

Frequently Asked Questions

THE BIG, PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

What is the basic philosophy behind classical Christian education?

Classical Christian education is a program of study that combines ancient and medieval models of learning that focuses on inculcating *wisdom*, *virtue*, and *eloquence* in students by directing their minds toward *truth*, *goodness*, and *beauty*.

Classical Christian education adheres to the belief that all truth is God's truth, that God is the Creator of *truth*, *goodness*, and *beauty*, and that we are the *imago Dei*—we are made in the image of God, not physically, but reflecting the nature of God in our capacity for morality, spirituality, and intellectual creativity. We recognize and celebrate that we are embodied souls, born in wonder and designed to love: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Through this *paideia*, this *curriculum*, we shape hearts, souls, minds, and bodies in the way we believe God intended.

How is classical Christian education different from modern education?

Modern education was developed in the 19th century in order to be pragmatic and, later, entertaining. It relies on innovation, tends to dismiss “useless” (i.e.—not immediately lucrative) subjects, and instead tries to train its students to become “productive” members of society. This involves making sure that they fit in (ideologically and intellectually) with the majority and have trained in “marketable skills.” It often teaches, as author and classical educator Martin Cothran writes, “*what to think* and *how to do*.” This is not to say that modern education has no value, but it is not the only way.

Classical education embraces rigorous mental training and looks beyond the instant gratification of “marketable skills” (which often become obsolete as soon as they are learned). Instead of reading just “fun books,” we read “great books” (which, if done well, also happen to be fun). Instead of dabbling in modern languages to try to use in restaurants and on vacations, we spend years studying Latin and Greek, the building blocks not only of many modern languages but also of much thought throughout history, so that *all* our language skills develop, including those that make learning other languages easier. We learn through the liberal arts how to think in an orderly, clear way and how to express ourselves well. The emphasis on the humanities means that we constantly engage and wrestle with the deepest thoughts and most influential ideas. In the end, a classical education produces the opposite of the progressive one. Instead of being trained in “*what to think* and *how to do*,” the classical student has learned “*how to think* and *what to do*”: that is, *wisdom* and *virtue*.

So, then, what is this “modern classical education” that you do?

“Modern classical education” (or MCE) is a fairly new term that differs from “traditional” and “neo” classical education.

Traditional classical education (described above) traces its roots to the ancient Mediterranean world, centers on Latin, Greek, mathematics, and prioritizes mastery of those subjects. Its content tends to be Christian, Eurocentric, and focused on “high culture,” though most “traditional” programs have, in reality, branched out substantially from the Latin/Greek/math origins. CCA agrees with the “traditional” style that ancient languages, mathematics, and the trivium subjects of grammar, logic, and rhetoric are crucial to classical education, but we do not agree with the Eurocentric focus, nor with the extreme narrowness of fields of study in truly traditional programs.

Neoclassical education is based on “The Lost Tools of Learning,” an essay from 1947 by author and playwright Dorothy Sayers, in which Sayers took the traditional trivium and used the subjects as an analogy for child development, calling them the “stages of learning.” This idea was popularized in the 1980s by Christian homeschoolers who wanted something *like* the classical education experience, but without so much emphasis on Latin and Greek. CCA uses some neoclassical materials (such as Susan Wise Bauer's excellent *Story of the World* history series), but it is not as “classical” as we desire.

Modern classical education recognizes the value of the rigorous classical model and much of its content but also acknowledges that we do not live in the ancient Mediterranean or medieval Europe, nor does it ignore the depth and breadth of cultures throughout the *whole* world and its history. MCE is academically focused and teacher-led, not only for college preparation, but for the “soft skills” that one needs to survive and thrive in a changing world. Modern classical education can be described as education for the six C's, divided into two categories: college, career, and citizenship (which are utilitarian, extrinsic goals) and culture, cognition, and character (which are intrinsic, inherent goals). We are socially progressive and educationally conservative, looking to the past to best prepare for the future.

Frequently Asked Questions

THE SPECIFIC, PRACTICAL QUESTIONS (and maybe one or two philosophical ones, also)

Are Latin, logic, etc., really required courses? Can't we just take a "regular" curriculum?

As this is a classical academy, the classical languages and subjects are non-negotiable. This is who we are, and to lose these would fundamentally alter our program. As well, classical studies are rigorous enough without additional "elective" classes to distract from them. Finally, most "elective" classes are not particularly academic and are better suited for clubs and extracurricular activities, which we encourage.

What about STEM?

Mathematics and the natural sciences are important! In fact, mathematics and the earliest sciences were recognized as part of the core quadrivium as noted above. While classical education does emphasize the humanities to a greater degree than does much modern education, the classically educated student gains a deep understanding of the most important elements of mathematical and scientific subjects (as well as the progression of scientific thought) without concerning him or herself with broad, shallow coverage of innumerable concepts. In all things, we practice *multum non multa*.

What's *multum non multa*?

Multum non multa (sometimes phrased as *Non multa sed multum*) is a Latin phrase meaning, "Much, not many" (or, "Not many, but much"). It originates with the 1st century Roman scholar Pliny the Younger and is popular in classical education as a shorthand for indicating our tendency to choose a few subjects and go deep rather than broad. We do this by integrating subjects so that there are strong connections between them. We choose a few good books to study intently rather than a plethora of easy ones to rush through. We prefer mastery to "exposure." We work until we understand and do it well rather than accepting poor performance and "letting it slide."

Do students take a Bible class? What is it like?

Yes and no. Selections from the Bible (along with other religious texts) often appear in other literary and historical courses but are treated as literary/cultural studies. We are aware that many aspects of Biblical interpretation vary widely among equally devout believers, and we do not wish to alienate our brothers and sisters in Christ by claiming that *one* interpretation is absolute truth and the rest is heresy, so our studies of scripture are not denominationally specific. Courses in basic theology are offered to juniors and seniors as extensions and applications of our studies in history and logic.

Do you teach "old earth" or "young earth" in your science courses? What about creation? Do you teach evolution?

We teach from a creation-based, old earth perspective. As for evolution, we think it is important for students to understand the scientific theory of evolution, as students will undoubtedly encounter it in future science classes and in everyday discussions. No good purpose is served by willful ignorance, but we do not judge those who prefer to believe differently.

Why don't you require your instructors to have teaching licenses?

First, we are not a public or charter school, and we are not seeking accreditation from the state. This in no way suggests that licensed teachers are bad, nor that they cannot make good classical educators; in fact, some of our instructors *do* have teaching licenses and *have* taught in public schools. However, state teacher training is based on principles that are quite different from the foundations of classical education, so we have no requirement for state licensure. Instead, many of our instructors—especially at the high school level—hold advanced degrees and have years of classroom teaching experience.

How often do classes meet?

Normally, the academy is in operation from 8:00am-3:00pm four days each week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Palaestra (K-4th grade) classes meet on Monday/Wednesday. The Gymnasium (5th-8th) and Academy (9th-12th) students have class options for up to four days each week in two-day increments.

How often are grades given?

Individual assessments are graded and returned periodically as they are submitted. Grades are representative of instructors' honest assessments of student work, but parents are still legally homeschooling and are the teachers of record according to their umbrella school. It is ultimately the parents' responsibility to aggregate and enter grades for their students in accordance with their umbrella school's requirements, and it is their ethical responsibility to do so fairly.

What is CCA's position on diversity and inclusion?

Diversity is not only welcome but also desired. In this local area, it can be hard to come by, but we are eager to serve students of many different backgrounds. We also commit to showing respect, modeling openness, and listening thoughtfully to the lived experiences of all our students. In the interest of attaining a better understanding of creation, we are also actively working to reach beyond a narrow, Eurocentric, patriarchal focus—which can often dominate classical education—so that we can gain a broader and deeper perspective on the history of our world and of humanity.