

The Notebook Method

Reading maketh a man full. Speaking -- a ready man. Writing maketh him exact. (Sir Francis Bacon)

The Notebook Approach is the tool of American Christian Education used at StoneBridge School that embraces the four steps of learning -- research, reason, relate, record --commonly termed "The 4 R's." Centuries old, it is the excellent method found in the educational background of the greatest thinkers and leaders in history. The Notebook Approach is more than an efficient way of filing the student's work in a three-ring binder, which is how it appears to the new parent and student at StoneBridge School. If that were all it embraced, teachers would not spend the immense labor and time that the Notebook Approach requires in teaching and learning, particularly at the primary level of learning. However, the Notebook Approach is a valuable tool of reasoning and academic discipline that produces Christian scholarship and a Biblical worldview in both the teacher and student.

As each teacher applies the Notebook Approach to his personal research and study, the real value of the notebook becomes apparent. The teacher is the "living textbook" in the classroom. As a "master" of his subject, he is able to be more flexible, spontaneous, and inspirational in the classroom. Not tied to a "dead" textbook or teacher's manual, his lessons and instructions touch the heart of every child in the classroom. Combined with the structure of discipline and habits of work skills that the Notebook Approach requires, the student becomes involved with the subject as he "4 R's," thinking and reasoning, writing his thoughts, making a record of his study. He grows in his responsibility for his own learning, building strong qualities of character. Therefore, the grade that he receives for his notebook work reflects his character as well as his mastery of the subject.

The Value of the Notebook Approach

1. It aids in the Biblical purposes of education by "enlightening the understanding, correcting the temper, and forming the habits of youth that fit him for usefulness in his future station." [Webster's 1828 Dictionary]
2. It is the product of the student's own hand. It reveals his penmanship, his reasoning and thinking, and his creativity and illustrations.
3. It is a permanent record of his productivity.
4. It aids his parents and teacher in his progress, showing exactly what is being taught. It shows graphically his character development -- his industry, diligence, and responsibility.
5. By the time students are in high school, they have mastered the Notebook Approach and developed the habits of discipline and research that produce Christian scholarship and Biblical reasoning, those qualities needed for effectual communication of the Gospel and Christian leadership.

Three-Ring Binders

We recommend that parents invest in quality notebooks, as they take brutal punishment throughout the course of nine months' usage.

For parents the Notebook Approach means that three-ring binders abound for which large, durable book bags are needed. (And yes, we do use textbooks!) We highly encourage parents to routinely read their child's notebooks when he brings them home to complete homework assignments and to praise him for the labor involved in maintaining them. Your child's notebooks are very special to him and reflect his individuality, his character, and his labor in learning.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary

Every family should purchase an 1828 Dictionary for home assignments, particularly by the time your child is in the third grade. Please see the Upper School receptionist for ordering information.

"The 1828" is the term we fondly use for Noah Webster's original American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828. Noah Webster, master of twenty-eight languages and the "father of American Christian education and scholarship," spent twenty years compiling and writing this dictionary by researching word meanings from their original languages and the Bible. Definitions reveal Biblical meanings and usage of words, which are invaluable toward developing the preciseness needed by teachers and students for Biblical reasoning and articulating ideas in effective communication. We use the 1828 Dictionary in "4 R'ing" word studies, which lays the foundation for every lesson taught throughout the curriculum.