

WHAT NORTHSIDE TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT THE LANGUAGE ARTS: VOCABULARY, SPELLING, GRAMMAR, SPEECH, WRITING

Vocabulary

We teach students that words are profoundly important because they are the foundation blocks of communication. In John 1.1 Jesus defined Himself as the “Word,” which means He is the vehicle of communication between God and men. The Bible doctrine of Inspiration includes the concepts both of “verbal” (the words), and “plenary” (every single word). Therefore, every change in words represents a consequent change in meaning. Good communication is sensitive to connotations words and phrases have acquired and convey. Choosing precisely the right word is a difficult exercise, approaching an art, and is the duty of every speaker and writer.

Spelling

We are traditionalists in that we accept only the dictionary spelling of words as correct. We teach students that creative attempts and personal variations are wrong. We reject the contemporary notion that children should express themselves without regard for correct spelling, depending on the computer spell-check to edit their writing. Often we must write longhand, without the benefit of a computer, and no computer catches unintended words which are properly spelled. Spelling errors result in lowered grades.

Grammar

The way words are structured so as to communicate complete thoughts is as important as the words themselves. Virtually all acceptable variations in word order produce associated variations in meaning, or at least in emphasis. For example, we teach students that faulty subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement are errors and therefore wrong. Grammatical errors result in substantially lowered grades.

Speech

The oral expression of thoughts is speech, of which the Bible speaks abundantly. The Bible condemns many varieties of unacceptable speech: lies, deceit, slander, gossip, profanity, false witness, and many others. On the other hand, the Bible praises God-honoring speech, pointing out “that a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Graduation from Northside requires a credit in speech, and many of our students pursue excellence in this area by means of a full-scale annual dramatic production and by forensics competition. Northsiders regularly win state and national honors in these tournaments. Speaking well is part of being a well-rounded person, and it is essential to being an effective witness for Christ.

Writing

The written expression of thoughts may be accomplished in several genres, such as drama, biography, fiction, and poetry. Writing, though generally less immediately persuasive than speech, has the advantage of permanence and immutability, which is exactly why God committed the revelation of Himself and His will to us in written form: the Holy Scriptures. Northside puts great emphasis on writing correctly, accurately, and persuasively. Writing well is another aspect of being a well-rounded person, and it can provide a permanent witness for Christ.

Literature

We have prepared a separate paper dealing with the distinctively Christian teaching of literature.

Northside Christian School, with much prayer and deliberate care, employs faculty and selects curricular materials with the specific purpose of teaching language arts from this Biblical perspective.