

## **Curriculum Philosophy and Policy**

### **Core Knowledge: Grades K-8**

Loveland Classical Schools employs the nationally recognized Core Knowledge sequence from kindergarten through 8th grade. It is founded on the principle that the more you know; the more you will be able to learn. Many elementary schools today operate without a structured sequence allowing teachers to teach whatever they like. For example, in Colorado's academic standards for Social Studies, it states that students will be able to, "Construct a timeline of events showing the relationship of events in Colorado history with events in United States and World History." Unfortunately, it does not help with determining what is important in Colorado, United States, and World History. The Core Knowledge sequence fills in these gaps clearly defining what these facts should consist of.

The Core Knowledge sequence takes these facts and places them in strategic positions throughout a students' academic career from Preschool through 8th grade. It places material in a spiraling process such that each time a topic is discussed; it is explored at a deeper level. For example, kindergarten students studying magnets identify familiar everyday objects and classifying things as or are not attracted by magnets. First graders are introduced to electricity. They discuss static electricity, basic circuits, conductive materials, and safety rules for electricity. Second graders then spiral back to magnetism and discuss unseen forces; most magnets contain iron, lodestones, magnetic poles, magnetic fields, law of magnet attraction, the Earth as a magnet, and a compass. As you can see, the depth of the discussion in 2nd grade is much deeper than that of kindergarten. The Core Knowledge sequence takes a topic that the students are familiar with and helps them appreciate it at a deeper level. As the students progress through the sequence, they find themselves in the 8th grade discussing the connection between electricity and magnetism.

### **Literacy**

Supporting the Core Knowledge sequence is the Riggs literacy program. The Riggs method is a phonics-based program that began 120 years ago by Dr. Samuel T. Orton. The program teaches students the foundational sounds made by letters and groups of letters. As young students learn to read, they are able to sound out words by using the phonograms already instilled in them. They are able to compare the sounds with words they already know until they eventually speak the correct combination. As they do this, they can identify what is right and what is not. In doing so, students learn to become self-sufficient in reading alone.

### **Mathematics**

Loveland Classical Schools utilizes the successful Singapore math program. Singapore has consistently performed well in the TIMSS international math assessment. Students in

Singapore have ranked number one in 4th and 8th grades in three out of the last four times the exam has been administered. Typical U.S. math textbooks focus on political correctness or trying to engage students by making the mathematics relevant. Counter to this, the Singapore textbooks focus on the mathematics and the beauty of the relationships that exist within the mathematics. Because of this, the Singapore math textbooks are, on average, one-and-a-half to two years ahead of the typical U.S. math textbooks by the 6th grade. The Singapore textbooks also place an emphasis on problem solving using a method often referred to as bar-model drawing. The theory of bar-model drawing is that students first understand concrete objects. Mathematics demands that students are able to think about many abstract concepts. After all, how can one think of imaginary numbers? To help bridge the gap between the concrete and the abstract, the Singapore math program implements a pictorial stage that makes the transition to the abstract stage a more fluid process. The depth of this method is beyond the scope of this piece so parents are encouraged to attend a parent seminar to fully experience this truly amazing method.

### **The Classical Education: Grades K-12**

What is the purpose of education? To produce an adult ready for the work force? Or does it address this obvious necessity, but also encompass something greater, something nobler? A classical, or liberal arts, education is centered on the idea of *liberātus*, meaning "freed, liberated." It is in this context that the end goal of a classical education is an independent, or "freed," intellect that is capable of making logical discernments informed by a strong, virtuous character.

Classical education has many interpretations, but here at LCS it is defined by three main areas of focus: Great Works, Great Teaching, and Great Character. Our classical curriculum centers on the great works from the Western canon that have lasted the test of time as vitally important to the cultivation of wisdom. Our classical pedagogy is anchored by the trivium, used as highly effective instructional method for millennia. And, our emphasis on character utilizes our Core Virtues, which is an explicit part of our students' classical education. These three areas of focus are the pillars which define classical education at Loveland Classical Schools.

### **Classical Education is about Great Works**

When hearing the word "classical," most think of "old." Classical education does involve old things such as the ancient Greeks, classical music, and Euclidian geometry, but this is only the beginning. Students at Loveland Classical Schools definitely study many "old" books and people, such as from Homer, Aristotle, Thucydides, Cervantes, and Milton. However, these historic books and characters are not chosen because they are old, but because they have withstood the test of time and are of universal importance to the study of what it means to be human. Loveland Classical Schools uses a curriculum based in what has been recognized for centuries as the great books and authors of the ages rather than the latest fad or political agenda. We study and discuss the great works because they give insight into our heritage, into ourselves, and into what it is to live a meaningful life. They express and explore universal truths that resonate deep

within every one of us.

A critical component of classical education is the use of primary sources. For example, if you wanted to study the Federalist Papers to understand the formation of our government, you could either study the Federalist Papers itself or study what others say about the Federalist Papers. Institutionalized education today chooses the second approach. Many educators feel that the Federalist Papers itself is too difficult for students to learn so they instead look to an "expert" to explain it. LCS knows that students are capable of amazing things when given the opportunity. We prefer to read and dissect original source documents when possible rather than solely rely through someone else's interpretation.

An excellent summary of why we focus on the great works is the following statement by Sir Isaac Newton: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." By studying the works of our civilization's greatest minds, our students are provided a strong foundation from which they can stand tall. Just as the works of Galileo, Descartes, and Copernicus paved the road for Newton, students learn greatness by surrounding themselves with great people and ideas. Who better to surround students with than some of the greatest of all time: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Melville, Dante, Kant, Orwell, Virgil, St. Thomas Aquinas, Conrad, Einstein, Franklin, and Lincoln, to name a few.

### **Classical Education is about Great Teaching**

The trivium is the classical method of instruction using the "three paths." As a teaching method, the trivium utilizes the stages of grammar, logic, and rhetoric in instruction. This method of education began thousands of years ago by the Greeks, which began with the study of grammar, in order to understand the structure of their language. Then the student learned how to use the language so as to make accurate statements, construct logical arguments, and detect fallacious reasoning. Finally, the student would then learn how to communicate eloquently in the rhetoric stage to elegantly and successfully express their thoughts.

In practice, the grammar, logic and rhetoric stages can be understood as training the student in facts, critical thinking, and communication. To begin, a student must learn the fundamental structure or facts in order to be able to understand the subject. However, it can be argued that this is where most education stops. In the trivium used in classical education, on the other hand, we next take those facts to infer something that was not previously known; to draw connections and build syllogisms between the facts we've learnt. When the student can successfully and accurately employ logical reasoning, the student then needs to artfully articulate that understanding in a persuasive manner. This is in essence the grammar, logic and rhetoric stages of the trivium that forms the basis of the classical method of instruction at LCS.

As an example, when studying the Peloponnesian War, facts such as dates, personages, governments, motivations, and battles are covered. However, while typical instruction stops there, after going through these grammar items at LCS a logic question may be presented, such as, "What could have happened if the plague had not occurred in the second year of the war?" In order for students to answer, they will need to know what did happen (grammar), and

formulate what could have happened in an "if, then" answer that is rationally sound. We tell students that although there is not one right answer in this exercise (because it is a theoretical situation), there are definitely wrong answers if the facts or logical reasoning are not correct. In describing the "if," like "if the plague had not occurred in 29 BCE in Athens," students demonstrate their grammar knowledge. The "then," which is the logic piece, can be something similar to, "then the Athenians would not have lost as many citizens and soldiers, and may have successfully executed their naval strategy in 29 BCE to end the conflict, rather than the war continuing on for 18 more years whereby Sparta and its allies were eventually able to defeat Athens." In this example, students draw connections to what they have already learned to new ideas. When students explain their reasoning, either by presenting orally or in writing, techniques are practiced to develop the rhetoric stage of the trivium.

What is described above is an example of what occurs daily. Another simplified example in math is the instruction of math facts (grammar), student application of those facts to higher-level processes that are new to the student (logic), and the clear explanation of the reasoning for their answer (rhetoric). Further, this method of instruction is the basis for teaching students to read and decode phonemic rules of English in the lower elementary, learn a foreign language, dissect the themes of a text, apply scientific laws to processes, analyze harmonies and scales in music, or employ theories studied in art, to name a few instances. The different stages of the trivium don't just ensure that students know content knowledge (grammar) but continues to develop logical inference, critical thinking, and skills in the art of rhetoric for students to be independent thinking adults who can make their own discernments (*liberātus*).

### **Classical Education is about Great Character**

Plato describes a group of people bound in a cave with visibility to only the world of shadows. He goes on to describe how one is able to see the real world of people and shapes in the light. Classical education focuses on bringing the student out of the world of shadows and into the light. This process isn't always easy; in fact, it can be laborious and difficult at times. Success in school, as in life, is similar and it is not a guarantee. The learning process may be frustrating and a struggle at times. It is something that requires grit, hard work, and patience. Our motto, *fallamur ut floeamus*, "let us falter so we may flourish" addresses this head on. This differs from typical methods of education where students are spoon-fed answers when they come across a difficulty rather than work out the answer themselves to find success, learn perseverance, and deeply integrate the solution. These experiences are an excellent opportunity to instill and practice character that will be life-long characteristics of a classically educated student. As Aristotle stated, we are what we repeatedly do.

Loveland Classical Schools addresses the fact that knowledge without virtues and morals can lead to the application of that knowledge to a negative end; there are many criminals that are crafty and intelligent, but are they truly wise, are they living the "good life" that is discussed by Socrates? Throughout the school day, situations present themselves for discussion and study on what is virtuous character and what is worth pursuing in life to benefit our community. Character education becomes a critical component of the academic program rather than

reactive discipline. This is another crucial area where classical education is different; to acknowledge and implement that education is not only about learning facts but learning how to be a good person.

Loveland Classical Schools defines classical education as Great Works, Great Teaching, and Great Character. LCS uses the time tested curriculum, teaching methodology and virtues to instill *liberatus* in our students to fulfill our mission of assisting parents in developing young minds with virtuous character, critical thinking skills, and a passion for learning to become exceptional community stewards.

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