



OAKDALE ACADEMY
CHARACTER • TRUTH • WISDOM

THE PATRIOT CHRONICLE



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THE PATRIOT CHRONICLE

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VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

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MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES

CAMERON SPENCER

ALUMNUS

FROM THE HEADMASTER

September 2026

The past school year saw a focus on comm[UNITY], with intentionality surrounding many opportunities to engage and foster community both inside and outside our school walls. Parents and guests were invited to attend monthly Patriots & Pastries gatherings, Great Books Clubs, concerts, our annual Walk-a-thon, our inaugural Golf Outing, Grandparents' Day, and the opening of our long-anticipated soccer field. We truly witnessed our chapel theme lived out in Scripture: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Psalm 133:1.

The Lord showed his faithfulness to our community through providing a temporary campus last fall while we had a new roof installed, in fundraising milestones, and in providing additional extraordinary teachers to add to our already exceptional faculty.

This year we look toward loving our neighbors. In an age ripe with frustration, anger, and division, we aim to exemplify what we pray together daily - that we would be "beacons of light in our homes and community". I am excited to see how the Lord will work in and through Oakdale Academy as we share the love of Christ within these walls and as we move about in our community.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of our mission to instill Character, Truth, and Wisdom in our students in order to prepare them for a life of service to God, family, community, and country through classical Christian education. It is a tremendous privilege and gift to shepherd our precious students in virtue, caring for the eternity of their souls.

Mrs. Bredow

VALERIE BREDOW
HEADMASTER



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025-2026



The inaugural soccer match was held on the newly-finished Spencer Real Estate Athletic Field at Oakdale Academy in August 2025.



The Logic School hosted its annual square dance in the fall.



The annual Veterans Day program celebrated both active and retired service members and recognized two Oakdale alumni joining the armed forces.



The Rhetoric School students served the community at Oakland Hope, packing groceries and loading them into waiting vehicles.



Grammar School hosted Grandparents' Day. It was an enormous success!



The inaugural Golf Outing was an incredible success, with 22 foursomes registered and \$50,000 raised!

THE QUADRIVIAL ARTS: THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES



In a world where we are constantly looking down at devices, the culminating science of the liberal arts bids us gaze upwards to the heavens created by God. Astronomy holds the final and most prominent place in a classical Christian education through the Quadrivium. The four quadrivium subjects (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) were originally proposed for education in ancient Greece by Plato in *The Republic* and all represent some philosophical investigation of number: arithmetic - quantity without relation to other things; geometry - stationary dimensions and shapes; music - numerical ratios in harmony; and astronomy - magnitude in motion, applying ratios to the heavens. Later formalized by Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the Quadrivium consists of the oft-forgotten mathematical liberal arts. Together, through number, these four “train the soul to love order and to rise toward wisdom”(1) when their intellect grows to distinguish between chaos.

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies
proclaim the work of his hands. - Psalm 19:1*

This shift in focus from earth to heaven is designed to inspire awe and wonder, reminding students of human finiteness while extolling the splendor of a seemingly infinite, orderly universe.

Through studying the many cyclical stellar and planetary motions, students are positioned to develop a philosophy based on eternal truths that govern those motions, placing Christ our Lord at the center of it all. As contrasted with the astrophysics of progressive education, classical astronomy as taught at Oakdale Academy incorporates the study of ancient and Medieval astronomers as well as the observational study of the night sky. Students become familiar with identifying the constellations of the summer, fall, winter, and spring skies. Orion takes center stage in the winter while the Summer Triangle gives them confidence in locating first magnitude stars. They learn how ancient peoples used lunar cycles and zodiac constellations as a natural calendar to guide their agrarian tasks of seedtime and harvest.

Not only do students learn to navigate the night sky, they also gain access to the thoughts of great natural philosophers-turned-astronomers. Students learn how faith guided their cosmological studies, contrary to what we usually hear today. As astronomer Johannes Kepler wrote in *Astronomia Nova*:

Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it befits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God. (2)

Finally, astronomy appears as cosmology in the literature our students read. We have discussions of the Earth-centered model of heavenly spheres developed by the Greco-Roman polymath Cladius Ptolemy. In his geometric treatise *Almagest*, Ptolemy organized the celestial sphere into concentric circles akin to Plato's theory of uniform circular motion for the perfect heavens.

Ptolemy wrote this in 102 BC, yet, over one thousand years later, Italian poet and philosopher Dante Alighieri used Ptolemy's model in *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, mirroring the soul's ascent to the Empyrean, the ultimate dwelling place of God. In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius, through Lady Philosophy, considered the heavens and was able to shift his gaze from earthly, meaningless suffering to the compassionate, providential God.

Students who recognize these astronomy connections in the humanities begin to realize how their learning leads to virtue or, as St. Augustine stated “rightly ordered loves” (*City of God*, XV.22). In pursuit of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, astronomy as the capstone of the Quadrivium is intricately woven into the work of virtue, pointing our students toward a universe ordered by and human hearts aligned to God.

(1) Astronomy in the Quadrivium. (2025, December 17). New Aberdeen College. <https://newaberdeencollege.com/astronomy-in-the-quadrivium-the-crown-of-the-mathematical-arts/>

(2) Baumgardt, Carola, Johannes Kepler: Life and Letters (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1951)



The Astronomer by Johannes Vermeer (1668)

MRS. ROSEMIND TABER
RHETORIC SCHOOL MATHS & SCIENCES

Mrs. Taber holds a Master's Degree from Regent University. Her passion is to instill wonder in her students about the natural, created world that encourages them to worship the Creator. Mrs. Taber is privileged to work alongside her husband at Oakdale Academy.



THE ANNUAL FUND



OVERWHELMING GOODNESS AND GENEROSITY

The 2025-2026 school year saw Oakdale Academy celebrate 15 years of classically educating students. It also saw our largest fundraising totals to date. During a time of financial burden in replacing our aging roof, there was a contagious outpouring of support. Through our fundraising efforts all year and through the Walk-a-thon and inaugural Golf Outing, your generosity helped Oakdale raise roughly \$300,000!

All glory, for this tremendous blessing of gifts, goes to our Lord Jesus Christ. We know, though, that you responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting to generously support Oakdale, even above and beyond what was comfortable for you. We are overwhelmed by your generosity and the Lord's faithful provision for our small, but mighty, school community.

We cannot thank you enough for your prayers and support of Oakdale Academy.

*But thou hast arranged all things by
measure and number and weight. -
Wisdom of Solomon 11:20*

THE QUADRIVIAL ARTS: THE TRANSCENDENTALS IN MUSIC



During summer break, my wife and I attended a Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert at the amazing venue of Orchestra Hall, an inspirational performance space of extreme beauty.

As I sat in my main floor seat and observed the wonderful symmetry of the string section moving their bows in unison, the sounds of Rachmaninoff filled my ears with great aural satisfaction and my spirit was lifted.

Music certainly has the ability to stir the emotions but many do not realize the brilliance of music found in the Quadrivium.

At Oakdale Academy, we have given ourselves to the exploration and study of the Trivium and Quadrivium. The Trivium is devoted to the art of words and focuses on Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. The Quadrivium is directed toward the art of numbers, consisting of arithmetic, mathematics, astronomy, and music.

It may appear from a superficial glance that music does not belong in that Quadrivium family, but if one dives deeply, one will find the wonder and connections of numbers within music. The great mathematician and thinker, Pythagoras, helped develop our modern, western tonal system. He discovered that ratios corresponded to intervals (distance between pitches).

For example, if you want to produce a sound one octave higher on a violin, you shorten the string by 50%. Pythagoras discovered that whole number ratios produce the goodness of harmony and that non-whole number ratios produce harsh, ugly sounds. These observations set the table for the major scale that we hear in 99% of western music.

There is a beauty of logic and numerical symmetry to be found in music. Last year students at Oakdale learned about the Circle of Fourths for “flat keys” and the Circle of Fifths for “sharp keys.” They also were shown that the template of a major scale stays the same no matter what pitch one uses for “Do” (the first note of a major scale).

The study of numbers in the Quadrivium proclaims that there is truth and goodness, beauty and purpose, and wonder and order in this special organization of sound that we simply call music.

MR. EDDIE TABER VOCAL & INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Mr. Taber holds a Master's Degree in Music Education and has more than four decades of experience teaching vocal music and band. Mr. Taber and his family were formerly missionaries to India. They have four grown children and two grandchildren.



THANK YOU TO OUR 2025-2026 ANNUAL FUND SPONSORS!

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A Scholar in his Study by Thomas Wyck (1616)

THE QUADRIVIAL ARTS: ARITHMETIC - DELIGHTING IN THAT WHICH IS

I still remember the closing slide of my senior capstone presentation in college as I stood before my university's Mathematics Department and wrapped up a 20-page proof demonstrating how a prime number is guaranteed to exist between any integer and its double. Like any good capstone presentation, mine concluded with the inevitable question: "Why does this matter?"

Knowing that mathematics teachers hear this question perhaps more than any other subject, I answered with a response that no student wants to hear, yet every mathematician secretly delights in:

"It is important because it *is*."

The answer was intentionally meant to appeal to my fellow mathematicians' humor, as we laughed thinking about the literature or history capstones down the hall that had likely required many pages to explain why their arguments mattered. My simple answer almost seemed, to the unknowing eye, like a facetious one that could have cost my whole grade. But to a mathematician, it was more than enough, for these small words contained the whole reason we devote ourselves to proofs. A mathematical truth is worth studying not because it is useful, but because it belongs to reality. In other words, it is good because it *is*.

On many occasions in my Oakdale classes, I have had the privileged experience to lead students through such mind-boggling mathematical properties that even the most disgruntled teenagers get inquisitive about them. Whether it be factoring by grouping, completing the square, or beholding the patterns in Pascal's Triangle, my students and I regularly step back at the whiteboard and pause in awe and delight. And following the moments of awe inevitably comes the infamous series of questions:

"How did that work? Who made this up? Is it always going to work like that every single time?"

*Numbers are a map of the
beautiful order of the universe, the
plan by which the divine Architect
transformed undifferentiated
Chaos into orderly Cosmos.*
- Michael S. Schneider

It is these questions that truly give life to my soul as a teacher, as I am privileged with the most humbling honor to tell these wondering students:

"This is not something that was concocted or made-up. No human being decided that $2 + 2 = 4$. Rather, the Creator made a world in which this mathematics is true. The properties of mathematics were not created by man; they were discovered. They were not manufactured; they simply are. And that sense of wonder you feel right now? That is just a small fraction of the joy and delight we were created to encounter when contemplating that which is."

The students and I have come to learn, through these little encounters with mathematics, that there is something profoundly beautiful and satisfying about realities that simply are. They exist independently of us. We do not invent them or improve them. We simply receive them, and we delight in them.

It is fitting, then, that the fullest declaration of being is found not in mathematics, but in Sacred Scripture. When Moses asked God His name, the Lord answered, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14).



Rhetoric School students at the Detroit Institute of Arts

The Lord's answer here is so much more than just His name; rather, it is a revelation of His very essence. He is the One who simply is – the unchanging source of all truth, beauty, and goodness. And that beauty of order, structure, and logic that we find so captivating in the world of mathematics – this is just a mere reflection of the One from whom it came.

This is why those moments around the whiteboard matter so deeply. They are about far more than students learning algebraic equations or systematic proofs. They are moments of contemplation. Every time students stand in awe before a truth that simply is, they are practicing the very habit that the practice of classical education truly seeks to cultivate: the ability to delight in that which is. For in learning to contemplate the beauty of what is, we are gradually awakening the appetite of our intellect to contemplate the beauty of the One Who Is.

This is why mathematics is important. Because it is.



MS. MOLLY LAMB
RHETORIC SCHOOL MATHEMATICS

Ms. Lamb holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from Ave Maria University. She loves instilling a sense of wonder and joy in her students as they marvel at mathematical truths.

PHILANTHROPY AT OAKDALE ACADEMY

This past year overwhelming generosity and gifts made a significant impact for our students, faculty, programs, and in our building. Your giving totaled roughly \$300,000 and makes a day-to-day difference! Your annual fund gifts:

- Purchased three large masterpieces for the Kindergarten hallway, completing our art installation in all four hallways
- Upgraded and installed smart security cameras surrounding the perimeter of our campus
- Supported classical teacher development through seminars, conferences, and curriculum training
- Allowed for continued beautification of our campus
 - Painting of three classrooms, the lobby, and main hallway
 - Purchase and installation of twelve pieces of classical artwork that has been installed in these classrooms
 - Purchase and installation of team benches and spectator bleachers for the Spencer Real Estate Athletic Field at Oakdale Academy
- Enhanced marketing efforts through professional videography and partnership with Niche
- Filled pot holes in our asphalt parking lot
- Provided professional sound equipment to enhance our 15th Anniversary Celebration and Concert
- Purchased grills for concessions/events on campus
- Supported our Athletic Department
- Sponsored events, including the Walk-a-thon, Golf Outing, the Square Dance, Convivium, and the Daddy Daughter Dance
- Repaired and repainted concrete on the circle drive
- Purchased new furniture for the Rhetoric School humanities classrooms
- Purchased prizes for the Walk-a-thon
- Provided food for the Fall Convocation dinner and Walk-a-thon
- Donated luxury items for our inaugural golf outing
- Supported teachers' needs in our faculty/staff lounge
- Provided a venue for hosting Convivium
- Provided analysis of parent satisfaction surveys
- Provided dental coverage for our faculty and staff
- Provided equipment for recess and sledding
- Donated professional photography services
- Donated lawn treatments and landscaping to beautify our gardens and lawn
- Met the greatest needs of our school community



EXTRAORDINARY NEW FACULTY



Dr. Bridget Balint joins Oakdale Academy after spending the past couple of decades teaching Latin and Medieval Studies to students at Indiana University. She holds a PhD in Medieval Latin from Harvard University. She joins our Rhetoric School Humanities Department.



Dr. James Burnett joins Oakdale Academy after spending decades pastoring and teaching at the collegiate level. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Minnesota. He joins our Rhetoric School Humanities Department and is teaching Drama this year.



Mrs. Katie Hable joins Oakdale Academy after teaching third grade at a classical Christian school in Georgia. She has a passion for classical Christian education and delighting in God's creation. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Theology from Ave Maria University. She joins our Grammar School in 1st and 3rd grade Language Arts and Math.

WRESTLING: CULTIVATOR OF VIRTUE, MAKER OF MEN



I began wrestling in high school because I wanted to be tougher and cool like my neighborhood buddies who were “grapplers”. I continued wrestling in college because I was good at it, and I was very competitive. However, in college, God helped me discover a deeper purpose in life beyond the satisfaction of being good at it and enjoying the competition against some of the best wrestlers in the world, I began living and wrestling for the glory of Jesus Christ, which was much more fulfilling. I began coaching wrestling to share my love for wrestling with our three sons when they were young. However, God quickly impressed upon me the many ways in which the sport of wrestling could be used to help train young men and help them grow in character, discipline, resiliency, humility, self-control, and other godly virtues that would help them become god-honoring men for His glory. Young men often turn to the wrong sources for guidance. God helped show me that not only could I share my lessons from the

wrestling mat and the extremely hard work that it takes to be successful, but I could also share my love for Christ to teach these young men a God-centered vision of manhood.

To date, I have coached the Oakdale Patriot wrestlers for 13 years and each year I have thanked God for a successful season – where we have had fun while seeing growth technically, physically, mentally, and spiritually, through difficult training, competitions, and scripture memorization. I have tried to teach each wrestler how to win and lose with humility and grace and how to show their opponents respect by realizing that their opponents have often worked just as hard as they have. In teaching them how to assess their own performance and consider their weaknesses and strengths in a victory or a defeat, and then how to make corrections and to better utilize their strengths, I have taught them to be accountable for their own successes and failures in competition.

The sport of wrestling is very hard and demanding and helps build steadfastness, which hopefully translates into responsibility for studies, family, work, and ministry. As the student athletes learn how to manage their time, study and sleep habits improve, and paralyzing thoughts such as fear, doubt, pride, and worry dissipate. These young men build internal strength, confidence, and resiliency. Wrestling teaches them how to fight when they are down and on their backs. They learn perseverance and not to give up when they are tired or struggling, which will benefit them in their academics and when life can be even harder than a wrestling match or practice. They have learned to keep trying instead of looking for an excuse for a rest or to quit. After a tough match, there is also the opportunity to praise and encourage them because of their performance, attitude, or Christ-like response to adversity. Young men need affirmation and praise for their excellent work.

Finally, I believe that wrestling produces two more wonderful results which glorify God and make Him smile. First, wrestling builds strong friendships and camaraderie because of the mutual respect earned from one another. Second, it teaches the wrestlers to be good huggers. Grapplers love to hug and that surely brings our heavenly Father joy and pleasure!



**MR. STEVE BENNINGER
WRESTLING COACH &
RHETORIC SCHOOL
MATHEMATICS**

Mr. Benninger holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan, where he wrestled for the university team. He has coached Oakdale's wrestling team to seven state titles since 2011. His three sons are graduates of Oakdale. Mr. Benninger and his wife Jennifer were one of Oakdale's founding families.

"For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."
1 Timothy 4:8

ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

Rigor with Joy: From Oakdale to the U.S. Air Force

By Cameron Spencer ('25)

When I first came to Oakdale, I was not motivated to achieve excellence in anything I did, much less in school. Previously, I had attended a school where it was acceptable for me not to try my hardest. I had been “getting by” with my schoolwork. I received a significant shock my first semester at Oakdale; excellence was expected of the students at every point in our learning.

In my current career in the United States Air Force, excellence is absolutely expected of us in every aspect of our job, from basic training, to going to work in the field. Oakdale not only gave me motivation to strive for excellence, but to work hard and to be proud and joyful in hard work.

Rigor with joy is a key saying at Oakdale. All of the tools that Oakdale Academy gave me has prepared me to serve God and my country with pride and to labor with joy.



NATIONAL RANKING

Oakdale Academy again made the national rankings for scores on the Classical Learning Test, this time for the CLT10, taken by our Freshmen and Sophomore students. The CLT is taken by our 3rd grade through 12th grade students annually, in the spring. The CLT is now widely recognized by colleges, universities, and military academies across the United States, demonstrating that classical education is equipping our students to succeed.



OUR GRADUATES ATTEND

Boyce College | Calvin College | Cedarville University | Ferris State University | Grace College | Grand Canyon University | Grand Valley University | Grove City University | Hillsdale College | Hope College | Kettering University | Liberty University | Mississippi Christian College | Oakland University | Rochester Christian University | United States Air Force | University of Michigan | Wayne State University

ALUMNI UPDATE

Andrew Benninger ('18) completed a master's degree in counseling and now works at Easter Seals in Auburn Hills, Michigan. He and his wife, Mackenzie, just welcomed their second son in July!

Luke Benninger ('16) continues to work as a Resident Staff Missionary at Camp Barakel in northern Michigan. He and his wife, Katie, recently welcomed their 4th child - their first son!

Tim Benninger ('18) and **Emily (Rumbuc) Benninger** ('19) live in Oxford, Michigan with their baby girl. Emily owns a successful wedding florals business and Tim recently started his own welding business, while continuing to work for Williams International.

JC Fox ('25) completed a summer internship broadcasting for the Florida Collegiate Summer League with the DeLand Suns in Orlando, Florida, as part of his sports broadcasting major at Mississippi Christian College.

Caroline Sias ('22) graduated from Grand Canyon University this May and is teaching dance and serving in youth ministry in Phoenix, Arizona.

Cameron Spencer ('25) completed basic training and has been stationed in Japan, serving in the United States Air Force.

Evan Surmont ('21) attended Kettering University and Oakland University, obtaining a degree in Industrial Engineering. He married his sweetheart, Sarah, over the summer. Evan is employed by Williams International and the couple resides in their new home in the metro Detroit area.

Wyatt Surmont ('22) is completing his final term at Oakdale University and will earn a degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering. Wyatt secured employment with Williams International, following a successful internship during his junior and senior years.



If you have alumni news you'd like to share with us, please send an email to office@oakdaleacademy.com and mention "Alumni News" in the subject line.



The mission of Oakdale Academy is to instill Character, Truth, and Wisdom in our students in order to prepare them for a life of service to God, family, community, and country through classical Christian education.



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