



## Classical Learning for All Students

with Dr. Amy Richards

Lecture 3: The  
Anthropology Audit:  
Understanding your  
School Environment

### Outline:

Combining the classical focus on beauty with attention to the needs of certain types of students and learning differences, we turn to an examination of the kind of environment that befits all learners as the kinds of beings that they are, relational creatures made in the image of God.

### Anthropology Audit

- Key: What do the practices of our school say about what it is to be human?
- Elements of the School Environment:
  - Physical Environment
  - Routines/Modes of Instruction
  - Curriculum
  - Disciplinary Policies/Procedures
  - Culture
- Levels at which we might consider these elements:
  - Individual teacher/student
  - Individual classroom
  - School day flow/procedures
  - Administrative practices/procedures
  - Family integration/parent community
  - Whole school
- **Two lenses** through which we might want to engage in this exercise:
  - **Distance vision:** focusing out to our telos helps to correct for myopia, or just focusing on the task at hand.
  - **Reading glasses:** focuses on the present needs of the student in front of us
- **Two guiding principles:**
  - The principle of **order, which is tied to beauty**. Keeping beauty ever in front of us, helps guide us towards our telos. “Joy flows from order.”
  - The principle of **love**, which allows us to see the student in front of us clearly.
- Physical Environment
  - The incarnation tells us that our nature as embodied creatures matters.



- Individual teacher/student: What are the sensory sensitivities or needs of each student?
- Individual classroom: Students should feel at home in school. Let in natural light and provide accent lighting.
  - *You'll find that when we start to look at their needs, our needs as human beings are revealed to us.*
- School day flow/procedures: Are all of the areas students pass through orderly and beautiful? Are the sounds through which transitions are marked alarming or comforting?
- Administrative practices/procedures: Is the principal or headmaster's office a welcoming place? Is the administrative staff sensitive to particular students' sensory sensitivities?
- Family integration/parent community: We might ask whether parents are invited into or encouraged to bring the beauty celebrated in the school in their home.
- Whole school: Hallways, cafeteria, library, every area of the school is considered in light of both of these lenses on what it is to be human (telos and immediate needs of the student).
- Routines/modes of instruction
  - Harness the power of memorization and imitation.
    - These can be particularly powerful for students with learning differences who often thrive of structure.
- Curriculum
  - When we look at our curriculum, we need to make sure we are not saying, "Whatever you are presently interested in is the only thing that is important."
  - Our anthropology should lead us to always be expanding the horizons of students and showing them the beauty of the world and the need for them to occupy their place with it.
- Disciplinary Policies/Procedures
  - "The soul needs love...a degree of tenderness..." (Caldecott)
  - Disciplinary policies and procedures must be driven by love for the individual student.
- Culture
  - Does it lead toward Truth, Goodness, and Beauty? Does it lead towards God?
  - Does it lead us toward one another in community?