

Classical Education Guide for Teachers & Parents

The Foundation: The education system called "classical education" was developed over two millennia with the goal of developing young minds to be wise. The foundation of classical education is the trivium. The trivium's three phases of learning are adapted to three phases of development in children--grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

Grammar: Young children (K-6) are uniquely adapted to memorize. They learn chants, songs, and rhythmic verse well and can be taught an enormous amount of information, much of which is retained for a lifetime. By exercising this ability, students remain practiced in the art of memorizing. Modern educators often overlook memorization once the student learns to read and write well in about third grade. As with many skills, if you don't develop memory at this phase, you'll lose it. Students so enjoy memorizing that they will make up playground songs or chants on their own.

Logic: Early adolescent children (grades 7-8) become argumentative. Their ability to draw conclusions from a series of facts begins to develop. This is called the dialectic or logic phase. Most modern educators overlook this phase, except with regard to higher math. Classical schools teach formal logic, logical fallacies, reasoning skills through tools like the Socratic method and Aristotelian logic. These subjects are foreign to most of us unless we learned them in college. They practice students in the science of accurate thinking. In this phase, the subject matter is not as important as what conclusions the students may draw from knowledge.

Rhetoric: In high school, students begin to develop a sense of how others perceive them. They become more self-conscious about fashion, vocabulary, mannerisms and various other forms of expression. Classicists called this the rhetoric phase. Students in this phase learn to speak and write well. They learn to relate to their audience with clarity and persuasion. Without the ability to communicate, the best ideas go unheard and are impotent.

Inspired to learn: Because classical education cuts with the grain through the developmental phases of the trivium, it naturally appeals to students. Gifted classical teachers inspire students to investigate, contemplate, debate, and pursue knowledge. By encouraging students to love learning, a lifelong gift is communicated.

Integration: Finally, integration between subjects presented ties the world together. Math, science, English literature, and history are interwoven in a way that relates all subjects to a whole.