

Importance of Debate and Research Strand Notebooks

Classical Conversations uses the classical model to build student skills not only for gaining information but also for retaining the biblical ideals of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of subject material. The classical model uses the three stages of learning:

- 1) grammar — memorization of facts;
- 2) dialectic — discovery, comparison, categorizing of facts;
- 3) rhetoric — analysis, application, and integration of the subject facts.

The debate and research notebooks in the upper Challenges efficiently employ these three stages of learning.

With modeling guidance from the director, the student effectively classifies purposeful research to organize a self-text. Building on a foundation of skills acquired in earlier grammar and dialectic learning, the older student compiles research with citations and bibliography along with documented facts that activate memory retention. The notebook is a tool for the culmination of study skills. It is used as a record of work accomplished and as a valuable study aid tying all the information together in a meaningful format.

Notebooks are valuable resources in the debate and research strands of the upper Challenge levels. The notebooks are used differently in each Challenge level to correspond with the specific material in the strand

level. The debate strand (history) notebooks have a similar goal of researching important history facts and recording entries in a manner particular to each student. Timelines are helpful to cohesively categorize and integrate isolated subjects and can bridge between Challenge levels, thus truly weaving the facts together.

Research strand notebooks combine various science investigations into a comprehensive unit. Research notebooks can be divided into sections that include a glossary, problem-solving exercises, note entries, additional research helps and concept aids, and formal lab documents. Depending on the Challenge level, the laboratory write-ups will either strictly adhere to the scientific method or will be modified to accommodate microscopic observations, dissection techniques, or in-seminar demonstrations. In addition, the lab journal of in-seminar notations and drawings is a valuable component of the research notebook.

Challenge directors give guidelines for the notebooks. They typically spot-check and make suggestions for the student in early weeks of the semester. They also collect the notebooks/timelines on Week 14 of each semester for evaluation and feedback to the student. The parents assign grades to the completed works.