

FROM THE HEADMASTER

AP Exams

In addition to all of the other year-end activities, we are administering Advanced Placement exams in the High School this week. This is our fourth year giving AP exams, and we have eight students taking ten AP exams in four subjects: English Literature, Biology, World History, and US History.

The AP program consists of taking standardized tests recognizing excellent classwork in any number of areas, for which colleges then may award course credit. We have not adopted the AP curriculum for our classes—we truly prefer our curriculum, carefully thought out to maximize a classical and Biblical perspective. However, our upper grade courses are generally taught on an AP level, and the students that have taken the exams have done quite well. One year, out of five students in our Calculus class, all five scored a 4 or a 5 on the AP (5 being the highest score, with 3 considered a good, or "passing" score to receive college credit).

We are following a trend of many prestigious schools that have chosen not to adopt the AP curriculum, but to facilitate students who chose to take the exams on an individual basis. Generally, there needs to be a review period to make sure the students are comfortable with the AP program's approach to the material and the testing format itself. The AP is, after all, administered by a for-profit company, and at a cost of nearly \$90 to the parent, it needs to be the family's decision as to whether that would be money well spent. A number of Trinity students have taken multiple AP exams, and started out in college with quite a number of credit hours under their belts (of course, these tend to be students that do well on other types of standardized tests as well!).

Thesis

When I first visited Trinity, one of the events I was urged to attend was a Senior Thesis presentation. Imagine, a high school student working for some weeks or months on a major paper articulating their perspective on a topic, and then presenting and defending that paper before an outside panel of "experts" in that field. Many of you, our parents, have served on such a panel at one time or another. I immediately wanted my son to have that experience.

The students actually present and defend two such papers—one each during their Junior and Senior years. The Junior Thesis is part of the High School Logic class, and the defense is made before an in-house (though no less demanding!) audience of their peers and teachers. Those presentations have just finished in the last week or so.

The Senior Thesis papers, part of the Rhetoric course, are presented in January, and we invite local professors, physicians, academics, or business or legal professionals to listen to and critique papers within their area of experience or expertise. As Headmaster, I have the privilege of sitting on all Senior thesis panels, and it may be my favorite time of the year. The job the students do in both presenting and defending their topics is outstanding. On a reassuring note, while it is a challenging process, the whole approach is collegial in nature, and is treated as a wonderful learning experience (not some sort of final exam!).

James Armistead
Headmaster,
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