

THE NEW COVENANT EXPERIENCE

by John Heaton

This year marks the the 33rd year since the founding of New Covenant Schools. For many, this is the first year of association with the school. For other parents in our community – xxx parents of seniors to be exact, it marks the thirteenth year! Wherever you fall in the history of our school, our story is now your story. Our highest hope is that you find New Covenant to be a significant and strong partner as your seek to raise and educate your children. Here are a few things you should expect in the coming year.

First, I constantly emphasize to our faculty that the New Covenant experience should be level. Here's what I mean. Regardless of the grade in which your child is enrolled, you should expect that from year to year, he or she will thrive in a classroom where predictability and support are normative. We work hard to create a classroom experience that feels the same over time. Kindergarten, to be sure, has a particular feel as little children adjust to the rhythms of day school. When they move through the grammar school, however, the demands they encounter will change, but the expectations, the routines and habits, will remain the same. In other words, to use a phrase I put to

the faculty, we strive for a “monolithic front.” That’s a clunky way to put it, but what I mean is this: regardless of the particular teacher, the feel of the classroom remains constant from grade to grade. Our faculty members work from a unified curriculum through which a student progresses, and the classroom culture remains steady regardless of who the teacher is.

Sometimes parents come to us, having heard of “Mrs. Smith,” who is well-known to be a great teacher. Naturally, they want all of their children to have her. I understand that, but at New Covenant we disallow “teacher choosing.” The reason is that every one of our faculty members are chosen for their education, their skill, and their knowledge of children. My personal test is that every teacher on our faculty is an individual to whose tutelage I would commit my own children, a practice I followed as long as my sons and daughters were enrolled. My confidence in every one of them is personal, as well as professional.

Second, our teachers come from a variety of backgrounds. While each is credentialed in their fields, nevertheless, it is true that each possesses a variety of gifts which they bring to bear on a daily basis. The difference in the student experience does not lie in a faculty member's autonomy. All of them work within a framework of predictability that has been honed by the schools

leadership for more than three decades. Differences, where they occur, lie in the specific gifts they bring to bear. Thus, it is never the case that a struggling student has a personality conflict with a teacher. Rather, the New Covenant classroom is a place where loving supportiveness is the norm, and where every student can thrive and reach his or her potential.

Finally, New Covenant is blessed with durable leadership in the grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric schools that reaches nearly all the way back to our founding. I and my colleagues bring an unparalleled depth to our efforts. Marion Patterson begins her 27th year as the Grammer School Principal. Kathryn Martin begins her 26th year in the School of Dialectic, and Scott McCurley enters his 20th year in the School of Rhetoric. In a transient world where institutions experience vast turnover, we bring over a century of experience to bear on the daily experience of your child.

Wherever you find yourself in the long process of raising children, you have a deep resource in the community that is New Covenant Schools. We are committed to your child's success and to the health and well-being of your family. Our highest hope is that our school is a blessing to you as we begin the journey of a new together.