



Grammar School Symposium: Introduction to Classical Education and Grammar School Teaching with Lori Jill Keeler

Lesson 4: Teaching with Excellence in the Grammar School

Outline:

Teaching with Excellence in the Grammar School

Lead with Learning

- **You must be a life-long learner yourself.**
- Resist the temptation to think: **“I have always done it this way.”**
- **Be an avid reader of children’s literature.** How can we pass on love for books that we have not read ourselves? Consider reading 100 children’s book every summer.
- **Consider subscribing to journals like those below.** While they often advocate for progressive education, they nonetheless contain much of value for classical educators.
 - *The Reading Teacher*
 - *Elementary Education*
 - *Educational Leadership*
- Read **books about parenting.**
- Read **books that give you background knowledge;** classical grammar school teachers need depth and breadth.
- **Visit the classrooms** of other teachers.
- Have other **teachers visit your classroom.**

Intentional and Purposeful Activity

- **Worldview:** For many, their worldview is shaped by their education, upbringing, media, and broader culture; many just absorb their worldview and cannot give a rational account for it or of it.
- **Worldview in Books:** What is the worldview assumed in a book?
- **Intentional Planning:** Avoid “winging it.” To plan well we need clear learning targets. Clear learning targets should be more than finishing a particular page; they should have in mind what students should know and be able to do. Do students know what they should know and be able to do? They should.



- Resist being the “**too nice**” teacher.
- **Use class time wisely:** time should be used in light of good long-range, weekly, and daily planning.
- **We should have clear learning goals** - then we can know if we are reaching such goals.
- **Using transition time:** Transitions should be purposeful. During transitions, students could be reciting Scripture, reciting a history sound-off, or responding to question prompts and the like.
- **Equip students with the tools of learning:** a goal that transcends mere job training.
- **Integration:** Integrate the subjects that students study, helping them to see knowledge as inter-related.
- **Train thinkers, problem-solvers, question-askers**—not just test-takers. Give them preliminary training in rhetoric.
- **Learn to ask excellent questions:** grow in this craft.
- **Learn to ask various kinds of questions:** give them time to answer; don’t call only upon the “hand-raisers.”
 - Essential questions
 - Guiding questions
 - Leading questions
 - Compare and contrast questions
 - Clarifying questions
- **Give formative feedback to students.** There is a special power that a teacher has over a student—a teacher’s words can kill or give life to a young student. More than simply saying such things as “Great job,” give specific, early, and frequent feedback.
- **Aim for total, “every student” engagement** in your classes (see Lesson 10: Total Participation Techniques). Turn and talk to your students; give every student a mini whiteboard. In groups, make sure every student has a role.
- **Focus on the effort made by a student** rather than their setbacks; adopt a growth mindset (students can grow and improve) rather than a fixed mindset (students will always display the same abilities and dispositions). See Lesson 6: Developing a Growth Mindset. Remember that mistakes are part of the learning process and that students will grow through and learn from their mistakes.