



Philosophy of Education

What being Christian and Classical means at Acacia

A Philosophy of Education delineates the shared influences and educational traditions that shape what, how and why teachers teach and students learn. Like a Vision and Mission statement it is both descriptive and aspirational. At Acacia we call ourselves Christian and classical. In this short document we try to define these terms and describe how they shape the way we teach.

A Christian School.

Our Christian faith is the starting point of our philosophy of education. Our faith permeates what we do, informs how we do it and it serves as the primary reason why the school exists. We believe that God is truth, and that all truth belongs to him and that as we seek truth, we are drawn into a fuller understanding of God and his character and his creation. Because of our faith we affirm that each child is uniquely created by God and formed in his image, that each child is inherently valuable and beautiful, a unique expression of God's creative power. We believe that God gave each child abilities and talents which we, as a school, have a responsibility to explore, develop, nurture and enjoy and that he created children as ethical beings and it is our duty to help cultivate wise and virtuous behavior, thoughts and attitudes. We view our work as a sacred undertaking that flows out of and is an expression of Christ's redemption, love and grace.

A Classical School.

Classical education theory was originally developed in the Middle Ages but it has recently been revived, and to a certain extent reinvented. Primarily in the United States it formed the philosophical starting point for an educational movement. It was a response to what many saw as declining academic standards and the creep of post-modern ideas into the classroom. Parents and teachers were nervous about the lack of academic depth and rigour in schools. They saw students graduating with poor levels of reading and writing and with significant gaps in basic understanding of science, history and geography.

A key element of a classical education theory is the "trivium" which divides education into three phases. The early years of educational development, called the

"Grammar Stage" which occurs between Grades One and Four emphasizes absorbing facts. Children enjoy hearing stories and learning new information about science, history and geography, etc and they find memorization fun. This stage lays a foundation for advanced studies. In the middle grades during the "Logic Stage" children learn to think more critically and ask why things happen the way they do. They love to debate ideas and their abstract thinking skills begin to mature. In the final phase of the trivium, the "Rhetoric Stage" during secondary school, children learn to develop and articulate arguments with greater clarity and originality and they begin the process of specializing in particular topics. [Susan Wise Bauer](#) provides a concise overview of these three phases.

In many ways, the classical education is not much different from any other primary school curricula. It focuses on numeracy and literacy. It devotes a lot of attention on the three "r's" of education: reading, writing and 'rithmetic. Extended writing and good grammar are seen as particularly important to a child's intellectual development and academic future.

The classical education also tends to focus on content. Unlike the International Baccalaureate primary curriculum (PYP) or the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), a classical curriculum wants kids to "know the stuff" not just to "learn how to learn." From an early age children have a huge capacity and appetite to learn facts. Left to their own devices, they often develop huge reservoirs of knowledge about cartoon characters, dinosaurs and sports trivia which ends up being not that important in the rest of their lives. The classical education aims to divert their attention to history, science and geography, to build a frame of knowledge that they can build on throughout life. Subjects are taught systematically.

Where possible, subjects are also integrated. History is often a backbone for learning geography and faith. Even science is often taught in conjunction with history. And a classical education is designed to be fun. In general, children love to learn. Art, drama, music, physical education and public speaking are viewed as important elements of a balanced classical education, as well. Classical education provides a very good foundation for children who matriculate to British or other European schools. In fact, at Acacia we benchmark using the British SATS to make sure that our UK students are well prepared.

Below are six reasons that we have chosen to teach the classical curriculum.

1. Classical education emphasizes written and spoken literacy. We want our children to love reading and writing. Words – not images or videos – remain the primary means of teaching and learning. Literacy forms the foundation of every child's academic future and for most people it remains an essential part of their career and will profoundly enrich their life.

2. Classical education encourages independent learning. Children are naturally inquisitive. They love exploring and asking questions and explaining their new discoveries. The classical education aims to nurture this curiosity and provide guidance and tools for

further independent learning. The goal is to motivate students to continue learning outside the classroom and long after they have left our campus.

3. Classical education is content-rich. Subject matter is taught systematically and in-depth. This is the often overlooked side of literacy. Yes, literacy can help children discover new knowledge – but knowledge also improves literacy. For example, most Americans are "functionally illiterate" when it comes to cricket; they would not be able understand or learn much if they were forced to read an article about cricket from the sports section of a newspaper. Classical education provides a broad and carefully constructed overview of content to help children begin to understand our world. The goal is to provide a foundation upon which to build and retain knowledge.

4. Subjects are interrelated. Facts, numbers and concepts learned in isolation are soon forgotten. How can subjects be connected? The classical education uses history as the backbone for integrating content. Beginning with ancient civilizations and moving to the modern history, students learn geography, art, music, social studies, technology, religion and science along the way. And, can I mention here how much children love history? Kings and queens, inventions, exploration, love and war, triumph and grief - history provides an endlessly fascinating story. Children simply love it.

5. Classical education is international. Most curricula start with the child and his family and work out to their neighborhood, city and country and perhaps eventually to the wider world. By contrast the classical curriculum starts with the early civilizations in North Africa and the Middle East and is soon traveling to India and China, Korea, Italy, Ghana and England and beyond. This material needs virtually no amendments in an international school setting.

Still curious? Read more about a classical education here:

- [Susan Wise Bauer](#)
- [The Association of Classical & Christian Schools](#)
- [Core Knowledge](#)