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The Art/Skill of Thinking

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My iPhone app, Dictionary.com, cites 18 definitions for the verb “think.”

For the purposes of this article, I only needed to read to the second entry in the long list to find the meaning I was looking for: Think (v)-to employ one’s mind rationally and objectively in evaluating or dealing with a given situation. Ex: “Think carefully before you begin.” I believe we would unanimously agree that teaching students to do what the above definition states is part of the job we, as educators, assume when we sign contracts to teach and oversee the teaching of the students with which you parents entrust us, seven hours a day, 180 days every year.

After all, thinking is involved in everything we do throughout the school day, right? Actually, practicing the art or skill of thinking is not the natural by-product of exposure to a purposefully scholastic environment. In 1956, educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom was credited with classifying depth of learning into what educators refer to as “Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives.” Simply put, being able to recite facts and figures doesn’t require the level of understanding of a topic and thought necessary to be able make predictions, paraphrase or retell a scenario in one’s own words, draw inferences, or build new concepts upon known material. These skills require students to think about the material with which they are presented and formulate responses that are not necessarily exact duplicates of their classmates. Basic Knowledge level assessments can be reduced to lists, multiple choice answers, and sentences with blanks the answers to which come from banks of words. Basic Knowledge level assessments are neat, easy to study for, and easy to grade. Demonstrating comprehension, application, and sometimes even analysis of a topic require the student and the teacher to be truly engaged—to think about how to answer assessment items during the assessment. With these types of assessments, no two students’ papers look exactly alike, and the grading always has a hint of subjectivity. Good learning experiences are combinations of all of the above, and good teaching prepares students to tackle all levels of questions with increasing confidence.

How does this type of training in the classroom prepare our students for life? When a person knows how to think, he or

she is better able to know what to think. Individuals who know how to think can eventually evaluate the ideas and perspectives of others whose values and opinions are in contrast to their own. Thorough and competent thinkers are not easily sidetracked and led by false teaching. Our goal is to teach students to think based upon the time-honored truths of God’s Word. We train our students from the earliest grades



that scripture is the ultimate filter through which all ideas, perspectives, opinions, and beliefs must pass. Effective ambassadors for the Kingdom must be able to receive, process, and respond to notions that are incongruent with scripture without becoming confused and misled from the path of the safety and abundant life that God has planned for each of his followers. We count it a privilege to be partners with hundreds of parents who still embrace biblical principles as the only sure foundation on which to prepare children for life. Together we are training the next generation as the apostle Paul did the first century church at Philippi. His instructions define the core of how we attempt to lead students daily. “...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4:8)