



## Effective Grammar School Teaching & Leadership with Lori Jill Keeler

### Lesson 1: Building on a Strong Foundation

#### Outline:

#### Building on a Strong Foundation

- Even small errors in the foundation of a building can create serious problems in later construction, yet after construction, the foundation can't even be seen. The simplicity of a foundation is actually of vital, critical importance.
- Building a cathedral: this is our work.
- What are the Content Distinctives in a classical school?
  - **Timeline Approach:** context, story, narrative
  - **Integration:** Both academic and theological integration; connecting new knowledge with prior knowledge; all things hold together in Christ
  - **Word-based:** Literature, writing, Latin; learning is accomplished through words more than images; active over passive learning; nourish the mind with the best literature (strong minds, soft hearts, fat souls); competent writers and speakers; primary sources (excerpts in the younger grades)
  - **Fine Arts**
  - **Great Books:** Best authors for children that we can find
  - **Primary Sources:** Memorize nursery rhymes in the early grades; read excerpts from primary sources, then wrestle with the primary sources and memorize selections from them
- Methodology Used in Grammar School—the Tools of Learning, helping students to learn on their own
  - **Memorization:** Chants (e.g., history timeline, poetry, Scripture, math facts)
  - **Grammar of Each Subject:** the foundational building blocks for each subject; e.g., “grammar of history” (change, conflict, compromise)
  - **Thinking Paradigms:** e.g., how to think like a scientist (learn the scientific method); how to be a good reader (how to approach a text as a master reader); how to think like a historian (e.g., “Why settle along a river?”)





- **Questioning:** Prepare young students for Socratic discussion; reward students with further questions; teach discussion in small groups and with partners
- Biblical Worldview—student thinking patterns are of critical importance
  - **Authentic Integration of Scripture** in all subjects we teach: e.g., seeing the true, good, and beautiful in literature
  - **Creation / Fall / Redemption / Restoration** paradigm in literature: e.g., in *The Boxcar Children*
  - **What? So what? Now what?** learning paradigm (from *Teaching Redemptively* by Donovan Graham): Why do I learn this? (So what?); How will I use what I have learned in a redemptive way? (Now what?)
- Benefits of Building a Strong Foundation
  - **Strong foundation for future learning** in the upper school: backward design to prepare for future learning
  - **Good test scores:** not the most important goal, but it helps us and parents to see effectiveness of classical education
  - **Development of critical thinkers:** creative thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators
  - **Transfer of Knowledge:** e.g., chants will apply to practical, valuable skills
  - **Kingdom-minded stewardship mentality:** everyone is a kingdom-builder; training students to serve selflessly