

Education at St Paul's Community School

Every educational institution, whether public or private, relies, either implicitly or explicitly, on foundational assumptions about human nature, the meaning of a good life, the purpose of education, and the relation of curriculum to stated educational goals. For many, education's aim is to fill the minds of students with information in order that they may become productive citizens. Curriculum is designed for just such a venture, a curriculum that shapes students toward a certain vision of a good life, usually something along the lines of 'The American Dream'. Classical Christian education seeks to give students something deeper than job skills or information about subjects or citizenship lessons. It is not because these products of education are wrong—a classically educated child will excel in all these areas. Rather, St Paul's seeks to provide nothing short of an holistic education, which recognizes the full humanity of each children. An education which provides the means necessary for the growth of such children into a full, virtuous humanity, empowering them to participate in the building of Christ's kingdom. We hold that an excellent education doesn't merely *inform* children, an excellent education *forms* children. It is the conviction of St Paul's that students are created in the image of the triune God, that a good life consists in loving God and neighbor, that the purpose of education is to enable students to attain such a life of love and that a classical Christian education equips children to accomplish this end. In short, a classical Christian education at St Paul's offers students a mind enlightened by truth, an imagination filled by beauty and affections formed by goodness, all of which affords students the opportunity to live an excellent life by embodying a love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as their neighbor for the good of the kingdom.

Classical Education at St Paul's Community School

Finding roots in ancient practices, St Paul's joins a centuries-old tradition of educational practice, delivering a unique schooling option for children of southwest Oklahoma City. Classical education primarily concerns itself with the cultivation of wisdom in students in order that they may acquire the skills necessary to remain life-long lovers of truth, beauty and goodness wherever it may be found. St Paul's, as a classical Christian school, maintains that the trivium forms the core of an excellent philosophy of education. Constituted by the three liberal arts of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric, the ancient wisdom of the trivium structures the methods of education, guiding not only *what* we teach, but also *how* we teach. The trivium serves as much as a method as a curricular content. Such an education seeks to introduce students to the best books of a culture, handing down the beauty and wisdom of the past for growth into the future. We believe that along with traditional subjects of study (e.g., algebra, history and biology), the arts and the gymnasium form a crucial piece of our curriculum, not merely enlivening the affections and imaginations of students, but strengthening their bodies as well. Classical Christian education is language-intensive which involves introducing students to the study of Latin, from which most modern languages derive and from which study students develop broader thinking skills necessary to successful interaction with God's good world. Similarly, the formal study of logic in the middle school years and the formal study of rhetoric in the high school years round out a vision of education that equips students to fare well in their cultures. Traditionally four further arts, astronomy, music, mathematics and geometry, known as the quadrivium, follow the foundation set by the trivium arts. Taken together these seven liberal arts encompass a foundational curriculum, enabling students to master not just great works of art, literature and Scripture but also chemistry, biology and calculus.

The Trivium offers, not simply the subjects of grammar, logic and rhetoric, but a method of study of each subject area taught at St Paul's. Each subject contains a grammar (truths to be known), a dialectic (connections to be understood), and a rhetoric (wisdom to be expressed). Thus, emphasis is given to each of these three aspects when studying everything from Latin to Logic, from Physics to Philosophy, from Scripture to Science. Further, a classical education conceives each topic of study as depending on others. There are no stand-alone topics; rather, each piece fits into a larger whole. All subjects integrate, uniting truth in as yet unknown ways. History, therefore, is taught alongside mathematics, proper sentence syntax side-by-side with Paul's missionary

journeys. Subjects are not kept separate from one another; all are invited to join together in Christ's beautiful tapestry of truth, beauty and goodness.

St Paul's curriculum reflects this deep interconnection between knowledge, understanding and wisdom, between truth, beauty and goodness, between faith, hope and love. Developing a sense of the interrelated nature of all truth, beauty and goodness is a key ingredient in any educational story. Shaping a student's affections rightly orders her vision of God's good world, enabling her to truly understand these connections and embody them in her very life for the love of God and of her neighbor.

A classical education begins in wonder and the expanding of the imaginative world of children. So doing puts them in the way of participation in truth. Learning the great truths of God's world through chanting, singing, and play enliven the imaginations and creativity of children. Primed to receive vast amounts of truth, students readily participate in truth through hands-on, incarnational learning, via embodied exploration of the world. Such participation in truth via imaginative wonder must deepen a vision of the grand connectedness of all truth. The faculty of the understanding is the place where this connectedness lives and a proper pedagogy will strengthen this in students. As students grow, classical pedagogy demonstrates more fully, that all knowledge belongs to a more cohesive whole, a whole which comes into focus only in light of the truths learned. No truth may be understood on its own but finds meaning ultimately in relation to other truths. A further feature of classical education involves training students to live out truth and understanding in wisdom, in order that they may become influential in their communities. Students develop skill in expression, able to rightly discern between good and evil in order that they may lead their communities well. The hope of St Paul's is to produce students capable of implementing a vision of their place in the kingdom of Christ for the good of Others.

Christian Education at St Paul's Community School

While a classical approach to teaching proves to be most successful, it cannot do this of its own accord. It must find its completion in a Christian vision of knowledge, understanding and wisdom and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. This is so because only in Christ is the integration sought by classical education possible. St Paul's sees all of education as finding its home in the integral unity of the Triune God. All truth, beauty and goodness, is bound up in the Risen Christ in whom are hidden all knowledge, understanding and wisdom. He who united heaven and earth in his Incarnation reveals the Father through the Spirit orienting the hearts of children to truth, beauty and goodness. He who was raised to sit at the right hand of the Father, who sent His Spirit now recreates all things, including our students in order that they may come to know His Word and world aright. Without this grounding in the redemption of Christ, education may not accomplish what it ought, namely, freeing students to pursue the good of Others for Kingdom of God. The fear of the triune God revealed in Christ, as the Scriptures proclaim, is the beginning of knowledge, understanding and wisdom. This fear consists partly in becoming the kinds of humans with the virtues of faith, hope and love, all of which must be allowed to form students in order for education to succeed. St Paul's therefore seeks to root our students and our subjects in the biblical story of creation, fall, and redemption. All things were created good and, though all were stained at the fall of mankind, these good things remain worthy of our sustained study especially in light of the coming of the true Man, the Incarnate Christ, who cleanses all from that stain, renewing them all. This story of the Triune God re-creating a good world twisted by evil, provides the framework through which we approach our children and the subjects taught to them. St Paul's seeks to take part in this reclamation project, leading students into kingdom work and into places in need of the Risen Christ's redemptive light. Nothing short of this produces true education.

A more thorough overview of classical Christian education along the lines of that adopted by St Paul's may be found at classicalsubjects.com/resources/ICE.pdf.