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CHRISTIAN SCHOOL | *We make it easy so you can make it amazing.*



Vivian Paulino
de Perez

The Most Lacking Soft Skill: Critical Thinking | 13

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ISSUE 3
VOLUME 3

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Abeka's ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

You care so much about Christian education.

That's why we take helping you reach your Christian school's goals so seriously.

These five steps pave the road to success in almost anything, and they're the steps we take to create curriculum you can count on.

BUILD ON THE BIBLE.

We combine solid academics with biblical worldview so that children are best prepared for learning and for life.

Our teacher-led, character-building philosophy comes from a biblical worldview.

GIVE YOUR BEST.

Every Abeka product goes through an extensive research and development process. It includes researching

- ✓ educational standards and objectives
- ✓ academic trends
- ✓ testing data and customer feedback

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE. (YOURS AND OTHERS').

Educators who've been there and done that create step-by-step lesson plans, teaching aids, and other resources so you don't have to figure it all out on your own.

DO WHAT WORKS.

Cross-subject integration

- ✓ develops connections between subjects
- ✓ reinforces learning
- ✓ broadens perspective
- ✓ helps children truly learn instead of learn for a test

Phonics-based reading

- ✓ empowers confident reading at a young age
- ✓ opens the door to independent learning

Spiral-learning approach

- ✓ implements purposeful repetition
- ✓ accounts for age-appropriateness
- ✓ builds from simple to complex
- ✓ gives children multiple opportunities for success

ENCOURAGE THOUGHT.

Abeka teaches facts and truth, then gives higher-level thinking questions that require application and problem solving. We encourage critical thinking and enable it by teaching a firm foundation first.



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Your great idea could win \$100!

Abekamazing invites you to share titles of books you love. Perhaps it is a book you always read to your class—or a book you love to teach—or a book you always recommend—even one that has made you a better teacher. Those who include some lines about the book's influence or the imaginative way you used the book with your class are eligible for \$100!

Send your idea to amazingschool@abeka.com by February 3, 2020.

We would love to hear from you!

Abekamazing Christian School, a service of Abeka (Pensacola, Florida), is an extension of our commitment to Christian traditional education in schools and homes. Our mission is to support and equip students, teachers, and parents by providing amazing Pre-K through grade 12 academic resources based upon biblical values.

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WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

“The **direction** in which education starts a man will **determine** his future life.”

– PLATO

DEAR FRIENDS,

I have to admit it. In my first years of teaching, I do not remember pondering many deep philosophical thoughts! Like the aviator Wrong Way Corrigan, I suspect I often “flew by the seat of my pants.” Not good.

I know now that teaching by impulse may work for a while, but when unexpected situations arise, I better be convinced about what I am doing and why. Otherwise, like Corrigan, I may end up landing in an unexpected place!

And that is where philosophy and worldview come in. I had to come to the realization that it actually gives direction to how and why I live and work! I had to think about it.

Worldview takes on great importance at Abeka.

Because Abeka’s aim is that Christian education should be Christian in the fullest sense of the word, Abeka takes a philosophical stance that we call *Christian-traditional*.

The framework of Abeka’s ideas and attitudes about the world, people, knowledge, and life is the Bible. It is Christian.

The term *traditional* harkens back to early education based on a biblical worldview. The education traditions and understandings passed down for many years were based on that worldview.

Of course, not all early education practices became traditions. After all, we do not espouse going back to slates or ignoring the needs of today’s learner.

The traditions we speak of are primarily philosophical.

“The content, methods, and philosophy of teaching must **support** and **strengthen** our students’ belief and application of Scripture.”

– Dr. Troy Shoemaker,
President, PCC

Here are just a few:

A belief in

- 📍 God's revelation in His Word and in the natural world
- 📍 Absolute truth
- 📍 Every person's intrinsic value and divine purpose
- 📍 The necessity of both academic and moral training
- 📍 The leadership role of parents in a child's education
- 📍 Education as preparation for life and life as preparation for eternity
- 📍 The importance of reading and an excellent foundational education

Those traditions are our road map and our standard of measurement.

But American schooling is now thoroughly secularized. These traditions are either eliminated or viewed very differently in schooling today.

But not here.

You can still know with certainty exactly where Abeka is coming from and where it is heading.

So, as we sift through today's driving education trends and the clamoring voices influencing educational philosophy and methodology, with God's help, we will continue to think it through.



It is such a privilege for Abeka to join you in this thoughtful and important work!

Phyllis
Dr. Phyllis Rand
Senior Editor

amazingschool@abeka.com

As I think through my purpose, I am encouraged that I am not alone in this important work of Christian-traditional education.

Excerpted from *The Building of Character*, J. R. Miller, 1894

There are many things which God does in which we can have no part. A child wished he could be a painter, that he might help God paint the clouds and skies and sunsets. God wants no help in this work. He wrought, unhelped by creature-hand, in making the worlds. In providence, too, He has no fellow-worker. No one assists Him in keeping the stars in their orbits, in sending rains and dews and summer sunshine. No one helps Him paint the roses and the lilies. But there are things in which God permits us to be His co-workers. He calls us up close beside Him, to work with Him, doing a part while He does a part.

In spiritual life it is true that we are fellow-workers with God.

The teacher sits down with his class. The end of the teaching is the bringing of the scholars to Christ, the building up in them of a Christian character, and the leading of them out into ways of usefulness and loving service. What is the teacher's part? He can make plain to his class the Word and will of God, and he can also represent Christ to them, showing them in his own life glimpses of the divine compassion, tenderness, yearning, truth, purity, and love. But he cannot himself do what needs to be done in their young lives; only God can do that. But God works through the teacher. God and he are fellow-workers. ■

The Winding Road of Skills Movements

What are the *most important* studies?

Are they “those that are useful in life or those which make for excellence or those that advance the bounds of knowledge? Men do not all honor the same distinctive human excellence and so naturally they differ about the proper training for it.”

Aristotle asked this basic question and made his observation centuries before Christ was born! And the dilemma is pretty current over two millennia later. Today, Aristotle might pose his questions in terms of hard skills vs. soft skills, practical vs. academic studies, or even the supposed needs of the 21st century vs. traditional education. But the questions remain:

- 📍 What kind of education does best prepare young people for life?
- 📍 What kind of life?
- 📍 Is there, as Aristotle thought, a Golden Mean, a desirable middle between two extremes?
- 📍 How does our worldview enter into our answers?



Noted author and professor, Diane Ravitch, addresses the issue of skills learning versus academic learning. A wrong emphasis can change our direction and purpose completely.

“In belief, what I’ve found is that in the land of American pedagogy, whatever is **thought** to be new is always embraced more readily than what is **known** to be true.

–DIANE RAVITCH”

I am a historian of education and have written often about the educational enthusiasms and fads of the past century. In brief, what I’ve found is that in the land of American pedagogy, whatever is *thought* to be new is always embraced more readily than what is *known* to be true.

Thus pedagogues, policymakers, thought leaders, facilitators, and elected officials are rushing to get aboard the 21st-century-skills express train, lest they appear to be old-fashioned or traditional, these terms being the worst sort of opprobrium that can be hurled at any educator.

(Continued on page 8)

What these train riders don't seem to realize is that there is nothing new in the proposals of the 21st-century-skills movement. The same ideas were iterated and reiterated by pedagogues throughout the 20th century. **If there was one cause that animated the schools of education in the 20th century, it was the search for the ultimate breakthrough that would finally loosen the shackles of subject matter and content.**

For decade after decade, pedagogical leaders called upon the schools to free themselves from tradition and subject matter. Ellwood P. Cubberley, while dean of the education school at Stanford, warned that it was dangerous for society to educate boys—and even girls—without reference to vocational ends. He thought it foolish to saturate them with “a mass of knowledge

that can have little application for the lives which most of them must inevitably lead.” Cubberley called on his fellow educators to abandon their antiquated academic ideals and instead to adapt education to the real life and real needs of their students. This was in 1911.

The federal government issued a major report on the education of black students in 1916. Its author, Thomas Jesse Jones, scoffed at academic education, which lacked relevance to the lives of these students and was

certainly not adapted to their needs. Jones wanted black children to “learn to do by doing,” which was considered to be the modern, scientific approach to education. It was not knowledge of the printed page that black students needed, wrote Jones, but “knowledge of gardening, small farming, and the simple industries required in farming communities.” This was prescription for locking the South’s African American population into menial roles for the foreseeable future. As Jones acknowledged in his report, the parents of black children wanted them to have an academic education, but he thought he knew better.

Although there were many similar efforts to eliminate the academic curriculum and replace it with real-world interactions, none came as close to the ideals of 21st-century-learning skills as William Heard Kilpatrick’s celebrated Project Method. Kilpatrick, a fabled Teachers College professor, took the education world by storm in 1918 with his proposal for the Project Method. Instead of a sequential curriculum laid out in advance, Kilpatrick urged that boys and girls engage in hands-on projects of their own choosing. As Kilpatrick envisioned it, the project was “whole-hearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment.” Kilpatrick said that the project shaped character and personality. It required activity, not docility. It awakened student motivation. Ideally, the project would be done collaboratively by a group.

Another forerunner to the 21st-century-skills movement was the activity movement of the 1920s and 1930s. As in the Project Method, students were encouraged to engage in activities and projects



A Century of Skills Movements

1911

**Ellwood Cubberley
Adaptation
to “Real Life”**

1916

**Thomas Jesse Jones
Training Black Children
in Simple Industries**

1918

**Wm. Heard Kilpatrick
Hands-on Project
Method**

1920s

**Activities
Built
on Interest**

built on their interests. Studies were interdisciplinary, and academic subjects were called upon only when needed to solve a problem. Students built, measured, and figured things out, while solving real-life problems like how to build a playhouse or a pet park or a puppet theater. Decision making, critical thinking, cooperative group learning: all were integral parts of the activity movement.

Something similar happened in many high schools in the 1930s, where many avant-garde school districts replaced courses like science and history with interdisciplinary courses, which they called the "core curriculum" or "social living." Some districts merged several disciplines—such as English, social studies, and science—into a single course, which was focused not on subject matter but on students' life experiences.

But there were occasional parent protests. In Roslyn, New York, parents were incensed because their children couldn't read but spent an entire day baking nut bread. The Roslyn superintendent assured them that baking nut bread was an excellent way to learn mathematics.

In the 1950s came the Life Adjustment Movement, yet another stab at getting rid of subject matter and teaching students to prepare for real life. And in the 1980s, there was Outcome-Based Education, which sought to make schooling relevant, hands-on, and

Kilpatrick, a fabled Teachers College professor, took the education world by storm in 1918 with his proposal for the Project Method. Instead of a sequential curriculum laid out in advance, Kilpatrick urged that boys and girls engage in hands-on projects of their own choosing.

attuned to the alleged real interests and needs of young people.

The early 1990s brought SCANS—the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills—which recommended exactly the kinds of functional skills that are now called 21st-century skills. These documents were produced by a commission for the U.S. Secretary of Labor. I recall hearing the director of SCANS say that students didn't need to know anything about the Civil War or how to write a book report; these were obsolete kinds of knowledge and skills.

(Continued on page 10)



1930s

Focus on Life Experiences

1950s

Life Adjustment

1980s

Outcome Based Education

1990s

SCANS

2000s

21st Century Skills Movement

Each of these initiatives had an impact. They left American education with a deeply ingrained suspicion of academic studies and subject matter. "It's academic" came to mean "it's purely theoretical and unreal." For the past century, our schools of education have obsessed over critical-thinking skills, projects, cooperative learning, experiential learning, and so on. But they have paid precious little attention to the disciplinary knowledge that young people need to make sense of the world.

One of the problems with skills-driven approaches to learning is that there are so many things we need to know that cannot be learned through hands-on experiences.

The educated person learns not only from his or her own experience, but from the hard-earned experience of others. We do not restart the world anew in each generation. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. What matters most in the use of our brains is our capacity to make generalizations, to see beyond our own immediate experience. The intelligent person, the one who truly is a practitioner of critical thinking, has the learned capacity to understand the lessons of history, to engage in the adventure of literature, to grasp the inner



logic of science and mathematics, and to realize the meaning of philosophical debates by studying them. What a gift! How sad to refuse it. ■

Reprinted with permission from the Spring 2010 issue of *American Educator*, the quarterly journal of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO and the author, Diane Ravitch.



What Are 21st Century Skills?

Ravitch writes that "pedagogues, policymakers, thought leaders, facilitators, and elected officials are rushing to get aboard the 21st-century-skills express train..."

As she notes, the current push for these soft skills can result in an education that pays "precious little attention to the disciplinary knowledge that young people need to make sense of the world." Our traditional, Christian worldview seeks a balance—because substituting them wholesale in place of the traditional curriculum comes with problems.

HERE'S A LIST

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 📍 Global Awareness | 📍 Problem Solving | 📍 Collaboration |
| 📍 People Skills | 📍 Information Literacy | 📍 Media literacy |
| 📍 Flexibility | 📍 Innovation | 📍 Leadership |
| 📍 Critical Thinking | 📍 Initiative | 📍 Productivity |

Skills for Life

The teaching of responsibility and other soft skills was a part of a balanced education long before the 21st Century Skills Initiative.

Renee Bryant



Traditional teachers have always viewed many of the so-called *soft skills* as important *life skills* that deserve a prominent place in schooling. In Christian education, we often call many of them *character traits* that are a necessary preparation for a useful life.

As education philosophy became more student-centered and interest-driven, tradition and biblical character training were replaced by behavioral psychology, and character teaching was neglected.

And the workplace has noticed! The 21st century may have brought with it new kinds of workplaces, but the balance between knowledge and life skills is still sorely needed in every endeavor.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

The classroom balance between academic content and life skills is not like a teeter-totter, where there must be equal weight given to each, but more like a recipe. It has

become obvious that if one ingredient is missing or misused, the result is not good.

The main ingredient in traditional education, of course, is a broad base of knowledge and understanding. But, as one parent told me, the character of her child was her primary interest and the reason she was entrusting

him to our school. He came to us with weak reading skills—which improved—but he also eventually learned to not give up and to follow through with his work. We all agreed that these characteristics were as

important in the long run! We cannot neglect to mix in the ingredients that ultimately make young people useful wherever God leads them.

SO WHAT DO I DO?

Keep remembering that a good education is preparation for life not just a job. We and our students need

“The classroom balance between academic content and life skills is not like a teeter-totter, where there must be equal weight given to each, but more like a recipe. It has become obvious that if one ingredient is missing or misused, the result is not good.”

to study and learn, but life is most importantly about knowing and loving Christ, His wisdom, and His purpose for us. **A good education aims to make good men and women.**

Keep laying a solid foundation in core academics, all the while praying for God to use you to teach the life skills your pupils need. Take advantage of support from Abeka textbooks and curriculum which purposefully build character development into lessons. **And watch for teachable moments that make it real! Every perceived challenged has something to teach.**

9 Have some stories handy like this Aesop fable of *The Lark* that teaches personal responsibility:

A Lark had made her nest in the early spring on the young green wheat. The brood had attained the use of their wings when the owner of the field, looking over his ripe crop, said, “The time has come when I must ask all my neighbors to help with my harvest.” One of

(Continued on page 12)

the young Larks heard his speech and asked his mother where they should move for safety. "There is no need to move yet, my son," she replied. "The man who only sends for his friends to help with harvest is not really in earnest." The owner of the field came again a few days later and saw that the grain was getting overripe. He said, "I will come myself tomorrow and will get in the harvest." Then the Lark said to her brood, "It is time now to be off, my little ones, for the man is in earnest this time; he no longer depends on others, but will work and reap the field himself."

📌 The Bible is our best resource on how to live.

I just reread Galatians 6:1-10 and decided to put a verse and skill on one side of a 3x5 card and the thoughts on the other for quick reference when making the most of teachable moments.

Gal. 6:1 People Skills: If it falls to me to correct others' mistakes, I should do so with *kindness and understanding*—it could just as easily be me with the same difficulty.

Gal. 6:2 Initiative: I should recognize the burdens of others—and quickly respond with *empathy and helpfulness* with a Christ-like spirit. Helping is not something I do to draw attention to myself.

Gal. 6:3 Social skills: If I think I know everything, I'm setting myself up for trouble. I can learn a lot by *listening to others*.

Gal. 6:4 Productivity: When I can be *responsible and trusted to do good work* without having to be supervised all the time, I can be happy with what I have accomplished.

Gal 6:5,7 Leadership: First, I must learn to lead myself and take responsibility for my own tasks

and their outcome. Ultimately my success or failure rests with me. *When I learn to lead myself, God may give me the responsibility of leading others*

Gal. 6:6 Communication: I should communicate good things (not just bad) with those who teach me. When I learn to look for the good in people and circumstances, *my communication with the Lord becomes full of praise*.

Gal 6:8 Responsibility: *Because I choose my actions, I'm responsible for the outcome*

Gal 6:9 Productivity: *I keep working to finish even if I don't want to.*

Gal 1:10 Social skills: I take every opportunity given me to *do good to others*.

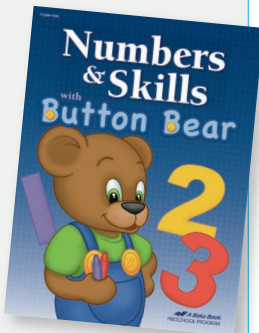
Instruction in godly character is a hallmark of Christian education—for work and life! 🇺🇸



Numbers & Skills with Button Bear

Three-year-olds are already capable of learning so many things! With this activity book, enhance knowledge of shapes, pairs, opposites, numbers 1-15, sequence of events, senses, seasons, weather, animals, countries, transportation, dot-to-dot, coloring, thinking and reasoning skills, listening skills, and more!

abeka.com/NumbersandSkills



Coming from Abeka

The 21st Century Skills Movement is driven by demands from the business world, which finds that many future employees lack particular hard skills and soft skills.

- 📍 Examples of hard skills: writing, reading, speaking ability, and content knowledge
- 📍 Examples of soft skills: see 21st Century Skills, p. 10. What is the most lacking soft skill? Critical thinking



AMY YOHE

Managing Editor, Abeka

In a recent survey, we asked you how we at Abeka could be of more help. A common response was *Help us with critical thinking*. So that is what we aim to do.

We know that God has a purpose—a way of usefulness and service—for each of our students. It may not be in the technology or business world, main drivers of 21st Century Skills Movement, but every avenue of service benefits from those who can identify and tackle problems, analyze possibilities, and suggest solutions based on sound thinking and biblical wisdom.

So we are making the connection with critical thinking more obvious in Abeka. As we update materials, level by level, you will see seemingly small, but useful changes or additions:

- 📍 More time built in for the development of thinking skills. In some places, practice was cut back but not deleted—just moved to the back of the book for use if necessary.
- 📍 More thinking prompts such as *Brain Boosters* and *Thought Provokers* in student texts/lesson plans/Teacher Editions—to make it easier for you to develop amazing thinkers.
- 📍 More graphic organizers—to help visualize orderly thinking, analyzing, and creating.

- 📍 More application of the scientific method and similar logical thinking in other subject areas—to provoke hypothesizing and evaluating.
- 📍 Deeper-level questions and discussion prompts in Bible curriculum—to develop biblical thinking/worldview.
- 📍 More optional enrichment ideas and teaching tips—to allow you to customize to your students' specific areas of strength and weakness. (Please take this as our commitment to creating flexible resources that meet your desires for your students!)

And it all starts with our commitment to lesson objectives that include a more obvious emphasis on thinking—implemented in instruction, practice, and assessment. Get ready—developing thinking skills in conjunction with a biblical worldview takes time and creativity but yields the next generation of Christian adults, capable of entering any field that God calls them to, ready to make a difference that will last for eternity! 🌈



The Power of the Question

*How can we encourage thought?
The place to start is with questions
that give opportunity to think.*



First, Some Golden Principles for Critical Thinking Questioning

- Establish these expectations:
 - Students will pay attention and participate
 - Teacher will not call on only raised hands
 - Teacher will check for understanding and thought throughout the lesson
- Prepare some questions (open not closed) based on what you want them to know/to think about. (Don't forget to have in mind possible answers.)

- Don't respond with *excellent* if it is not excellent. Use comments that reward what you want to see more of.
 - *That is a good start. Tell me a bit more.*
 - *That makes good sense. Now, that would be in contrast to what other view?*
 - *Can you add even more detail so I can get a better idea of what you are trying to say? It will strengthen your message.*
 - *Thanks for your answer. Talk me through how you came up with that, please.*

Next, Some Techniques That Balance This Important Soft Skill with the Hard Skills of Disciplinary Content.

1. Teach **Problem-Solving Process** like the following. It works for tackling everything—from homework questions to personal problems!

Identify/Understand the Problem

Analyze the Problem/Gather Information

Make a Plan*

Carry Out the Plan

Evaluate the Solution/Did it Work?

***THINK ABOUT IT:** Try any of these tactics to help come up with a plan or strategy to solve a problem.¹

- Restate the problem.
- Make an orderly list.
- Think of a related problem.
- Eliminate possibilities.
- Look for a pattern.
- Draw a picture.
- Work backwards.



2. Ask **Deep-Level Questions**. Socrates knew it—a deep question is a powerful teaching and learning tool. Beyond recall, deep-level questions can lead to new knowledge and wisdom, promote critical thinking and problem solving, and require students to put in words what they think they know. Get started with these suggestions:

- What caused it?
- How did it happen?
- Why not?
- What is the evidence for x ?
- What if?
- How does x compare to y ?
- What do we already know?
- Can you give me an example?

THINK ABOUT IT: Some Deep-Level Openers²

- Tell me about . . .
- Talk me through . . .
- What pictures are coming up in your head . . . ?
- Could you explain what she means . . . ?
- What difference would it make if . . . ?
- What makes you think that . . . ?

3. Adopt Lemov's Questioning Techniques³

Cold Call Teacher randomly calls on students to answer questions or make statements even though hands are not raised. (Not to be used as a discipline technique!)

No Opt Out Lemov's complementary strategy used if a student says, "I don't know." The teacher calls on another student to answer and then goes back to the first student. Again, the expectation is that everyone actively participates.

Stretch It The teacher asks additional questions to extend the response (and learning) even further.

- Is there another way to say that?
- Could you explain what this means in your words? ■

¹ Polya, G. (1957). *How to solve it*. Princeton University Press.

² <https://classteaching.wordpress.com/2013/07/12/deep-questioning/>

³ Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Abeka's ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

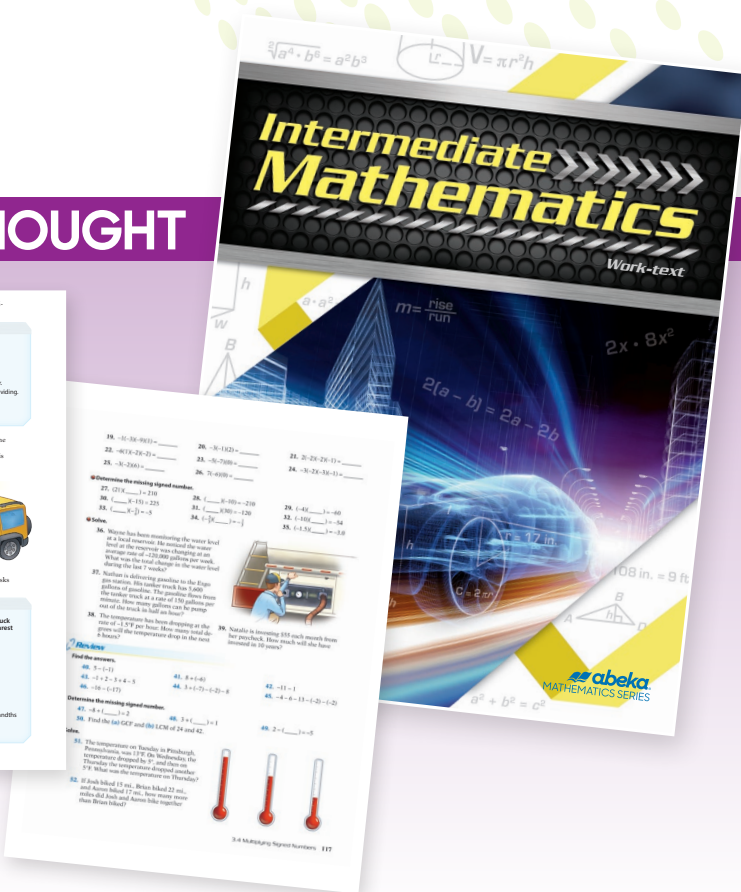
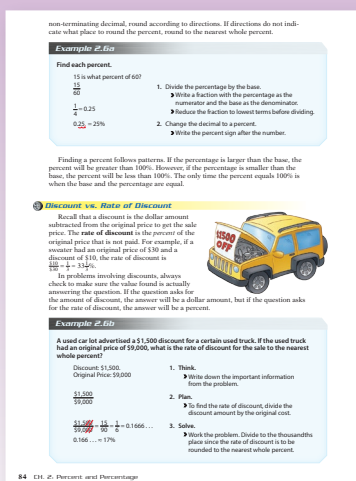
ENCOURAGE THOUGHT



Critical Thinking

Students are given opportunities to solve word problems by using an applicable problem solving strategy. Each word problem is unique and models mathematics in the real world.

abeka.com/Intermediatemath



HEADED FOR BALANCE

Did You KNOW?

A GOOD Discussion REQUIRES . . .

A Moderator to

- 📍 keep things moving along
- 📍 encourage reflection
- 📍 keep track of time
- 📍 summarize the discussion

Experts say that the BEST moderators have

- 📍 knowledge
- 📍 control
- 📍 energy
- 📍 flexibility

That's You!

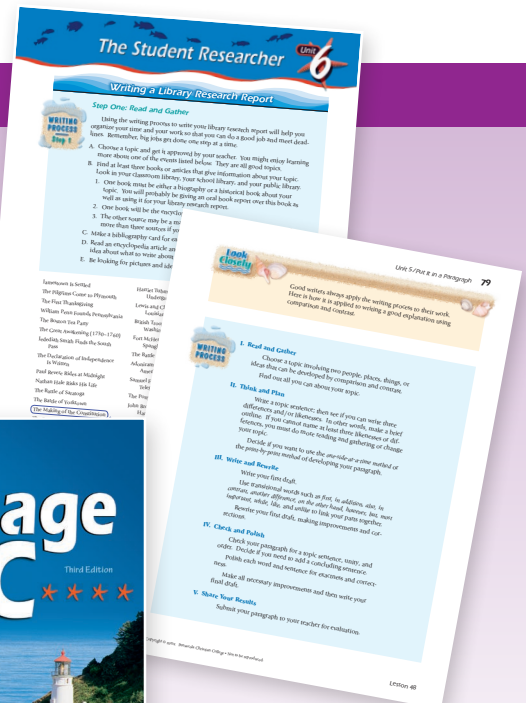


Abeka's ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

ENCOURAGE THOUGHT

The 6th grade research paper allows students to apply the grammar and writing concepts they have learned as they research a subject of particular interest. Gathering and organizing information and clearly and effectively communicating it allows students to demonstrate personal style of writing.

abeka.com/LanguageC

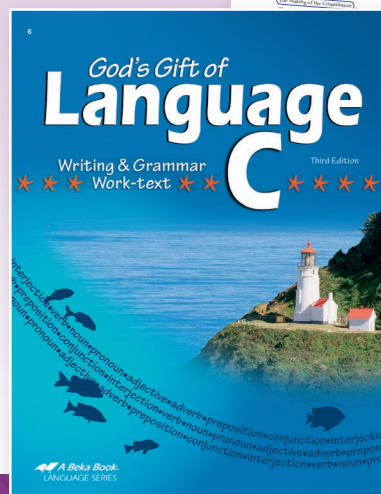


80 Part 1/Composition: Creativity and Craftsmanship

Write Write two explanatory paragraphs using the information in the charts below. Use comparison and contrast to make your explanation clear. In one paragraph, tell about the differences of the sea lion and the walrus. In the other paragraph, tell about their similarities.

	The Sea Lion and the Walrus
DIFFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both are mammals and members of the seal family. • Both live and travel in groups. • Both are fast, skilled swimmers. • Both walk on four flippers. • They breathe air like whales, polar bears, and man. • Both are curious and sociable.
Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They spend most life, and are birds. • Weighs 500-700 pounds • An elongated body—has a longer neck than the walrus does. • Trained to perform at circuses and zoos. • Face is doglike. • Found along the coastline in northern regions. • Most at home on land.
Walrus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger than a sea lion—weighs up to one ton. • Short, massive neck. • Thick nostrils. • Has coarse whiskers and two tusks. • Lives in arctic regions. • Rarely comes ashore.

Lesson 49 Language C



No **TIME** for Discussion Today? *Try This Direction!*

Thinking is hard work. Much like playing an instrument or a sport, it requires instruction and practice and motivation.

1. Make a Response Box

Pose a critical-thinking question, give students a specified time to write a response and put it in the Response Box. Award a homework pass the next day to everyone who submitted appropriate answers.



- 📍 "Is there a shorter way to work out this geometry proof? Explain your thinking."
- 📍 "How is this similar to...?"

2. Tease Those Brains!

Brain teasers test basic reasoning skills, and students love bringing them to class and writing them on the board.

- 📍 Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world (Mt. Everest)
- 📍 Rearrange OOUSWTDNEJR to spell just one word. (Just one word)
- 📍 What belongs to you, but other people use it more than you do? (your name)



Our **Gift** For You
Free

PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS



Go to abeka.com/Think to download your FREE chart/bookmark.

UNDERSTAND
the problem

GATHER
information

STRATEGIZE
information

CONDUCT
the plan

Did it
WORK



abeka

HEADED FOR BALANCE

TEACHER'S WORKROOM



KIM SMITH

Welcome to the teacher's workroom, where veteran Christian school teacher Kim Smith shares ideas you can use to make your classroom amazing.



PERSONALLY SPEAKING ABOUT CRITICAL THINKING IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

For a decade, I worked alongside gifted teachers across the country in continuing education meetings and in-school curriculum training. When it came time to discuss critical thinking strategies, this was a common response:

Every day is already full. Critical thinking development takes time! How do I fit it in?

Let's think about that question as well as a couple other "Reality Roadblocks."

- I think you will find out you are already doing a great deal to train good thinkers.
- I think you will also find that teaching discernment, reasoning, and independent thinking fits naturally in your daily lesson goals. So be encouraged!

Kim

REALITY ROADBLOCKS

Teaching Thinking Skills in the Elementary Classroom:



ROADBLOCK #1: *My students don't know enough. They are not prepared for higher-level thinking.*

I get it. If your students are weak in knowledge, how will you get them to make higher-level connections? The best answer is **work to improve skills and knowledge at the same time.**

- Have you ever asked *What do you think will happen?* during reading—or science—or arithmetic? Good! Open-ended questions provide opportunities to think and develop hypotheses.
- Do you ever say, *Let's think that through!* after a student question? Good! You didn't do the easiest thing which was to just give the answer.
- Do you link learning across subject areas? Good. You are applying knowledge and thinking in as many contexts as possible.
- Are you teaching students to respect and listen to others, value thinking and truth, ask for an example when they do not understand? Good. You are developing thinkers!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Skills rely on knowledge; knowledge relies on good instruction; and good instruction relies on proven teaching practices.

Remember these simple problem-solving strategies from your school days in arithmetic class?

- read the problem twice
- look for key words, patterns, or analogies
- show all your work
- underline the question

They still work, but strategies cannot replace understanding and knowledge. Imagine searching for the solution to a



problem that you don't understand. Without specific instruction, students don't know what they don't know.

So, you should

- keep providing specific steps for solving each type of problem.
- keep showing examples of problems that have already been solved.
- keep interweaving ample problem-solving practice and analysis in classwork and homework.



ROADBLOCK #2: *I do not have enough class time to devote to critical thinking.*

I agree. There is a lot to learn and only so much time to do it.

Abeka is helping by building opportunities into your lessons.

See p. 13 for more information from Abeka.



ROADBLOCK #3: *Many of my students just don't make the effort.*

I understand. Your challenge is to **establish the VALUE in being able to apply, create, or extend thinking.**

How do you handle it when students forget assignments or responsibilities? You bring on the motivators, right! Tackle the lack of thought in the same way.

Give opportunities to make independent choices, a great motivator for bored students. Making decisions is key to critical thinking.

- Not putting thought into arithmetic story problems? Using models from the lesson, create and solve your own story problem today instead.
- Sloppy with spelling homework? Analyze which words you should write and then just spell the other half orally tonight.

- Loud groaning at book report time? Choose from alternatives for one of the sections.
 - Summarize the plot from the viewpoint of the main character.
 - Write a letter to a friend recommending (or not) the book.
 - List new or interesting words, phrases, or comparisons you found in the book.
 - Present your oral book report on power point.

CONSIDER THIS: some students are afraid of answering questions "incorrectly."

- Give them time to think. Pause and wait. Some thoughts have to simmer a while!
- Ask leading questions that help them make connections with what they already know. Show how they can come up with answers.
- Give specific, sincere praise and recognition focused on thinking and improvement. ■

Did You **KNOW?**

Cognitive development takes a leap in elementary grades. This means children can work things out in their heads rather than relying on just physical experience.



"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason so few engage in it."

Henry Ford

You're committed to
nurturing the next
generation of thinkers.
We're here to help.



Pauline's Christian Academy

MASTER VIDEO SCHOOL • BAVARO PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

VIVIAN PAULINO
DE PEREZ

General Director
(See cover photo)



An Unlikely Beginning

When Vivian Paulino de Perez's aunt gave her Abeka catalogs, she stowed them away, not giving them much thought. She didn't really see herself working in education. But when she changed jobs and finances prompted her to seek an alternative to her daughter's private school, she pulled out her stack of catalogs and ordered the Abeka kindergarten DVD's for Edna.

Amazing Growth

Realizing that other families in the area might have the same needs, she and her husband Edgar opened

the doors of Pauline's Garten as a Master Video School in January 2009, offering childcare and a Christian kindergarten in English. The school's name refers to the founder of French nursery schools, but Vivian thinks of the Apostle Paul when she says the name.

The school began in our home and garage, but in three months we had 60 children under our care and had to rent additional space. We saw that this was going to be a regular school so we applied for all of our Dominican education permits.

By August, attendance was up to 80.

We decided to be obedient and to follow through and keep praying and do each day as it came. Abeka has been the real help for our school. Of course the video classes, but also the Teachers Clinic and Principals Clinic held every year in Pensacola. We couldn't make it without the help of the Lord and the Abeka curriculum and DVD's.

The key to our progress has been to just follow the directions of what is already written by Abeka. When a





teacher follows the video guide and the curriculum, placing God first, there's no doubt that children are going to learn what they need by their age.

Edna is now in 10th grade and attends Pauline's Christian Academy—the name given to the secondary grades. The school now enrolls an amazing 260 students in nursery through grade 12. Last year the first graduating class—5 students—earned national test scores that put them in the top 10% of all graduates in the Dominican Republic! They each received a letter

from the President of D.R. congratulating them on their achievements and offering scholarships.

More than Just an Education

Pauline's Garten and Pauline's Christian Academy are more than just schools. Above just excelling academically, Vivian desires her students to come to know Christ as their personal Savior.

The majority of the students come from atheistic backgrounds. We have

children that have accepted the Lord by age 5 and have been serving the Lord by sharing the Word of God at their homes.

We have seen how God has worked in the lives of many of the parents that came to our school not believing, and now they are active Christians in their churches.

We give praise and thank the Lord for Abeka and for the people who work to maintain an excellent Christian education. 🇩🇲



Did You KNOW?

- ▶ **The students in 275 new and growing Christian schools** (25 international) get expert instruction from a Christian perspective on DVD or streaming via the Proteach Master Video Program.
- ▶ **The average enrollment** is 34. The highest is 300.

See abeka.com/MasterVideo for more info and a full price list.

THE CREATIVE

CLASSROOM



WHAT'S YOUR BIG IDEA?

If you have an idea to share, we want to hear about it. Send it, along with a high resolution photo (>1.5Mb), to amazingschool@abeka.com.

Enhance Positive Expectations

Have you read (or reread) Harry and Rosemary Wong's *First Days of School*? (www.EffectiveTeaching.com)

This book has such helpful advice—such as

Five Significant Concepts that Enhance Positive Expectations.

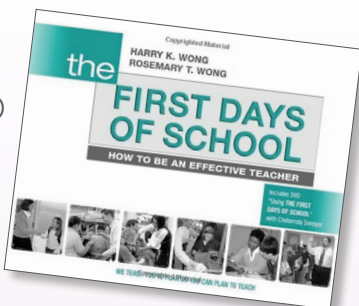
NAME: When you address a student, use the student's name.

PLEASE: Courtesy and respect convey a message that says "I am paying attention to you." Precede the word with the person's name, as in "Trevor, please..."

THANK YOU: "Thank you" is the perfect transition. It makes whatever you want done next much easier. "I truly appreciate what you did. Thank you, George."

SMILE: A smile is the most effective way to create a positive climate—a controlled, slight, disarming smile is all you need.

LOVE: Care is demonstrated through both body language and what you say.



Look for It—Learn It

KWL charts have been around for a long time, but have you ever tried this?

- ▶ Before beginning a new chapter/topic, display a KWL chart on screen or board.
- ▶ On the chart, write several things class members say they already **KNOW**.
- ▶ Then write several things they **WONDER** about.
- ▶ At the end of the period, bring back the chart; add some new things **LEARNED** in the lesson.
 - Was anything in the **KNOW** column proven to be inaccurate or incomplete?
 - Was anything in the **WONDER** column explained during the lesson? If not, find out about it and share tomorrow.

Our Free Gift For You

Download this FREE gift at abeka.com/KWLchart

Topic:		
K	W	L
What I KNOW ...	What I WONDER ...	What I LEARNED ...



Writing with Purpose 3

A focus on penmanship shifts midway to a focus on writing activities while maintaining penmanship practice. Various activities develop key writing and life skills—filling out party invitations, helping plan a menu, making a day planner, reporting, etc. Especially useful are the animal research reports that may be used in the third-grade project *My Animal Notebook*.

Coming soon **Writing with Purpose 4** with more skill building and creative writing activities. abeka.com/WriteWithPurpose



Heartbeat of Our School Newsletter

This year my 6th graders made a newsletter about the heartbeat of our school. Each row collaborated to interview a school employee and write an article about him or her. They chose two from their group to conduct the interview while the rest of their team were busy taking notes. It was fun to incorporate extra thinking into the project by asking the groups follow-up questions such as, "How is your person vital to the operation of our school? What would our school be like without that person? How does this person impact your life as a 6th grader?" This year we ran out of time to "publish" our newsletter, but we read them all.

When I introduced the project to the students, they were immediately interested and overflowing with questions.



– Amber C.

**Editor's
Favorite**
abeka

*Thanks, Amber.
A \$100 Visa gift
card is coming.*

We spent prep time focusing on professional behavior and dress before the interview day. It was fun to see many students dress up for the occasion. We discussed the importance of staying engaged in the interview and reacting appropriately to the responses given. As a class, we wanted each person being interviewed to sense our genuine interest in them and all they do for our school. All students played a vital



role in the project whether the student was conducting the interview, taking notes, or offering a firm handshake and a sincere word of gratitude for coming to our class. Our guests thoroughly enjoyed themselves and hoped we do it again next year. This project was a great combination of fun and collaboration while helping students appreciate the hard work others put into our school.

*Adapted from Writing with Purpose 3,
p. 147 and Language 3
lessons 161–163, 165.*



– Eric C.

You Tell Me

Eric often advises new teachers to resist the impulse to answer every question asked in class. Instead, redirect the question as often as possible—a good way to keep the class engaged and thinking. Especially

- when the question is obviously a lower-level learning one, and everyone should know it.
- when reasoning through a problem that has more than one method of solving.
- when going over boardwork problems. Instead of just pointing out an error, let the class try to catch it. A good question is *Do you see any place where your work is different from Joe's?* After the response, Joe gets an opportunity to defend his work or his thinking. Then go back to the student or class to make sure the correct solution is clear.

– Eric Collins



Aiming for Our Best

These 3 motivating ideas are fun because they are easy, inexpensive, interactive, and promote team work.

Can the jar fill with macaroni before the end of the class?

Every 3 correct class answers in a row during review mean another handful in the jar. A full jar earns the class one canceled quiz!

Everyone fills out a survey of five favorites.

- For example, favorite
- Bible character /verse
 - animal/pet
 - sport/team/hobby
 - book
 - color

It is great fun when names/info appear in quiz sentences, math examples, etc.

Liz Allen loves putting together 1000- word jigsaw puzzles. She has $2/7$ of a puzzle completed. How many more pieces to go before the puzzle is complete?

The paper clip chain grows with every correctly solved math word problem.

When does it reach the board tray or floor? Maybe a special PA announcement or door banner when it does!



– Kim S.

The Mystery Number Connection

Write numbers 1 to 12 inside each slot of an egg carton.

Put 2 marbles in the carton. Have student shake the carton. Open the lid and say the 2 numbers. Based on the age level, choose a process: add, subtract, multiply, divide. Teach students to look for the mystery number. For older students, marbles that land in 3 and 6 might mean a sum, product, dividend, or quotient of 36. What numbers are missing to equal that? For younger students, the missing number for 3 and 6 might be 9 if asked to add, 3 if subtracting, 2 if dividing and so on. Get extra mileage from this game idea by writing only the numbers 1–10 in the slots.

Use the extra compartments to write a particular process that needs attention.

Solving the mystery number connection is excellent practice for critical thinking.

–Kim Smith



Our **Gift** For You

The Eyes Have It!

Have you ever written a word and thought *That doesn't look right!* After rewriting the word, your eyes came to the rescue with the correct spelling. When eyes and brains connect, the embarrassing confusion of commonly misspelled words can be avoided. Display this clever chart. It can help!



Download this FREE gift at abeka.com/EyesHaveIt



there
they're
their

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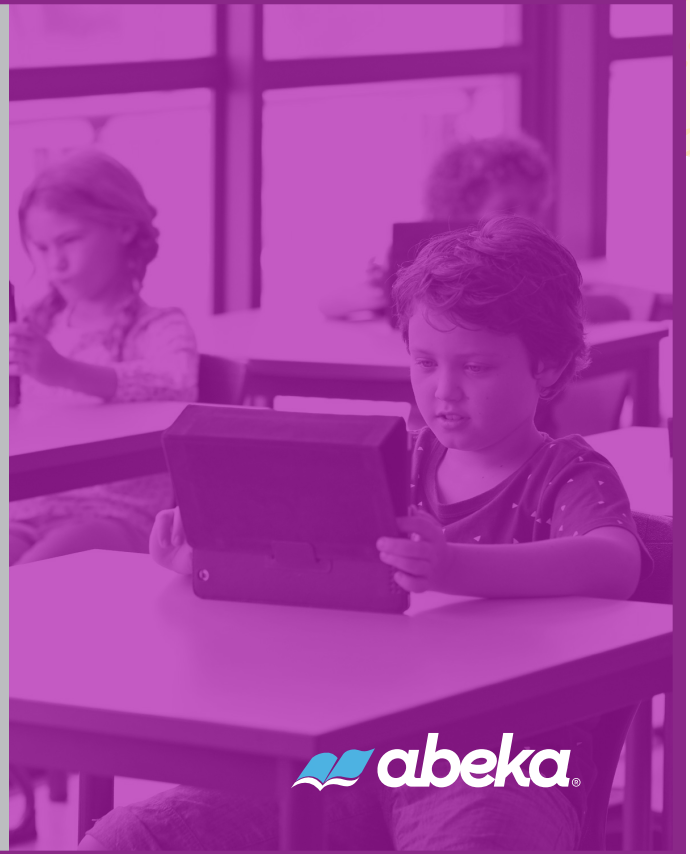
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Think! Learn! Write!

Ed Oksanen shares a writing/thinking/learning assignment he has used successfully in the past for high school chemistry.



– Ed O.

It is important for students to understand how scientific ideas develop. Occasionally a discovery occurs by seeming accident, but most breakthroughs are really built upon the foundations of past discoveries and study.

The Periodic Table is a good illustration. The scientists listed below published the ideas that paved the way for each succeeding scientist to contribute an improvement for classifying the elements. It took almost 100 years to uncover the key to the Periodic Table.

- 1817 Johann Dobereiner (German)
- 1863 John Newlands (British)
- 1869 Dimitri Mendeleev (Russian)
- 1913 Henry Mosely (British)

Assignment: Using your textbook, describe the contributions of each scientist and how it laid a brick in the foundation for the next step. What was the key to the Periodic Table that Mendeleev missed but Mosley uncovered. Why do you think Mendeleev was unable to find the key? Why is it important for the work of scientists to be published and critiqued by other scientists?

– Ed Oksanen



Inspiration for Thought

Wise sayings inspire us. They lead to reflection. Why not make a collection of favorite quotations and bring some out when a student needs inspiration for an essay? Here are some to get you started.

When you've done something wrong, admit it and be sorry. No one in history has ever choked to death from swallowing his pride.

–Origin unclear

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

–Eleanor Roosevelt

I long to accomplish a great and noble task; but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.

–Helen Keller

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

People generally see what they look for, and hear what they listen for.

–Harper Lee,

To Kill a Mockingbird

A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.

–Italo Calvino

But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.

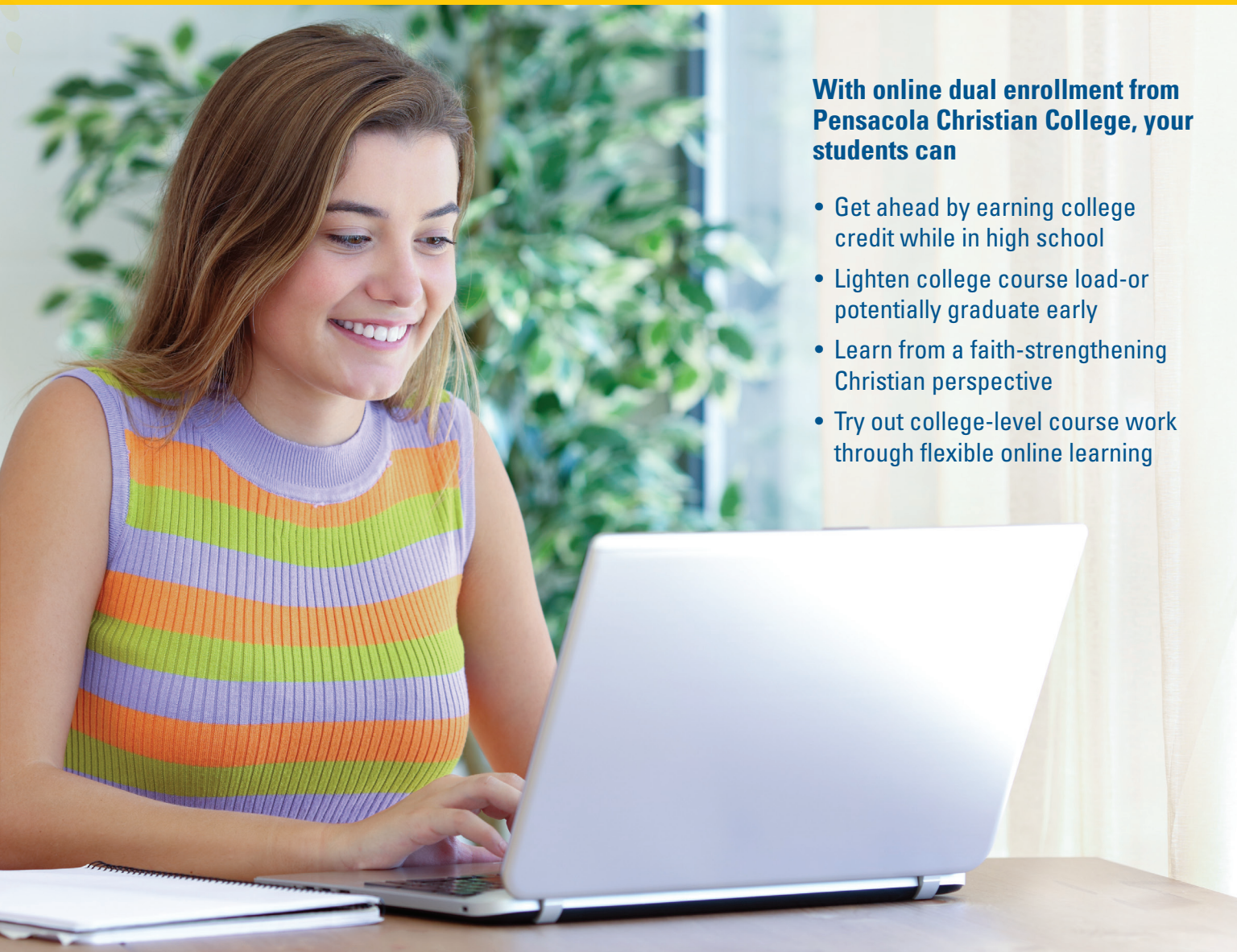
–C. S. Lewis,

An Experiment in Criticism

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