



THE NEWSLETTER OF  
NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

# QUID NOVI

MARCH 31, 2025  
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## HOW WE LEARN TO READ

by John Heaton, Headmaster

It was an amazing breakthrough. Sometime around 3200 BC, human beings began converting the sounds of their spoken languages into graphical form. Symbols that represented vocalizations were created, such that something that was “said” could be recorded and read back at a later time. With this invention, the written word was born. It’s a fascinating and complicated history that involves philosophy, theology, and the practical and endless difficulties of converting the nuances of human speech into meaningful and permanent form.

Fast forward to the 20th century. Romalda Bishop Spalding (1899-1994) was a classroom teacher and student of the English language. She studied under Dr. Samuel T. Orton, distinguished neurologist, who specialized in helping dyslexic and other learning-disabled children. She taught older children with Dr. Orton’s guidance and realized that the techniques that worked so well with the child having the most difficulty also prevented problems from developing in other children in her classes. She developed what came to be known as the

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## WHAT’S NEW?

### SCL Accreditation This Week

On Wednesday and Thursday New Covenant will host an accreditation team from the Society for Classical Learning. Throughout the academic year New Covenant has been preparing for this accreditation—a detailed process in which we pored over “playbooks,” circulated surveys to parents, students, and faculty members; and formed focus groups, which

will be meeting this week with members of the team. To all of you who participated in a survey or responded to an invitation to be in a focus group, we thank you. The Society for Classical Learning was founded out of New Covenant Schools in 1997, and **Headmaster Heaton** and our faculty have long been participants in its activities. After more than

twenty years, the Society has recently been recognized as an accrediting agency in all 50 states, and New Covenant is among the first schools to undergo the accrediting process. New Covenant is currently accredited through the Virginia Association of Independent Schools, a status it will continue to maintain.

THINK. LEARN. LOVE. LIVE.

# H O N O R A R I A

## REYNOLDS AND ANDRADE EARN HONORS AT JUNIOR REGIONAL ORCHESTRA CONCERT

On Saturday March 15, **Claire Reynolds** and **Emilia Andrade** represented New Covenant Schools at the South-Central Virginia Junior Regional Orchestra Concert. The concert took place at Patrick Henry High School in Roanoke, and Claire and Emilia performed challenging repertoire in the event's 54-piece B Orchestra. Each year, students from across the region audition for the opportunity to participate in this honors orchestra. Claire was awarded the sixth chair in the first violin section, and Emilia was awarded the principal chair of the cello section. Way to go, Gryphons!



*Claire Reynolds*



*Emilia Andrade*

## 2025 SUMMER CAMPS

### AMERICAN GIRL DOLL CAMP

*Rising 2nd–5th Grade Girls |  
June 9–June 13*

The American Girl Doll Camp will run for one week, Monday, June 9 – Friday, June 13 from 9am–12:30 pm. The cost is \$250 and **the deadline to sign up is May 16**. After completing the registration, you will receive an invoice through your FACTS account by May 30. This camp is limited to 12 girls and you will receive an email confirming a spot after registering.

[bit.ly/AG\\_Camp2025](https://bit.ly/AG_Camp2025)

### DRAMA CAMP 1: SHAKESPEARE'S MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

*Rising 7th–12th Graders |  
June 2–June 6  
(Play performance will be held on  
the afternoon of June 6.)*

This action-filled camp will teach students characterization, understanding of Shakespeare's language, and confidence as they bring classic characters to life. It runs Monday, June 2 – Friday, June 6 from 9am–3pm. The cost is \$275 and **the deadline to sign up is May 16**. After completing the registration, you will receive an invoice through your FACTS account by May 30. The camp is limited to 20 students.

[bit.ly/DramaCamp1\\_2025](https://bit.ly/DramaCamp1_2025)

### DRAMA CAMP 2: TREASURE ISLAND

*Rising 3rd–6th Graders |  
June 23–June 27  
(Play performance will be held  
the afternoon of June 27.)*

Students will join Jim, Long John Silver, and the rest of his scurvy crew for this classic pirate adventure. It runs Monday, June 23 – Friday, June 27 from 9am–1pm. The cost is \$250 and **the deadline to sign up is May 16**. After completing the registration, you will receive an invoice through your FACTS account by May 30. The camp is limited to 20 students.

[bit.ly/DramaCamp2\\_2025](https://bit.ly/DramaCamp2_2025)

### STAYFIT CAMP

*Rising 1st–7th Graders |  
Two Sessions*

Our annual StayFit Camp will be offered in two sessions this year. The first session will be held June 16 –26, Monday through Thursday each week with no camp on Fridays. The second session will be held July 7–17, Monday through Thursday each week with no camp on Fridays. The cost is \$175 for a two-week session for the first child in a family and \$50 for each additional sibling. The cost is \$300 for a four-week session for the first child in a family and \$75 for each additional sibling. **The deadline to sign up is May 16**. After completing the registration, you will receive an invoice through your FACTS account by May 30.

[bit.ly/Stayfit\\_2025](https://bit.ly/Stayfit_2025)

# E T C E T E R A

## EVERYONE

### LUNCH ORDERING

May lunch ordering opens this **Friday, April 4**. It's the last time this school year, so don't delay! The deadline to order lunch is **Tuesday, April 22**. Featured items include pork BBQ sandwiches, hard shell beef tacos, hot dogs, meatball subs, corn dog nuggets, and pancakes. Please note that May includes several field trips, so be sure not to order lunch on those days. Additionally, Kindergarteners and Seniors finish the year earlier than other students, so you may need to adjust your orders accordingly.

### HANDS & HEARTS

Thank you to those who have returned sponsorship packets to the office. Tickets will come home with the youngest student in each family on **April 14** and tickets will be collected at lunch on **April 15 & 16** with prize drawings to be held on **April 22**. If you have not returned your packet and would like to participate, please bring it to the office completed as soon as possible.

### REPORT CARDS

Parents will receive an email with a link to view student report cards **Wednesday, April 2**.

### EVENSONG

All Saints is hosting Evensong (sung Evening Prayer) every Wednesday in Lent beginning at 6:30pm in the Marie Macdonald Chapel. Each service will be followed by a soup and salad supper in the Grammar School Commons. **Lukas Stock, John Heaton, and Davidson Morse** will give in turn a Lenten meditation after the supper. All are invited!

### EASTER BREAK

Maundy Thursday is **April 17** and students will have a noon dismissal that day. Easter Break will begin on **Friday,**

**April 18** and continue through **Monday, April 21**. Students will return to school on Tuesday, April 22.

### CAFETERIA VOLUNTEERS

The lunchroom needs additional volunteers to assist with the microwaves during lunchtime from 11:25-1:15. This is a great opportunity to serve our students and help keep lunch running smoothly. Moms, dads and grandparents are welcome. If you are available to help, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, please contact **Debbie Williamson** at [dwilliamson@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:dwilliamson@newcovenantschools.org).

### GUITAR LESSONS

Allegro Music School has additional guitar lesson spots available starting in April at New Covenant. If interested, please contact **Julia Sansone** at [julia@allegromusic.school](mailto:julia@allegromusic.school).

### THANK YOU

New Covenant has raised \$587.76 by shopping at Kroger. You can help New Covenant earn money by linking your Kroger account to our school. Simply log in to your Kroger account online or go to the app and select Rewards, Community, and New Covenant Schools to link your community rewards. Our organization code is IX901.

## GRAMMAR SCHOOL

### FIELD DAY

Our annual Field Day will be on **Friday, May 23**. This event is for our Grammar School students in grades 1-4. If your student in grades 1-4 will NOT be attending, please email **Amanda Gunn** at [amandaLgunn@gmail.com](mailto:amandaLgunn@gmail.com). Knowing who will or will not be here helps when forming teams. Parent volunteers are needed to make this fun day possible! If you would like to participate as a parent volunteer, please sign up via Signup Genius at this link: [bit.ly/Field\\_Day2025](https://bit.ly/Field_Day2025).

## MOMS' NIGHT OUT



We are pleased to invite all the mothers in our school to a ladies-only event on April 25, at the comfortable campus of Dwell (221 Wiggington Road) from 5:30 to 10:00 pm. Our guest will be **Leslie Moeller**, who is a native of Virginia, and is a classical, Christian school "mom." Her three children—Gray, Jack and Virginia—attended schools very much like New Covenant. She graduated from UVA and earned a law degree from Boston College. She practiced law, of course, but her real passion however, has been serving in the classical, Christian school world in various capacities. Our headmaster first met her in 2004 while she was on the board of the Geneva School of Boerne, Texas, where she subsequently became the Head of School. Our administration and faculty kept up with her through professional conferences over the years.

She served with **Headmaster Heaton** in the Society for Classical Learning, a professional organization that provides consulting services and professional development for classical schools. In this capacity, she has become extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of our growing movement, now more than 700 schools across the county.

Several years ago she and her husband Eric moved back to their farm in Virginia where she served as the Upper School Head at Covenant School in Charlottesville. Now that her children are grown, she and Eric have returned to Texas where she has resumed her former position at the Geneva School of Boerne.

She has been a friend of New Covenant for twenty years and is finishing her second term of service to our board. She is a wonderfully engaging woman you won't want to miss. Please let us know you are coming by signing up here: [bit.ly/moms\\_night2025](https://bit.ly/moms_night2025).



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*Writing Road to Reading*, a program that is effective because it integrates four knowledge domains: reading process, reading development, skill learning, and effective instruction.

Her approach to reading began by codifying the vocal sounds utilized in the English language—about 45 sounds—into “phonograms” or groups of letter symbols that expressed these sounds. She identified 72 such phonograms. In other words, she showed that the sounds we utilize in speech are represented in the English language by nearly twice the symbols used to express them. An easy example is the sound represented by the letters “c,” “k” and “ck.” Technically, it’s a voiceless velar plosive, meaning that the vocal cords do not vibrate when making the sound; velar, the sound is produced with the back of the tongue against the soft palate (the velum) and plosive, the sound is made by stopping the airflow completely and then releasing it suddenly—like a little burst. In English this sound is represented by three different “phonograms” used in different situations.

Complicated? You bet. A four-letter phonogram like “ough” can represent the following sounds: “o” “oo,” “uf,” “off,” “aw,” “ow” (though, through, rough, cough, thought, bough). The science of reading is therefore quite complicated, and the Grammar School instructors at New Covenant undergo training in the Spalding method which can take more than a month to learn. In the aggregate, the faculty in our Grammar School have well over a century and a half of experience.

Students in kindergarten at New Covenant learn 54 of the 72 phonograms, which makes them “reading ready.” To be sure, many of these students will be reading before first grade. Nevertheless, the remaining phonograms will be introduced by November of the first-grade year, and the entire class will begin reading real books.

This method is embedded in a pedagogy through which students see, hear, say, and write using all four sensory channels of the brain to reduce the amount of practice required and to prevent and overcome difficulties. The

stronger sensory channels reinforce the weaker. Moreover, students are required to reproduce the letter symbols in meticulous manuscript form through second grade. In the second semester of third grade, this converts to cursive, which many adults can no longer read or write. Research shows that the emphasis on penmanship and care in writing contributes significantly to learning across the disciplines.<sup>1</sup> New Covenant is nearly unique in requiring this skill.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Spalding Phonics to the overall program at New Covenant. This curriculum was chosen at the founding of the school and has been used for the school’s entire existence. To be sure, there are a hundred ways to learn to read; none, however, are as time-tested and thorough as the *Writing Road to Reading*.

<sup>1</sup> A 2010 study by Berninger et al. at the University of Washington found that students who learned cursive wrote more words, faster, and more complete sentences than those who only learned print or keyboarding. Cursive appears to help children with dyslexia, as the connected flow may reduce letter reversal and spacing issues.

FUNDRAISING REPORT			
	GOAL	RECEIVED	
Annual Fund	\$120,000	\$153,234	
General Scholarship	\$10,000	\$55,008	
Scholarship Foundation	\$300,000	Pledged	\$480,300
		Received	\$411,989
Hands and Hearts	\$50,000	\$23,882	

Thank you for your gifts to New Covenant Schools. Donations continue to be accepted throughout the year and may be given through cash, check, stock transfers, or IRA distributions. All gifts are tax-deductible to the extent that the law provides. Contact **Dayna Renalds** in the Development Office for more information.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CLASS OF 2025 — Neil Bohnert, Leslie Moeller, Bob Price, Leland Seckman, Dan Vollmer  
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## EX OFFICIO

John Heaton—Headmaster

## OUR MISSION

New Covenant Schools is an educational community serving families of Central Virginia, providing an exceptional education in a classical curriculum within the framework of historic Christianity, furnishing the student with the tools of education and the inspiration to be a lifelong learner.

new covenant schools