

WHAT IS CLASSICAL EDUCATION?

It is an effort to recover the educational methods and standards of the past. Classical education is a conscious return to the ancient goal of education: teaching children to think and learn for themselves by imparting to them the tools of learning. It is an approach to education that is rooted in the ancient medieval concept of the **Trivium**. The Trivium is comprised of three basic tools of learning; **Grammar** (the tool of knowledge), **Logic** (the tool of reasoning) and **Rhetoric** (the tool of communication and expression). The **Trivium** can be viewed as (1) An approach to subjects, (2) An approach to students, and (3) A set of subjects.

The Three Functions of the Trivium

(Chart adapted from *Classical and Christian Education*, Gregg Strawbridge, 1997, Reformed Thought Publications)

TRIVIUM STAGE	AN APPROACH TO SUBJECTS	AN APPROACH TO STUDENTS	A SET OF SUBJECTS
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mastery of fundamental facts & rules ◆ Emphasis on core-knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Elementary age ◆ Concrete thinkers ◆ Information sponges ◆ Memorization comes naturally 	<p style="text-align: center;">Latin</p> <p>(The study of an ancient language that builds learning skills, develops English vocabulary, and enhances appreciation of classical culture)</p>
Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mastery of sound reasoning & critical thinking skills ◆ Emphasis on comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Junior High age ◆ Beginning to think abstractly ◆ Growth of reasoning & analytical thinking abilities 	<p style="text-align: center;">Logic</p> <p>(The study of the science of sound reasoning)</p>
Rhetoric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mastery of communication skills ◆ Emphasis on expression, articulation & application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ High School age ◆ Abstract thinkers ◆ Interest in self-expression, communication & creativity 	<p style="text-align: center;">Rhetoric</p> <p>(The study of the effective use of language in speech and writing)</p>

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Modern/Contemporary Education vs. Classical and Christian Education

(Chart adapted from *A Classical Education Provides a Timeless Introduction to Knowledge*, Douglas Wilson, 1993, Practical Home Schooling)

	MODERN/CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION	CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
PHONICS	Emphasizes look/say & whole language.	Emphasizes mastery of the units of sound.
READING	Student progresses from basal readers to popular trade books.	Student begins reading "great books" as soon as he is able.
MATHEMATICS	Emphasizes abstract concepts above rote learning of math facts, tables, rules, etc.	Emphasizes mastery of facts, rules, tables, etc. as well as repetitive drills to make math processes habitual.
BIBLE	Explicit teaching of Bible is discouraged or prohibited.	Emphasizes systematic Bible reading, study and application.
SPELLING	Less emphasis on rules. Sometimes allows for inventive spelling.	Rule-guided, prescriptive spelling. If it's not right, it's wrong.
HISTORY	Multi-cultural influences lead to ignorance of achievements of Western Civilization. Revisionism is often used to support vogue ideological agendas.	Emphasizes history as having purpose because it is the work of God's providence. Holds that our heritage should be understood, and unless at variance with Scripture, appreciated.
RHETORIC/SPEECH	Emphasis on creativity and self-expression, as opposed to the more rigorous discipline of wordsmithing.	Teaches student to recognize and use formal structures of persuasion and presentation (the science of Rhetoric).
THINKING/LOGIC SKILLS	Promotes expression of student's own opinion, along with whatever reasons he may have for holding it. The end goal tends to be self-expression as opposed to discovery of the truth.	Emphasizes real difference between truth and validity. Teaches student to identify fallacies of form and distraction -Logic as science.
LANGUAGE/LATIN	Foreign languages are not required for non-native speakers and are taught only for practical or multicultural/diversity reasons. Latin is now virtually extinct and is viewed as irrelevant.	Foreign languages are taught to develop intellectual discipline. Practical side-benefits are secondary. Latin is seen as a foundation for precise thinking, English vocabulary, appreciation of classical culture, and of course, et cetera.
LITERATURE	Tendency is to bring books down to level of the contemporary student -books that will not overwhelm a limited vocabulary, cultural isolation, and a reluctance to read anything unfamiliar or difficult.	Object is to bring student up to the level of great and classical literature, to teach appreciation for challenging books of all ages.

QUOTES ON CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Besides, one cannot begin a good thing too early, and the Trivium is by its nature not learning, but a preparation for learning. We will therefore 'catch 'em young', requiring only of our pupils that they shall be able to read, write and cipher.

Dorothy Sayers

Very simply, classical education is a conscious return to those academic disciplines and methodologies (the basic scholastic categories of grammar, logic and rhetoric) - the very notions that helped to spark the great cultural flowering of Western Christendom over the past thousand years - emphasizing the basic thinking and character skills necessary to launch young men and women on a lifetime journey of growth and learning. It is the simple affirmation that all of us need to be grounded in the good things, the great things, the true things.

Dr. George Grant

The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists. To it all politics, all war, all literature, all money-making, ought to be subordinated; and every parent especially ought to feel, every hour of the day, that, next to making his own calling and election sure, this is the end for which he is kept alive by God -- this is his task on earth.

R I Dahmen

WHAT IS CLASSICAL EDUCATION?

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

*(Modern/Contemporary Education vs.
Classical and Christian Education)*

PROVIDENCE HALL

CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 16141

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73113

(405) 478-2077 WWW.PROVIDENCEHALL.ORG