

# The Mount Carmel Way

Keys to Academic Success  
At Mount Carmel

“To Live with **Z**eal for God, for Life, for Learning”

You have to study a great deal to know a little.  
Baron de Montesquieu

2010-2011

## **Three Keys to Success**

### **Be Here/Be Prepared**

- MC Students are in school every day. Something important happens every day: new information is given, new activities reinforce what has already been learned and critical skills are practiced.
- MC come to class on time, since readiness is a key to success.
- MC students sit up straight and sit up front. They use their bodies to help their minds learn.
- MC students get enough sleep, nutrition and recreation outside of school so that they can be at school healthy, alert and ready to learn.
- MC students know the dress code and are dressed accordingly, so that no class time is wasted on correcting such things.
- MC students keep a calendar or assignment notebook with them to make sure they do not forget an important date, assignment or task.
- MC students bring their books, notebooks, their pens and pencils with them to class. This allows them to focus on the class itself.
- MC students bring their assignments and homework to class and do not have to go to their lockers to retrieve them during class time.
- MC students review their notes each night for homework. They know that reviewing, sorting, interpreting and connecting information is the primary way they will learn the course material.
- MC students work together with each other and with the teacher outside of class. They are not afraid to ask for help from the teacher or their parents and they are able to work in study groups to master the material and prepare for the next class.
- MC students know how to read and write effectively. They follow the rules listed in the “MC Writing Guidelines” posted in every classroom.

### **Be Aware/Pay Attention**

- MC students know the discipline code and follow the rules. They understand that this makes the most of the time they have in school.
- MC students keep their attention focused. They avoid distracting others during class and they keep themselves from being distracted as well.
- MC students listen carefully to the teacher for information and for directions.
- MC students are alert to non- verbal cues like gestures, body language and tone of voice- since teachers communicate in this way as well as with words.
- MC students set goals for themselves and then study and work to achieve them. They understand that a sense of purpose is crucial to learning and they take an active part in their education. They do not just sit back like a sponge and try to soak up information.
- MC students know themselves- they know the learning style through which they are most successful and they use the tools to help them maintain this success.

- MC students take good notes. They develop a shorthand, which works for them, whether that is an outline, a diagram or some other technique. They keep these notes in a notebook or journal, which allows them to organize and retrieve the information later without too much trouble or without losing them.
- MC students ask questions when they don't understand the material and they work to see connections between courses in different departments.
- MC students participate in class discussions and activities. They actively listen to each other and they show respect for the ideas of everyone in the room.

*The reading of all good books is like the conversation with the finest men of past centuries.*  
Descartes

### Do your Homework

- Read with a plan.
  1. What is the purpose of the reading assignment?
  2. What clues are in the textbook/reading to help accumulate the information?
  3. Are there other textbook(s)/materials that I can read too or instead, if necessary?
- Read effectively.
  1. Skim the reading assignment first.
  2. Then go back to gather the details- first the who, what, when, where, and then the why and how and the more subtle information..
  3. Make a list of unfamiliar words/vocabulary that you encounter.
  4. Review the reading when you have completed the assignment. If you can summarize what you have read, or test yourself on key ideas, you have been successful.
  5. To increase your speed and comprehension and retention: focus on what you are doing , convince yourself that you will remember this material , link what is new to things you already know. Then—study that material each night so it becomes familiar to you and connected to what you learn tomorrow.

Complete written assignments.

1. Work on problems, questions, essays, worksheets or short-term assignments first. Check your assignment notebook: What is due tomorrow? What is due at the end of the week? What is due next week?
  2. Set up a schedule for long term assignments. How large is this research project or assignment? How much time will it take? How much time must be spent each day/ each week to complete the long term project by the due date?
  3. Proof read your written work. Have you clearly conveyed your ideas, begun with a thesis, provided specific examples and composed a conclusion? Have you written your assignments neatly, and followed all the rules of English grammar (spelling, punctuation, complete sentences, capitalization, etc.)?
- Study
    1. Your homework is incomplete until you review the notes you took in class, pre-read assignments or readings for tomorrow's class, study for the quizzes at the end of the week/ or the exams for the next week, revise written work that you

have done, or generally read a newspaper or another chapter from your textbook or a novel or some other reading of your choice.

2. Set goals for yourself... then study often and hard to achieve those goals. Practice is necessary in any athletic endeavor- and practice (or studying) is necessary if you intend to master the subject matter in your courses.
3. Be active in your study and reading- understand key ideas, underline an important word, develop a diagram, draw a picture, construct a concept map or some visual representation of the information to aid yourself in remembering these details, outline the material, write questions about the information, connect it to things that you know/have done, etc.
4. Maybe establish a study group- a small group of other students in your course that would enjoy working together to learn, review, prepare, achieve success in your course.
5. Invest the time and energy you need to invest to do well. Don't ever say 'I'll never need this stuff.' You never know when the subject matter, the skills and these experiences will be useful to you in the future.

### For Parents

- **Make homework a priority.** Don't allow homework to be your son's last priority, but insist that he address his homework before watching television, calling friends or heading out for fun.
- **Set up a homework routine.** A regular time for homework, the same place each day will strengthen his production.
- **Limit distractions.** Remember that as a parent, you have the right to limit or rescind your son's privileges if he is not achieving in school.
- **Monitor your son's homework.** Make sure that he uses a homework notebook/assignment notebook at school and ask him to explain assignments to you each night.
- **Praise your son for work well done.** Review any written work and encourage him to revise anything that is less than his best effort. See to it that he stays on task.
- **Allow for reasonable breaks during homework time.** It often helps to suggest that your son work for twenty minutes, followed by a five or ten minute break (perhaps with a snack). The key, however, is to insist he return to his work after the break.
- **Declare that there is no such thing as a "no homework" day.** Successful students study every day, even on weekends, and realize that "homework" means more than written assignments. They also realize that even when nothing has been assigned, they still need to study: review class notes. Pre-read upcoming sections of a text, studying for quizzes and exams, revising written work to improve its quality, etc.
- **Encourage and motivate your son to read.** The best students read everyday, whether it be a chapter from a textbook, the newspaper or newsmagazines, a novel or some other book of their choice.
- **If your son seems to be spending an unreasonable amount of time doing homework, evaluate what's wrong.** Look at his after school schedule and make adjustments. Make sure that study time is being used productively. Assess how much time is being spent watching TV or listening to music or talking on the phone. Share your concerns with your son's teacher(s).

- **Convince your son of reality.** Sometimes students think that their grades will never be important beyond Mt. Carmel. Share with them the reality that a good effort, a successful performance, good behavior and the record of other activities will combine with their good looks, talents and personality and be reviewed by colleges, trade schools, employers and at other significant milestones in life.

*I recommend that you learn to take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.*  
*Lord Chesterton*

## **Some Important Skills to Succeed**

### **General**

- Assess your learning style – are you a person who learns best by repetition? By writing things down? By studying your notes? By working with others? By hearing the material out loud? By drawing a picture or diagram or outline? By answering important questions?
- Organize effectively – keep your locker in order, your folder up to date. Do your reading on time.
- Budget your time – allow for time to participate in extra- curricular activities, add time for your commute back and forth to school. Make time to eat and chill out a bit. But then, budget the time you need to do your written assignments, to do your reading, to re-read your notes or study the material you learned in class today.
- Keep an assignment notebook – you can see where the long range assignments fit on the calendar and what is due for tomorrow or at the end of the week as well.
- Speak up in class or before or after school or in emails –your teachers want to know if you have any questions or if you are certain about what is expected of you.
- Listen actively –taking notes, writing key words, phrases, underlining important information in a handout or the reading

### **More specific skills:**

- Reading –reading is important in every course and in everything you do today and in the future. If reading is not your strength, get help. Ask your teachers for a guide to reading your textbook. Ask other students how they read effectively. Enroll in a workshop or program that will help you to increase your reading comprehension, your reading speed, your reading retention. Most important, read, read, read. An athlete practices a skill to improve the skills he needs. The more you read, the faster, better, more successful reader you will be.
- Writing- writing is the next most important skill in every course and in the days ahead. Mt. Carmel has standardized Writing Guidelines. Read them, follow them and your writing will not only improve but will never earn point deductions for careless construction or disorganization.
- Thinking- every good student thinks about what he hears, what he reads, what he sees around him. It is essential that you thoughtfully consider the information to which you are exposed and to apply reason and logic to all that you do, all that you write, all that you say, all that you do. Since our world is full of sound bites and generalizations, you will distinguish yourself by the clarity of thought and the specific examples you give to support your ideas. Good students are good thinkers.

Good students think through problems and compute the answers carefully. Good students analyze lab experiments and follow the systematic scientific method to come up with results. Good students evaluate sources, select tools that are most appropriate and categorize tasks to use technology effectively. Good students know the grammatical elements of the foreign language they are studying and then apply those rules to the written and oral work they do. And good students/good thinkers become good, productive citizens. Good students go the extra mile!

- Remembering – improving your memory is an important skill to master. Taking notes, highlighting important words and phrases, reading carefully, developing some visual device to remember the information are all tools that can help. The most important tools are to connect the new information to things you already know AND to practice, practice, practice.
- Speaking – people are identified as well- educated, knowledgeable and refined as soon as they speak their first words. Always consider what you say carefully. Always support your ideas with specific evidence. Always prepare well for class so you can participate in the discussions and daily class activities. Speaking well is not only a skill for Performing Arts Class. It will be important in all of your classes, in your extra-curricular experiences and throughout your life.
- Risk-taking- though it is always easier to let someone else do the talking, or to let someone else take the lead. Mt. Carmel students stand apart from others when they step forward to participate in class. Mt. Carmel students stand apart from others when they volunteer to help someone else or to engage in various activities, even if they have never done them before. Mt. Carmel students stand apart from others because they do the right thing, always.

*He listens well who takes notes.*

*Dante*

## Who Can Help

- **Your parents** –no one loves you like your parents do, no one is more committed to your success than your parents. Rely on their advice, their wisdom, their assistance. Ask them.
- **Your counselor** – MC has four counselors who are here to offer not only assistance on your program of studies but also on other day-to-day challenges of growing up. Ask them.
- **Your teachers** – each day you will encounter three to six different teachers and depending on your activities maybe many more. They have expertise and experience with the subject matter they teach, but they are also good human beings who want to see you become men of character. Ask them.
- **Your coaches** – both athletic and extra-curricular coaches are here to teach the sport or activity to which you belong. They are also people who have grown up mastering high school, mastering a college education, mastering a sport or extra-curricular. Ask them.
- **Your fellow students** – sometimes the guy sitting next to you has understood the material better, or written the assignment correctly, or got the process for completing the problem accurately. Ask them.
- **Yourself** – know yourself. What are your strengths? What areas need improvement? Take a good look at yourself, your learning style, your previous successes. Try to repeat those successes each time you read, each time you complete an assignment, each time you prepare for a test, each time you organize your things, each time you study, etc.

*Learn as though you would never be able to master it; hold it as if you would be in fear of losing it.*  
Confucius

# Steps in the Writing Process

Mt. Carmel students will find that careful utilization of the following steps will make even the most ambitious project more manageable, and will insure the best possible final product of your efforts.

The page numbers refer to *Rules for Writers* (Hacker, 2009), which has been selected as the official writing guide for Mt. Carmel High School. All students should have a copy of this book. (**NOTE-** Mt. Carmel adheres to the Modern Language Association, or MLA, style.)

Step	Action	Reference
1.	Get a topic	pp. 3-10, especially list on p.3
2.	Develop a thesis	pp. 411-412, 23-24
3.	Research your thesis, evaluate your sources	pp. 382-404
4.	Revise your thesis	pp. 411-412, 16-17, 23-24
5.	Chart the information, avoid plagiarism	pp. 2-18, 405-463
6.	Outline the information	pp. 18-21
7.	Write the introduction	pp. 20-40
8.	Write the body paragraphs	pp. 40-57, 25-26
9.	Write the conclusion	pp. 26-27
10.	Revise and edit	pp. 27-39
11.	Create bibliography	pp. 382-463
12.	Publish	pp 463-475

**See Companion Website for additional resources:**  
<http://www.dianahacker.com/rules>

## Written Assignment Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

	5	4	3	2	1	0	Points awarded
Timeliness	Paper submitted on time with rubric attached by paperclip/staple		Paper one day late or submitted without attached rubric.			Paper submitted more than one day late.	
Organization	Information in a very logical and interesting sequence which reader can follow	Student presents Information in an acceptably logical and interesting sequence which reader can follow.	Reader has difficulty following work because ideas are not developed in a logical manner.	Sequence of information is very difficult to follow.	Sequence of information is impossible- to- extremely difficult to follow.	Unacceptable	
Content Knowledge	Student demonstrates full Knowledge(more than required)	Student demonstrates substantial knowledge.	Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.	Student is uncomfortable with content and is unable to demonstrate basic concepts	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.	Unacceptable	
Spelling & Grammar (see <i>Hacker</i> , 2004)	Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	Presentation has minimal misspellings and/or grammatical errors that have no significant impact on the effectiveness of the presentation.	Presentation has minimal misspellings and/or grammatical errors that have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the presentation.	Presentation has multiple misspellings and/or grammatical errors that have a seriously negative impact on the effectiveness of the presentation.	Work has extensive spelling errors and/or Grammatical errors that have a seriously negative impact on the effectiveness of the presentation.	Unacceptable	
References (see <i>Hacker</i> , 2004)	Work displays the correct scope and number of references, written correctly.	Reference section is not exhaustive but is acceptable.	Reference section is not complete and/or the format is incorrect.	Work has only a minimum of references and the format is seriously deficient.	Work displays no references and/or the format is grossly deficient.	Unacceptable	

Total points awarded for this portion of the assignment\*

\* This number will be an average of the previous points awarded and will be multiplied by a factor of 20, to be graded on a 100 point scale.

# Mt. Carmel Writing Guidelines

Student's Last Name, Page Number

Your Full Name

Course Name, Period Number

Teacher's Name

Date

This is the Title

All margins (top, bottom, sides) are set at one inch. On the right side of every page, you will type your last name followed by the page number. The heading is placed on the left side of the first page. Use a standard font such as Times Roman and set at twelve points. Do not underline the title.

Center the title of the paper. Do not begin a new page before you reach the one-inch margin on the bottom section. Always double-space when writing/word-processing a paper.

The names of books, plays, pamphlets and periodicals or newspapers should be in italics or underlined. Titles of poems, short stories and materials printed by a museum or institution are placed inside quotation marks.

In formal writing assignments you should use formal standard English. For example, unlike spoken English, you should not use contractions.

Use parenthetical citations in the body of a paper (Author, page number). The full citation is in the bibliography. You must always use parenthetical citations for direct citations and if you borrow substantially from the author's ideas or the ideas presented by a tour guide or some printed document.

Finally, check your work carefully. Tools like spell check are helpful but do not always catch all the errors (e.g. *to* for *two*, or typos like *tat* for *that*). The same caution applies to grammar check. Be aware of this and proofread your work.

*These thoughts did not come in any verbal formulation  
I rarely think in words at all. A thought comes, and I  
may try to express it in words afterward.*  
Albert Einstein

## **Four More Things...**

### **How Boys Learn Most Effectively**

On an earlier page in this booklet, one important skill to add to your repertoire was to assess your learning style. In addition, be aware of the unique learning needs you have as a boy. The research done by Michael Gurian, indicates that you will learn most effectively if you recognize

- your need for clear directions and firm, consistent parameters,
- exact specifications on any activity, assignment or project,
- problem-solving and critical thinking activities,
- movement, debate/verbal opportunities and competition and
- choice and variety in activities.

This means that when you don't hear or understand the directions, when you are not challenged to think 'outside the box' or measure your own work against your peers, you may not be working up to the potential you have. Look for the kinds of activities that will enhance your effectiveness. If they are not provided, compare your work to the work of your peers, or better yet, set competitive goals for yourself (for example, aim for five points higher on the next test, or read an extra chapter for homework, or create your own learning tools that offer problem-solving or that allow you to incorporate movement into your study time, etc.).

### **Using Technology to Demonstrate What You Have Learned**

You will take at least two technology courses during your work at Mount Carmel, in addition to all the exposure to and activities that our times and society offer to us. Multimedia, websites, digital discussion boards, wiki sites, video creation and editing, and other sophisticated tools are meant to enhance the basics of Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel and spreadsheets. Learn those technologies and programs. Use that technology as often as you can to illustrate your creativity, to communicate and work collaboratively, to research, analyze and organize information, to help with critical thinking and problem-solving. And remember that as a good digital citizen, you need to use technology safely, legally and ethically.

### **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens**

In 1998, Sean Covey, composed this book, based upon the highly successful book of his father, Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. The concept of a habit is that you do it without thinking because you have performed the activity so many times it comes automatically to you when needed. Developing the following habits add even more opportunities for you to succeed. Covey's list of habits include:

- **Be Proactive.** Take responsibility for your life. You make decisions and consequences follow those decisions.

- **Begin with the End in Mind.** Define your mission and goals, now, and work towards them. Take the steps, do the work, follow through on the requirements that will achieve your goals.
- **Put First Things First.** Prioritize and do the most important things, like homework, first, before sports practice, video games, internet surfing, etc.
- **Think Win-Win.** Have an 'everyone-can-win' attitude rather than a 'me first' expectation. If everyone participates, everyone should enjoy the outcomes, the rewards, the success.
- **Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.** Listen to others sincerely, respecting their point of view, their position or their idea. Try to find the middle ground in any debate.
- **Synergize.** Work together to achieve more. Teamwork often makes the project successful. Incorporating the diverse talents and ideas of others enriches any and every activity.
- **Sharpen the Saw.** Renew yourself regularly. Eat breakfast, choose healthy foods, exercise and give up bad habits and get an appropriate amount of sleep. Read your textbooks and course materials, study the content and practice those academic skills, read a newspaper every day, and expand your experiences by reading beyond the requirements, visiting a museum or learning a new skill. Take time for your family and friends and cultivate the relationships that matter most in life. Volunteer your time and talents beyond the Christian Service projects that you complete. Remember the **Caravan Values** that underlie all that we do at Mount Carmel.

**Our CARAVAN Values** (from *our Vision Statement* and posted on banners in the Commons)

*It is with zeal that we as a community seek to instill a love for God, a passion for all that life offers, and a commitment to learning in all of our young men. We accomplish our mission by committing to our Caravan Values.*

- Character - As the premier Catholic, college-preparatory school for boys in the Chicago area, Mount Carmel is committed to the work of **BUILDING CHARACTER** that will prepare young men to live their vocations with faith and passion.
- Academic Excellence - Mount Carmel High School is committed to **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**, and to a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for acceptance into college and success in life.
- Respect and Responsibility - Mount Carmel High School is committed to a diverse student body, and to teaching students **RESPECT** for others and **RESPONSIBILITY** for the community in which they live and learn.
- A Family Atmosphere - Mount Carmel High School is committed to **A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE** that embraces every student, appreciates every parent, and treasures every alumnus.
- Values for Christian Living - Mount Carmel High School is committed to our Catholic identity, to a curriculum that teaches the **VALUES** of **CHRISTIAN LIVING** and to activities that challenge students to grow in their faith and commitment to service, walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

- Athletic Achievement - Mount Carmel High School is committed to exceptional ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT and other extra and co-curricular activities that provide students with life-shaping experiences of discipline, teamwork and goal-setting.
- Nurturing Environment - Mount Carmel High School is committed to an educational experience that is rooted in the most effective strategies for teaching boys, and to providing students with the rules, structures and personal support that create a genuinely NURTURING ENVIRONMENT.