Policy*

For Tuesday and Thursday, the academy will follow the decision of the Jonesville Public School system for snow days, but not for delays. For Mondays, assume there is class, unless you receive phone notification by 10:00 a.m.

#### *Family Days*

The academy has two school parties—Reformation Celebration in October, and St. Patrick’s Day in March. Please plan to attend these Saturday evening celebrations. Those interested in helping should contact Mrs. Snyder.

## Finances

In all things, the academy desires to avoid not just evil but even “the appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). As the apostle Paul did in handling money, the academy has “regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:21). As a ministry of Countryside Bible Church, the academy must demonstrate to both God and men that its finances are honorable. Therefore, the following rules apply:

All payments must be made by check or money order. No cash payments are allowed. Moreover, beginning with this school year (unless grandfathered in from previous years), payments-in-kind are also not allowed. For all payments, parents will receive a receipt and the academy shall make a photocopy.

Bank transfers are not allowed. All reimbursements shall be done by a check, with a receipt and a photocopy on file.

Employees are paid through a payroll handled by a local CPA firm. This firm may also conduct biennial reviews via “agreed-upon procedures.” Church leadership may examine these reviews or any financial record at any time.

## Student Behavior

Spring Branch Academy is open to any student who fears God and respects human authority. The following guidelines are designed for the good of both the student and the learning community.

### *Electronic Devices*

Laptops, notepads, or other personal electronic devices are not permitted at school, except with special approval. Unapproved devices shall be held in the care of one of the teachers until the end of the day, with notification given to parents. Phones are allowed, but must be turned in to a teacher at the start of the day, and not retrieved until the end of the school day. Again, phones in violations will be held, with notification given to parents. In an emergency, parents may call the church office (517-849-9338) or Mr. Snyder’s cell phone (517-306-3082).

### *Dress and Decorum*

As a Christian school, the academy follows the Bible in expecting *modesty*—not too revealing and not too showy. Any message on attire must be a clean message. Also, in light of the seriousness of learning and in consideration of others, students must come *clean* (at a minimum, a good shower every day of class, with appropriate deodorant) and *fully dressed* (socks and shoes, no pajamas, no athletic outfits or sweats). As for speech, all rude or lewd speech is prohibited, as is fitting for those making a claim to fear God.

### *Discipline*

All matters of discipline are to be handled immediately, with erring parties reproved or rebuked, as the situation requires. Students who rebel against verbal discipline will be promptly handed over to parents, who must pick them up for the day. Parents and administration will work out the details for entering back into school.

### *Attendance*

In accordance with the state of Michigan, which is currently toughening its truancy laws, the academy will count as truant any full-time student who misses *more than ten percent* of class days per year, whether excused or not. In other words, freshman and sophomores are allowed six absences; junior and seniors are allowed nine absences. (Part-time students, classified as home-schooled under parental supervision, fall under different guidelines.) In addition, no student can obtain credit for a course if absences in that course exceed twenty percent. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrange appointments and vacations around class days.

### *Absences*

If possible, please notify the academy of absences ahead of time. Assignments are the responsibility of the students.

### *Work Permits*

The state of Michigan requires teens under eighteen to obtain a work permit before starting employment. This “yellow copy” must be obtained from the local public-school superintendent’s office, even though a white copy (with the legal specifics) is available for review [online](#). If an employed student falls behind in either attendance or academic performance, the work permit may be revoked.

## **Academic Expectations**

In general, teachers set the academic expectations per class, but the following apply to all classes.

### *Communication with Parents*

Day-by-day communication occurs through email; therefore, parents must have an email account, preferably gmail. Parent-teacher conferences occur around midterm each term. Sign-ups are online.

### *Parental Access*

Parents have access both to the classroom and to coursework. Visits to the classroom should be arranged ahead of time with the teacher, as a courtesy. Assignments are posted online and updated daily. Requests for grades should be made directly to the teacher via email. Parents are strongly encouraged to share their concerns with the teacher and the school director. The academy exists as a service to the home. Parents are the authority under God.

### *Tutoring*

Tutoring is available, upon request, and by agreement with the teacher. Tutoring may reveal a learning difficulty. For extended amounts of tutoring, parents are requested to reimburse teachers for time and mileage, if applicable.

### *Testing*

For any textbook, all answer keys and quizzes/tests must be turned in to the teacher at the beginning of the year. Failure to pass a final exam in a Greek, a science or a math class means that the student fails the entire course.

### *Reading and Writing Assignments*

All written work must be typed and turned in by hand. Emailing homework is not allowed, due to its prior abuse. No credit is given to a reading assignment that lacks its corresponding writing assignment, which is the academy's main way of assessing that the assignment was read and comprehended.

### *Slower Readers*

Students who are slow readers may still receive full credit for reading assignments, if they log in a minimum number of hours reading per week (four hours for theology and eight hours for humanities). They will need to create a log book with days and hours recorded for reading sessions. Teachers will grant credit based on this log book.

### *Cheating and Plagiarism*

Students suspected of cheating or plagiarizing will be questioned and perhaps tested. (Plagiarism consists of incorporating another person's words without giving credit, in particular off the Internet.) In all confirmed cases, the assignment involved will be an automatic zero. Repeated offences will be grounds for possible expulsion. If cheating is suspected, the teacher may ask for all answer keys to be turned in and then return them later in the year.

### *Late Assignments*

Unless otherwise specified, all homework is due the next class period. Assignments turned in late are penalized twenty percent the first week, forty percent the second week, and thereafter become a permanent zero. These sharp penalties are due in part to the nature of the school as a homeschool academy: Students with unfinished assignments failed to "show up" to class at home and should have difficulty passing the course and earning its credit(s).

### *Academic Probation*

Students who fail a class for one term are placed on academic probation. Parents are responsible to keep current on their student's progress. Students who fail a class two terms in a row will not be allowed to continue that class.

### *Honors*

The academy honors students who consistently do their work well and on time, with no unexcused absences.

## State Regulations for Private and Home Schools

The following section has been extracted from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), and *in no way* constitutes legal advice. It is strictly meant to help parents to decide their status before the state and to explain the policy of Spring Branch Academy with respect to graduation.

The most thorough document from the MDE is [Nonpublic and Home School Information](#) (NHSI). Parents are encouraged to scan this document for more detailed information. More information can also be found from the MDE's [Nonpublic and Home School](#) webpage. For legal information, see the website for HSLDA ([hsllda.org](http://hsllda.org)). This site should be checked periodically, because the laws of our state are subject to change.

### Overview of Options

Michigan has compulsory school attendance from the age of six to the child's eighteenth birthday (380.1561(1)). Sixteen and seventeen-year-olds are exempt if written permission is given by the parent to the school district (380.1561(5)). Graduates are also exempt.

No specific number of days is mandated by the state (see *Houghton Lake v. Board of Education*, 1988 and *Clonlara v. State Board of Education*, 1993).

Michigan affirms the right of parents to choose and direct the education of their children. The law states, "It is the natural, fundamental right of parents and legal guardians to determine and direct the care, teaching, and education of their children" (see section 380.10 of [Act 451 of 1976, The Revised School Code](#)). This includes homeschooling.

Home schools have three possible exemptions from compulsory public-school attendance, according to [Michigan Compiled Law 380.1561](#):

Home School Statute Option – Section (3)(f)

Nonpublic School Option – Section (3)(a)

Both Options – Section (4)

### Home School Statute Option

The statute is brief: "The child is being educated at the child's home by his or her parent or legal guardian in an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar" (380.1561(3)(f)).

The only requirements are location, teacher, and curriculum. The law does not require parents to notify the state, to test or file anything, or to have any teacher qualifications—especially in cases of religious convictions. The burden is on the state to prove delinquency.

According to HSLDA, the phrase "by his or her parent or legal guardian" amply specifies that the majority of the instruction in the core classes should be "provided" by the parent or guardian, without prohibiting some instruction from another person.

### Nonpublic School Option

Essentially this is a private school option. Under this option, parents either register their home school with the state as a nonpublic school or they enroll their child in a nonpublic school. The subjects taught must be "comparable" to those in the local public school. At the start of the school year, enrollment statistics must be furnished to the local or intermediate school superintendent.

The statute here is also succinct: "The child is attending regularly and is being taught in a state approved nonpublic school, which teaches subjects comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade, as determined by the course of study for the public schools of the district within which the nonpublic school is located" (380.1561(3)(a)).



According to MDE, the subjects of a nonpublic school include “mathematics, reading, English, science, and social studies in all grades; and the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of Michigan, and the history and present form of civil government of the United States, the State of Michigan, and the political subdivisions and municipalities of the State of Michigan in grades 10, 11, and 12” (NHSI). Very importantly, the MDE adds, “The state does not require specific content in the basic courses” (*ibid.*). (For the civics requirement, see section 380.1166 in [Act 451 of 1976, The Revised School Code.](#))

A home school operating as a nonpublic school does not need to be approved or licensed by the state (*DeJonge v. Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1986). By default, a home school is considered a nonpublic school, unless a state administrative hearing determines noncompliance (*People v. Bennett*, 1993). Regarding compliance, the MDE can only offer interpretative rules that have no force of law (*ibid.*). If requested by the MDE, home schools operating as nonpublic schools are required to submit records of enrollment, courses of study, and qualifications of teachers (see [Nonpublic School Membership Report](#)). Until requested, no information needs to be provided to the state. In contrast to the MDE procedure, each nonpublic school must send the following information to the local superintendent (in compliance with section 380.1578):

The name and age of each enrolled student.

The name (or number) of the school district, city or township, and county in which the parent or guardian resides.

The name and address of the parent or guardian.

The name and age of each enrolled student who is not in regular attendance.

Since 1921, all teachers in a nonpublic school must be state-certified (see 388.553 of [Act 302 of 1921, “Private Denominational, and Parochial Schools”](#)). However, for families where “religious convictions” prohibit the use of certified teachers, the Michigan Supreme Court deemed the requirement unconstitutional, according to first amendment rights (*People v. DeJonge*, 1993). If there is no religious objection, all instruction in the home must be done by a certified teacher (*Clonlara v. State Board of Education*, 1993). Even so, according to HSLDA, the MDE now considers persons with a bachelor’s degree as qualified to teach in a nonpublic school. Moreover, in its reporting form, the MDE seems to extend the religious exemption possibility to nonpublic schools, even citing *People v. DeJonge* (see [Nonpublic School Membership Report](#)).

### **Combination of Home School and Nonpublic School**

Michigan allows exemption from attending a public school for home-schooled children who are receiving education through a combination of “both” nonpublic schooling and home education. This option fits the academy well, where many families make use of the academy a la carte, taking only the courses needed to help with their home education.

The statute reads: “For a child being educated at the child’s home by his or her parent or legal guardian, exemption from the requirement to attend public school may exist under either subsection (3)(a) or (3)(f), or both” (380.1561(4)).

### **Participation in Public School**

According to the MDE, “Home-schooled students may enroll in nonessential elective classes at the resident public school subject to the district’s enrollment policy.” Electives include music, band, and physical education. Home-schooled students may also “participate in state testing at their local public school.” (For these options, see [Home Schooling in Michigan](#) and [Exemption \(f\) Home School](#)). The Michigan Supreme Court also ruled that students in a nonpublic school may take noncore elective courses in the local public school (*Snyder v. Charlotte Public School District*, 1984). HSLDA added, “No interscholastic activities are permitted unless permission is provided by the local public school district.”

Athletics are another story. First, participation in any extracurricular activity is based on at least part-time enrollment in the public school. Second, the Michigan High School Athletic Association regards a player ineligible who does not take at least two-thirds of a full load of credits from the local public school. A school district does not have to comply, but it may not be allowed to compete in the state association.

Auxiliary services must be available to all nonpublic schools (not home schools). According to HSLDA, these services include speech therapy, language therapy, remedial reading, and other services for students with disabilities.

## **Released Time Option**

The state of Michigan solved the pluralism problem by letting religious instruction occur offsite for not more than two class hours per week. Therefore, any public schooled high school student may enroll in a Spring Branch Academy theology class, which often occurs during school hours, but lasts only an hour and a half, thereby allowing for the necessary travel time. Any inconveniences in class work and scheduling will have to be worked out with the school by the student and parents.

The statute reads: "The child is regularly enrolled in a public school while in attendance at religious instruction classes for not more than 2 class hours per week, off public school property during public school hours, upon written request of the parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis under rules promulgated by the state board" (380.1561(3)(d)).

## Recommended Books on Parenting and Education

Spring Branch Academy

The preacher of Ecclesiastes once warned, “The writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body” (12:12). Therefore, we should never neglect the holy writings of the Bible for the merely human writings of men. Not only would it be wrong, it is not even wise. With that said, we encourage every Christian parent to become an expert in **the Proverbs**, which is God’s example of parental counsel. He is actually speaking to us as sons (Hebrews 12:5). Beyond the Scriptures, other books should be valued either for their biblical insights or for their accurate assessment of current culture—thankfully, some books do both.

For easier identification, hyperlinks are included (if possible) to the original publisher’s site; however, for purchasing, most of these items can be obtained *used* for a reasonable price through a distributor like Amazon.com.

### Proverbs Studies

[Principles on Parenting](#)

[The Tongue – Counsel on Our Words](#)

[Laziness – A Common Cause of Poverty](#)

[The Causes and Cure of Poverty](#)

### Parenting

Lessin, Roy. [Spanking: Why? When? How?](#) Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1979, 1982.

Obviously this is a book for parents of younger children than high school, but it is so helpful—on a topic sorely needed—that it demands wider circulation. The book is currently out of print, but used copies are available.

Ray, Bruce A. [Withhold Not Correction](#). Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1978.

Very biblical, this book applies the principles of the Proverbs to parental correction, with explicit examples of how to converse with a disobedient child. Very helpful for younger parents.

Tripp, Tedd. [Shepherding a Child’s Heart](#). Rev. ed. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995, 2005.

This book has become a standard for biblical parenting, with biblical principles about the nature of human behavior and stages of childhood development. In a sense, the book teaches parents the art of pastoral care in the home.

### Education

Callihan, Wes, Douglas Jones, and Douglas Wilson. [Classical Education and the Homeschool](#). Rev. ed. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001.

Written specifically for homeschooling, this book offers not only a good overview of classical education, but also a strong exhortation for *parents* to engage in the difficult task of educating their children. Out of all the books listed here, **this is the book most recommended for beginners**. God used it twenty years ago as the initial seed for what is now Spring Branch Academy. *God be praised!*

Dabney, R. L. [On Secular Education](#). Ed. Douglas Wilson. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996.

The author was a Southern Presbyterian theologian in the 1800s, who accurately saw that the transfer of education from the Church to the State could only mean one thing in a land like America—a purely secular education. The logic of American politics demanded such an outcome. Living today with the fruit of such seed, why should any Christian remain optimistic about the ability of a public school to educate children? Please note: This book has been updated into modern English and is available in eBook form or in audio.

Gaebelein, Frank E. [The Pattern of God's Truth: Problems of Integration in Christian Education](#). Chicago: Moody, 1968 [1954].

In the early 1950s, Gaebelein chaired the National Association of Evangelical's research into Christian education. This book presents the insights he gained into the problem of integrating secular topics with biblical understanding. After half a century, it still remains an important book on all truth being God's truth.

Gregory, John Milton. [The Seven Laws of Teaching](#). Reprint, [Lancaster, PA]: Veritas Press, 2004 [1886].

This book is a must-read for educators. In straight-forward wisdom, so in line with the educational philosophy of the book of Proverbs, Gregory discusses laws on teaching, the teacher, the learner, the language, the lesson, and both the teaching and learning processes. Every teacher at the academy reads this book before teaching.

Harris, Gregg. [The Christian Home School](#). Rev. ed. Gresham, OR: Noble Publishing Associates, 1988, 1995.

This book is the equivalent of Wilson's book on the classical school, in that it first discusses the problems of modern education before presenting an alternative. In contrast to Wilson, Harris presents a model for a Christian home school through high school. Due to its philosophical approach and popular presentation, especially in the idea of delight-directed study, it is a great introduction to the potential of homeschooling. (Please be aware that this book is out of print, so used copies of the revised edition may be expensive.)

Lewis, C. S. [The Abolition of Man, or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools](#). Reprint, New York: HarperCollins, HarperOne, n.d. [1944, 1947].

In this short but critical book, Lewis discusses the fundamental problem with modern education—the denial of objective glory in the created things of God. Instead of training children to see value statements as mere expressions of personal perspective, educators should recognize the objective value of certain things and train children to appreciate those things and to assess the statements of others as true or false on that objective basis. It is a weighty book, well worth the effort to read.

Machen, J. Gresham. [Education, Christianity, and the State](#). Ed. John W. Robbins. Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1987, 1995, 2004.

In the 1920s, American government asserted stronger pressure to control education, both on the federal level, in proposing a department of education, and on the state level, in compulsory public education. In the midst of these debates, the author, a renowned Presbyterian scholar of the New Testament, aptly defended the need for liberty in education, in order for the individual to develop *as an individual* before God. Interesting and insightful.

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. and Andrew Kern. [Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America](#). Ed. Brian Phillips. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Washington, D.C.: Capital Research Center, 2015.

This small book provides a survey of the historical resurgence of classical development and of its main proponents. Not every classical educator agrees on what counts for classical education, so a guide like this helps a parent to place a school on the map of ideas.

Wilson, Douglas. [Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education](#). Turning Point Christian Worldview Series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991.

The author was instrumental in classical education making inroads into the Christian community. Controversial and not always logical, Wilson is nonetheless quite provocative and entertaining. The book starts with a critique of modern education and then argues for a particular kind of classical education, based upon the essay by Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," which is reprinted in the back of the book. (For more information, see this [book review](#).)

Wilson, Douglas, ed. [Repairing the Ruins: The Classical and Christian Challenge to Modern Education](#). Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996.

This collection of articles comes from many of the staff at Logos School, the pilot school of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools. Each article covers a particular aspect of classical education from a distinctively Christian perspective.

## ***Writing an Essay***

Spring Branch Academy

We read not only to know, but also to *think*. Therefore, reading should often lead to writing.

To encourage this habit, you will write some essays upon topics generated from your reading in this course. An essay is literally a mental test of the strength of your own mind, expressed in an exploratory style:

“In the essay style, successive clauses and sentences are not produced by an overarching logic, but by association; the impression the prose gives is that it can go anywhere in a manner wholly unpredictable.”

—Stanley Fish, *How to Write a Sentence*, p. 62

The topics for your essay must be generated by something in the assigned reading. The best essays come from a trail of thought that was triggered by some detail or insight gained through reading. To develop this trail, you are encouraged to “pick your posies” from the text (quotations or insights that you want to pocket) and “press them” in your notes, citing the page number and persons involved. This practice will help both your recall and citation.

The essay is composed of **two paragraphs**:

The ***first paragraph*** introduces your topic in a way that will entice your reader to read more. In this paragraph, you must include the specific quotation or information in the reading that piqued your interest and generated your own thoughts. Often implied is a problem generated by the topic—that is, your topic has human interest because it will help solve problems or answer questions that others often face.

The ***second paragraph*** gives your own views on the topic. You must offer at least three points that support your perspective. These points can (and probably will) include other details from the reading or from other books, such as the Bible. At the end of the essay, conclude by stating your main point again, and by showing why it is important for the reader to know your main point.

The **format** of the essay is:

Layout: typed, 10-point font, one-inch margins, double-spaced

Length: 400-word minimum, one-page maximum length (including the bibliography)

Title: centered and bold, with your name on the next line (not in bold) and with no line spacing in between

Bible Quotations: cite the biblical book, chapter, and verse in parentheses

“Wisdom is better than strength” (Ecclesiastes 9:16).

Other quotations: cite the author, a short form of the title, and the page number in parentheses

“The lives of men are transformed by a piece of news” (Machen, *Christianity & Liberalism*, 48).

For repeated quotations from the same book, use the Bible reference or the page numbers in parentheses.

At the bottom of the page, include a bibliography of any non-biblical sources cited in the essay:

**Source:** Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 [1923].

Grading will be based on both the content and the form of the essay. In content, you should demonstrate the three levels of intelligence—*knowledge* (facts with interesting and salient details), *understanding* (discerning the difference between two similar items of the same class), and *wisdom* (the ability to apply creatively what you have learned to real-life situations). In form, you should demonstrate both *eloquence* (the force of argument, based a lot upon the arrangement of ideas) and *elegance* (the beauty of your prose).

***Please note:*** *Your essay will not be graded on whether I agree with your position or not, but on how well you interact with an idea from the reading material. This is a conversation, in which I will grade you based on performance, and then answer you personally based on my own thoughts and beliefs.*

If you have any questions, please let me know. In the end, you should appreciate having a written record of your journey through the material of this course.

## ***Writing a Book Review***

Spring Branch Academy

Much of education consists of reading books. Even God communicated His mind through a book, the *Bible*, which literally means “book.” The mere reading of books, however, is not sufficient in itself for knowledge. Many people read books and then forget what they read. Others retain what they read, but then fail to talk about it, either with God in prayer or with fellow human beings. Either way, much of the benefit from reading is lost.

Writing a good book review provides a way for you to remember more and to interact more with others. The following guide offers a simple outline for writing such a review. The book review consists of four paragraphs, which are described under the four underlined headings. When finished, the review and its bibliography should be more than 800 words in length, but less than two typed pages (10-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins). It should also have several appropriate quotes from the book (with the page number of the quote in parentheses).

### The Author’s Story

- The first sentence gives both the *genre* of the book and its *subject*:  
“*Big Book* by Joe Author is a *military history* about *life during the Civil War*.”
- The next sentence gives the main character or subject of the book:  
“The story focuses on the experiences of Billy Smith, a boy living on a southern plantation.”
- The rest of the paragraph provides a general outline of the book or plot without spoiling the end.

### The Author’s Point

- The first sentence gives the *thesis* of the book:  
“In *Big Book*, Joe Author argues that *adversity brings real prosperity*.”
- The rest of the paragraph gives the author’s argument for his thesis.  
“The author attempts to prove his point in three ways. First,…”
- Be sure to differentiate between what the author *assumes* and what he *asserts*.

### Your Analysis

- The first sentence tells your overall opinion of the book’s argument:  
“Joe Author makes a good apology for adversity, but misses out on two details.”
- The rest of the paragraph offers your detailed analysis of the book’s argument:  
Begin with the author’s point of view and draw out its logical implications.  
Then make your own assertions and back them up with reasons.
- Your analysis must include details of where you agree and where you disagree:  
You may both agree and disagree—or even agree but not appreciate how the thesis is proven.  
Even if you generally agree with the book, you must give your reasons why you agree.
- As the recipient of another’s work, it is honorable to begin with the merits of a book, not its faults.

### Your Suggestions

- The first sentence offers your overall assessment of the book:  
“*Big Book* is a challenging book to read, but well worth the effort.”  
“Although controversial, *Big Book* makes points that need to be considered today.”  
**Note:** Here you may include your personal reactions to the book (e.g. distasteful, delightful, etc.).
- The paragraph may offer suggestions on how the book could be useful to others (“So what?”):  
“*Big Book* will really help those in a personal crisis.”
- The paragraph may offer suggestions for further research, even your own research (“What next?”):  
“*Big Book* opens up two areas for further exploration. First,…”

At the end of your review, include a bibliography of the book reviewed and of any other non-biblical sources cited:

**Source:** Author, Joe. *Big Book: Living and Dying in the Civil War*. New York: Scribbles, 2019.

**Please note:** Your book review will not be graded on whether I agree with your position or not, but on how well you understand and interact with the argument of the book, both in assessing its truth and in making notes for further scholarship. This is a conversation, in which I will grade you based on performance, and then answer you personally based on my own thoughts and beliefs.