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MAJORIS

# QUID NOVI

Panache performs Peter and The Starcatcher at Friday's opener - a great production!

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

## NEW COVENANT AND THE NATIONAL READING CRISIS *by John Heaton, Headmaster*

I consistently tell prospective parents that there are a hundred ways to teach students how to read. There are also some ways *not* to teach them. Reading is not a natural function of the brain. Humans didn't invent an alphabet until 3200 BC, or thereabouts, and reading by the masses, as opposed to professional scribes, is a relatively recent phenomenon.

We know how to teach children to read. Symbols represent sounds and combinations of symbols represent combinations of sounds. There are rules that govern the order and function of the symbols, and in English, it's quite a complex code. There are seventy two sounds in the English language, all of which are represented by what linguist Romalda Spalding called phonograms. Intensive instruction in

these phonograms will virtually ensure that a young child will learn to read. In addition to the sounds themselves, there are twenty-nine spelling rules in the English language, which, if mastered, will give understanding of how to spell in general, allowing students to avoid having to learn to spell every new word as it comes along. Over the history of New Covenant, it has been our joy to see nearly all our children succeed in this curriculum.

This is not hard. We've known how to teach children to read for centuries. That is why I find the recent article from American Public Radio, *Why Millions of Kids Can't Read, And What Better Teaching Can Do About It* (available at the link below) so infuriating. Yes. That's not too strong of a word; the situation is inexcusable.

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New Covenant Schools will host two Open Houses in February. Both events will feature tours of our classrooms and facilities as well as light refreshments and discussion with administrators. Word-of-mouth is our best advertisement, so if you have friends who might consider a classical, Christian education encourage them to visit us. We will continue to offer our regular weekly tours. Prospective parents may contact Linda Simon for more information. [lsimon@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:lsimon@newcovenantschools.org)

## OPEN HOUSE

**Tuesday, February 12 from 9 – 11 am**  
**Thursday, February 21 from 9 – 11 am**

Think.

Learn.

Love.

Live.

# E T C E T E R A

Our priority is to keep all of our students healthy and in school. One way that we can all work together to accomplish this is to prevent the spread of illness. If your child is not feeling his/her best, please use the following guidelines to determine whether or not he/she should be in school. Please encourage your child to wash his/her hands often, and not share items, as this is the best way to avoid catching illness. Getting adequate amounts of sleep is also vital in preventing/recovering from illness.

	<b>CHILD SHOULD <u>NOT</u> BE AT SCHOOL OR IN CONTACT WITH OTHER CHILDREN</b>	<b>IF CHILD FEELS WELL ENOUGH, HE/SHE MAY ATTEND SCHOOL</b>
<b>RUNNY NOSE</b>	Cloudy or yellow/green discharge with congestion, fever.	Clear drainage as with allergies
<b>COUGH</b>	Frequent or uncontrollable cough (disruptive to class). Cough producing mucous of any color, or accompanied by fever	Infrequent, no mucous being coughed up and/or child has been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school, NO fever
<b>FEVER</b>	If temperature is above 100.0 or if symptoms of headache or cough accompany any elevated temperature	If temperature is below 100.0 for 24 hours without taking a fever-reducing medication and there are no other symptoms
<b>DIARRHEA OR VOMITING</b>	Any episode of vomiting or more than one episode of diarrhea.	Must be 24 hours with no vomiting or diarrhea episodes and no other symptoms (fever)
<b>STREP THROAT</b>	Sore throat (usually red, tonsils swollen, sometimes with puss pockets), headache, nausea, fever. The only way to rule out strep is a throat culture.	After 24 hours on antibiotics and fever free for 24 hours.
<b>“PINK EYE” CONJUNCTIVITIS</b>	Eyeball is red (bloodshot), with a crusty, white or yellow drainage or matting. Eye sometimes is itchy or burning	Bacterial conjunctivitis: after being on antibiotic eye drops for 24 hours. Viral conjunctivitis: Need a note from doctor stating child is no longer contagious.
<b>RASH/SKIN INFECTION</b>	Any rash or signs of skin infection need to be evaluated by a doctor.	Rash free, written release from doctor, Or after 24 hours of antibiotics for skin infection.
<b>CHICKEN POX</b>	Itching with pink/red spots with blister-type center, fever	All lesions must be crusted over and dry, no fever

# E T C E T E R A

## EVERYONE

**PROGRESS REPORTS** for this quarter go out **Wednesday, February 6.**

Progress reports will be e-mailed to all students, K-12.

**PANACHE** will be performing Peter and the Starcatcher this **Saturday, February 9 at 8:00 pm** and on **Sunday, February 10 at 2:30 pm.** This “play with music” is a prequel to the Peter Pan stories we all know and love, telling how Peter and the lost boys, along with Captain Hook, Tinkerbell, and the rest, got to Neverland and how the magic came to be there. While not a children’s show, this play will be fun for all ages, full of pirates and mermaids, treasure and romance—and laughing all the way!

**ALL SEATS ARE RESERVED** and tickets are on sale now (\$10 for adults and \$7.50 for students). Call the office (847-8313) or email [bmayberry@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:bmayberry@newcovenantschools.org) to reserve your seat. If you have a Renweb account, you will be billed thru the school store and tickets will be sent home with your student. Otherwise you

can reserve tickets in advance and then pay at the door. Shows sell out quickly, so call soon.

**ART & SCIENCE FAIR** Plan to join us **Friday, February 22** for the Art & Science Fair. View the artistic abilities of our students and enjoy watching them compete in various science challenges. Art viewing and food service begin at 5:30 pm, and the science challenges will start around 6:00 pm. Deadline to submit art work is **Wednesday, February 13.**

**VALENTINE’S DAY DRESS** **Wednesday, February 13** all students, faculty and staff may wear jeans, and a Valentine-colored top in celebration of St. Valentine’s Day!

**WINTER BREAK** will begin **Thursday, February 14** and continue through Tuesday, February 19. Students return **Wednesday, February 20.**

**NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS NIGHT AT CHIPOTLE** Looking for an easy dinner? Join our community at Chipotle on Old Forest Road for dinner from **4:00 -**

**8:00 pm tonight.** Our school receives a portion of the proceeds from the evening for all customers stating they are with New Covenant. Proceeds will benefit our athletic teams.

### WINTER UNIFORM GUIDELINES

**FOR YOUNG WOMEN:** leggings should meet the socks, match the uniform, and fit like tights (not sweat pants). No wild and crazy colors or leggings that stop just below the knee. Leg warmers are prohibited. On days when the forecast high temperature is 40 degrees or below, girls may wear uniform slacks, even on dress day, with their normal dress day tops (if slacks have belt loops, a belt must be worn).

**FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN:** long-sleeved t-shirts may be worn under long-sleeved shirts for extra warmth. If the t-shirt is white or navy, it may be worn under a short-sleeved shirt as well. Outerwear, other than the New Covenant hoodie or fleece, may not be worn in the building.

**HONORARIA CORRECTION** **Nate Kirshberger** earned Magna Cum Laude.

## GRYPHONS SWIM WELL

What a great meet Friday for our team! Our Boys team placed 3rd out of 6 teams, while our Girls team placed 2nd out of 4 teams. That is very impressive with a team of 6th through 10th grade swimmers!

Congratulations to **Caroline Marotta** who posted another state qualifying time for the 100 yard Butterfly, swimming it at 1:07.59. Much praise to our impressive middle school swimmers (**Jacob Moody, Andrew Rogers, Emily Trautman, and Declund Stevenson**), who contributed 26.7% of our individual points throughout the meet (122 points)! **Will Spruill** is fresh to the swim scene, having never swum in a meet before, but he did excellent in both his 50 yard Freestyle and his 100 yard Freestyle! Great job!



# GRYPHON STRONG

### VARSIY WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

NCS 36 EasternMen 24

### VARSIY MEN’S BASKETBALL

NCS 60 Ro Catholic 67

NCS 65 Covenant 57

NCS 65 Westover 46

### JV MEN’S BASKETBALL

NCS 54 Ro Catholic 46

NCS 38 Covenant 31

NCS 49 Westover 35

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The story profiles Jack Silva, the *chief academic officer* (emphasis mine) for Bethlehem, PA public schools. He noticed that nearly half of his third graders did not have reading proficiency and he wanted to know why. His staff wanted to blame poverty – the usual suspect – for the scores, but that was problematic because his district had swaths of affluence, and the scores were equally bad in rich schools.

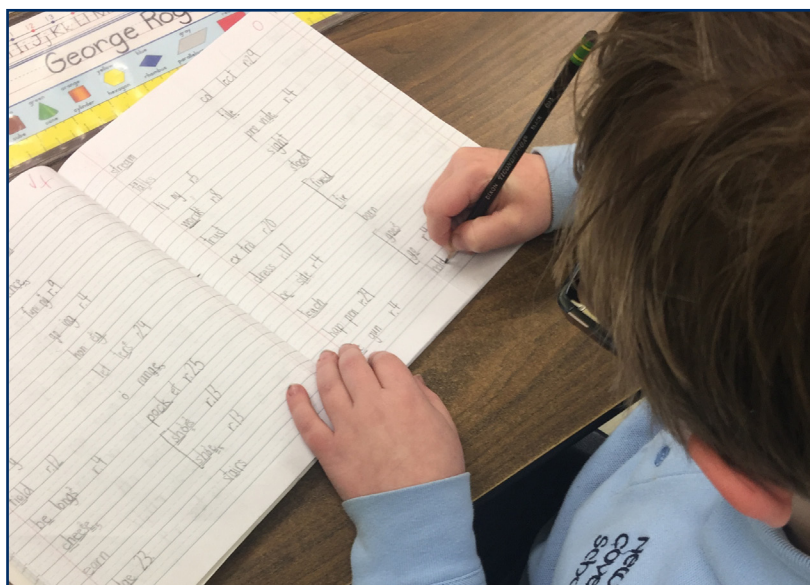
It didn't take long to find the real culprit. Most of the teachers in his district were taught by "reading professionals" to believe that "the most important thing was for the child to understand the meaning of the story, not the exact words on the page. So, if a kid came to the word "horse" and said "house," the teacher would say, that's wrong. But... "if the kid said 'pony,' it'd be right because pony and horse mean the same thing." Jack Silva was shocked.

You should be as shocked as he was. NPR makes this astonishing admission: "This advice to a beginning reader is based on an influential theory about reading that basically says people use things like context and visual clues to read words. The theory assumes learning to read is a natural process and that with enough exposure to text, kids will figure out how words work. Yet scientists from around the world have done thousands of studies on how people learn to read and have concluded that this theory is wrong."

It would be alarming if this was limited to the Bethlehem public school system. Sadly, it is not, as NPR further admits: "Across the country, millions of kids are struggling. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 32% of fourth-graders and

24% of eighth-graders aren't reading at a basic level. Fewer than 40% are proficient or advanced."

So what did Bethlehem school district do? They spent more money, of course - \$3,000,000 to be exact. What for? To teach their teachers how to teach reading phonetically. The program they chose wasn't Spalding's, but at least it was a commitment to reading by phonics, a self-evident solution. One teacher who attended the training, feeling betrayed by her expensive education said, "Why wasn't I taught this?...What about all the kids I've been



With *The Writing Road to Reading*, students learn 29 spelling rules and the 72 phonetic sounds in the English language. Manuscript and cursive handwriting are emphasized.

teaching all these years?"

For years New Covenant has been winked at by professional educators who have held phonics instruction to be quaint, outdated, and unnecessary. Their dismissiveness of centuries of pedagogy is breathtaking. Sure, some children are able to build their own knowledge of the relationship of symbols to sounds by using linguistic cues, context and pictures. Such methods, however, leave nearly half of our children behind. The only foolproof method for learning to read a phonetic language is a phonetic approach.

New Covenant uses Romalda Spalding's Method, also known as *The Writing Road to Reading*. Central to this method is the mastery of phonograms, and it is accomplished by an educationally sound and important sequence of teaching. In a typical session in grades K-4, our students hear the word pronounced, noting the syllables of the word, as the teacher holds up her fingers to indicate each syllable break. She also notes one, two, and multi-letter phonograms. Students repeat the word phonetically and vocalize it again as they write it

into their composition books. They underline the phonograms, and use numbers to signify the first, second, or third sound a letter might by making. Then they write the number of the rule that governs the spelling.

All this looks tedious to an adult who witnesses it for the first time. Young children, however, become engrossed in the challenge – there is a lot going on in their brains and bodies during a typical Spalding lesson! By the end of kindergarten, children are "reading ready," and by about November of the first grade year, they are able to read from real books –

*not strictly controlled readers which only include words they've memorized.* Seeing this miracle happen is amazing. Don't be fooled. A grammar school that does not take words seriously in a phonetic way is putting reading at risk.

Read the full article here:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/01/02/677722959/why-millions-of-kids-cant-read-and-what-better-teaching-can-do-about-it?fbclid=IwAR0UGr4pZ8pux1nnF3n2estO3tRjfr2TZ3EGghaHIXjAlxwcrxWVHweN63Q>