



Disability and Classical Education: Student Formation in Keeping with Our Common Humanity with Dr. Amy Richards

Lecture 4: Seeing and Serving the Whole Student

Outline:

Seeing and Serving the Whole Student, Cultivating Telic Attention in the Classroom

- Three key ideas unpacked in the first half of the course:
 - Disability as a strange vocation
 - Telic attention as the hallmark of classical education
 - The doxological classroom as the ideal for welcoming all kinds of learners into our classical schools
- All students need the telic attention that is a guiding principle of classical education. This attention is necessary for seeing the truth of things, and acting in its light.
- Why guides desire. Why guides will.
- A doxological classroom anticipates the presence of many kinds of learners with all of their strengths and weaknesses.
- If inclusion presumes prior exclusion then even practices rooted in the desired to be inclusive can unintentionally perpetuate a cult of normalcy.
- Too often the goal of inclusion seems to be to make it possible for students to participate in activities that were initially designed without them in mind.
- We need to reach down to a more fundamental level of seeing our place as creatures in the great economy each with our own vocation in our little economies.

How do we form doxological classrooms?

- Doxological classrooms would ideally anticipate difference by being designed to receive the gift of strange vocations that they expect to appear in their presence.
- Anticipating difference is often referred in educational theory as universal design.
 - Some students will need more scaffolding, some will need less.
 - We must provide the proper support.
- What kind of supports are there? How do we have to structure the activities differently in order to make space for these students?



- **Accommodations** – These are changes to the way individual students are expected to learn or how these students are assessed. These accommodations do not need to be noted on a report card or a transcript.
 - Kinds of accommodations to allow certain students to thrive in the classroom:
 - **Instructional methods and materials** (examples: audiobook alternative, math charts, templates for notetaking)
 - **Assignments and assessments** (examples: oral rather than written exam, a choice of different projects as a summative unit assessment)
 - **Learning environment** (examples: seating near the teacher or away from the window)
 - **Time demands and scheduling** (examples: break cards for students to be allowed to leave, give extended times for tests for students with slower processing speeds)
 - **Special communication systems** (examples: a teacher might establish a particular nonverbal cue with a specific student)
- **Modification** – A modification is a change to what the student is expected to learn. Modifications change curricular expectations to bring them to the level attainable by a particular student at a certain time.
 - Three common levels of modifications:
 - A student might partially complete the same requirements as the rest of the class.
 - We might alter the curricular activities.
 - We might have alternate curricular content.
 - Modifications need to be noted on a report card or a transcript.
- **Remediation** – Remediation is where a teacher provides missing background knowledge or skills that a student needs in order to be able to participate in the skills currently being practiced by the rest of the class.
- Universal design puts the person first.
 - We are able to anticipate the presence of difference and orient ourselves to receive it in wonder.
 - Plan for a variety of needs in the initial lesson and classroom design.
 - As much as possible, take the accommodation and bake it into the way you structure your lesson to start with.
 - Example 1: Math lesson plan is all done seated at a desk with certain accommodations for some students
 - Example 2: The lesson is organized to the principles of universal design. Often changes to the classroom environment



or routine made with one student's needs in mind end up benefitting the entire class.

- Homeschools and private schools have far more flexibility in how they experiment with and structure their approaches and systems. They may have more limitations on resources than charter schools.
- Charter schools will have to work within a more rigid system for meeting student's needs.
- Two general rules of applications that are added to the two lenses and two principles from lecture two.
 - Expect excellence.
 - Adapt as necessary. Focus on vigor rather than rigor (Christopher Perrin).
 - Rigor is not a sign of life, but of death.
- We can work towards being able to invite more kinds of learners as we develop the capacity to offer them support (that they and their peers need to swim in the pool).