

Philosophy, Research Basis, and Development of A Beka Book Educational Materials

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A Beka Book materials are developed with well-established philosophical and research foundations, providing an excellent K–12 educational program that is unashamedly Christian and traditional.

Philosophy of Education

The *A Beka Book* educational approach is founded on biblical principles and the concepts of traditional education. The Bible provides insight into educational matters including human nature, knowledge, authority, orderliness, and philosophy. *A Beka Book* firmly acknowledges that a Christian program of study must look to the Bible to inform the use of methods and materials in the classroom. Accordingly, teacher resources, student texts, assessments, and support materials have been designed to work together within this philosophical framework.

Early American educators employed methods that have been proven to work and that have become the tradition of excellence in education. Traditional educators understood the nature of the child and most often looked to the Bible as the source of truth. The resulting pedagogy included an emphasis on instruction and review, adherence to a well-planned curriculum, direction and instruction by an authoritative teacher, a well-structured learning environment, individual accountability, and the inclusion of character

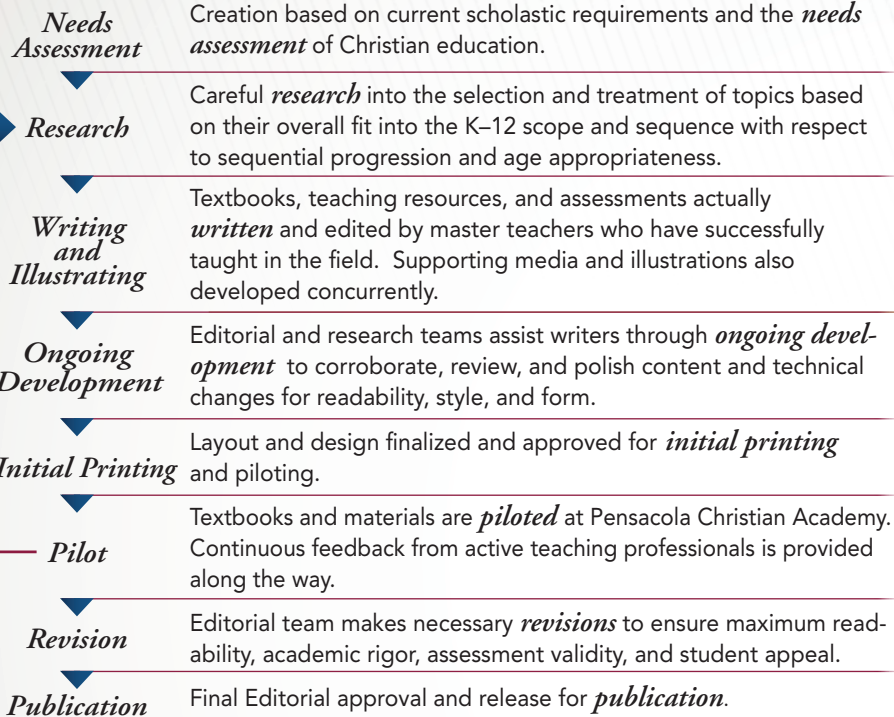
training. *A Beka Book* textbooks and materials incorporate the same proven traditional approach to teaching and learning.

This is different from what has crept into much of American education since the middle of the last century. The philosophy has been promoted as an innovative approach to teaching and learning called progressive education. Based upon naturalistic and relativistic thinking, most of the popular education ideas today are built upon progressive notions with a focus on humanistic views of a child's nature. The resulting paradigm is characterized by an emphasis on experience, attention to student needs and desires, facilitation by teachers, a natural (permissive) environment, collaborative learning, and the clarification of values emphasizing tolerance.

While progressive methods constantly change as new theories become popular, *A Beka Book* has continued to implement traditional methodology in materials. These materials are designed to reflect sensible theory firmly

Development Process

Our process demonstrates academic integrity, content research, trial testing, and ongoing evaluation to provide the very best in Christian educational materials.



Dr. Shoemaker is Administrator of Pensacola Christian Academy, Pensacola, Florida, the home of A Beka Book.



You can trust *A Beka Book* to provide the very best in traditional educational materials from a Christian perspective.

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anchored to practicality. This traditional approach to Christian education keeps learning lively, interesting, and memorable. Each grade level is developed with a clear understanding that there are absolutes—unchanging truths—in subject areas. Academic content is introduced in a sequential manner to allow for acquisition of factual knowledge as a necessary basis for higher-level learning and critical thinking. Accordingly, content in the early years concentrates

on formative learning and developing strong academic skills, while the upper grade content solidifies more advanced learning for a college preparatory program of study. In addition to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with academic growth, the materials are so designed that students can use their abilities for the glory of God while conforming their character and conduct to the standards of God's Word.

Research Basis

Traditional Education

A Beka Book textbooks, curriculums, and materials are based on results from reliable studies for traditional best practices (as opposed to a theoretical, experimental approach), and these are validated by the measured success of thousands of students over decades of time. In addition to the direct academic success of individual students, research has shown the advantage of traditional methodology over the progressive alternative.

One example of helpful research is that done by James Coleman on high school achievement in the 1980s. (See *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared*. Coleman, Hoffer, Kilgore, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1982.) Coleman is well known for his research in education which had significant impact on public policy. In one of his many studies, he conducted

controlled, large sample research on the ineffectiveness of progressive methods in raising academic achievement. His conclusions strongly support the traditional methodology due to its emphasis on structured learning and higher expectations of performance. Coleman's work is among the most reliable data regarding the validity of traditional education, and it has never been refuted.

Further support for the traditional approach is found in the writings of E. D. Hirsch. Among his books is a compelling critique of American education policy and practices titled *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (1996). In it, Hirsch details the necessity of traditional teaching wherein factual knowledge is prerequisite to true critical thinking and other higher-level learning. He denounces the educational fads that result from progressive techniques.

Phonics

Perhaps one of the most controversial topics in education is over the best approach when teaching reading. One of the hallmarks of *A Beka Book* is our intensive phonics approach which produces skilled readers beginning in kindergarten through challenging and character-developing materials. Definitive research was conducted by Jeanne Chall in the 1980s comparing phonetic instruction with sight reading. Her work, *Learning to Read: the Great Debate* (1983), concludes that children get a better start in reading if they are taught phonics because they break the code that links what they hear with what they see in print. In the years since that time, the rejection of phonics teaching by many educators in favor of the whole language philosophy has been very problematic.

Rudolph Flesch's books *Why Johnny Can't Read* (1955) and *Why Johnny Still Can't Read* (1981) brought national attention to the debate over reading and strengthened the movement toward using phonics. Despite popular progressive trends to the contrary, some educational publishers even began to include a superficial form of phonics in their texts. Today, many forms of phonics instruction can be found in various curriculums. *A Beka Book* is proud to say that from the very start, it has relied upon a pure intensive phonics approach that has taught thousands of students to become avid independent readers.

For more information and research on the traditional approach to reading, visit the National Right to Read Foundation website at www.nrrf.org/research.htm.

Research and Development

A Beka Book materials have been developed and refined over more than 50 years in the classrooms of Pensacola Christian Academy, one of America's largest and most respected Christian day schools. Christian schools throughout the nation recognize that *A Beka Book* sets the standard of excellence in the publishing of textbooks and other materials.

Our skilled researchers and writers do not paraphrase progressive education textbooks and add Biblical prin-

ciples; they do primary research in every subject and look at the subject from God's point of view. Of course, the most original source is always the Word of God, the only foundation for true scholarship in any area of human endeavor. Thus, *A Beka Book* publications are built upon the firm foundation of Scriptural truth and are written by dedicated and talented Christian scholars who are well grounded in the practical aspects of classroom teaching.