



The Teacher's Playbook: Practical Pedagogy for Classical Educators with Jerilyn Olson

Lecture 1: Teacher Formation

Outline:

This lesson examines the classical tradition, the importance of content knowledge and the study of the craft of teaching as they relate to teacher development.

Teacher Formation

- Start with rhetorical framework considering what the teacher knows and loves, starting with their own ethos.
- We can only teach what we know and love
- Norms and Ability
 - “Schools are places where students learn because they are places where teachers learn. Only a school (and by extension a curriculum) that encourages teachers to be always learning will keep its teach fresh and fearless and its students happy and motivated in their studies, ready to test their lessons against life” (David Hicks, Norms and Nobility)
- It is not just to know but to begin to love and practice.

Classical Tradition

- Classical tradition provides the context to be a classical school
- We are part of a greater tradition that has been handed down to us.
- Mathew Arnold “We learn about the best that has been thought and said across the tradition.”
- This comes down to us through the great books
- Recommends The Great Books of the Western World by Hutchins and Adler
- One should start with the first 2 volumes called the Synopticon, making it through as many great books as possible.
- This continues our study of virtue and excellence.
- Socrates said “A person who is to be an orator in the right way should be just and knowledgeable about what is just.”
- Teachers should study across the liberal arts not just philosophy, literature and history.

Content

- It is important to not just know the specific material but to also gain a depth of knowledge in the area you are teaching



- “The profession of teaching is both a learned profession and a profession of learning.....
The best teachers are those who not only perfect what they are teaching through practice of its art, but who also deepen their grasp of the subjects they are teaching by further study of those subjects.” Mortimer J Adler -
“The Schooling of a People
- Start with a deep study with the discipline.
- Study and master the content of material approximately 4 years ahead of what your students are studying.
- The key to teaching Socratically is knowing the material before and beyond what the students are currently learning.
- One way to do this is to examine a textbook a few years ahead of what you are teaching.
- You also need to know what is yours to teach and what is not.
- Teachers do not need to cram all their knowledge of an area into their class.
- This is most difficult for homeschoolers and elementary teachers since they teach across the subjects.
 - It is recommended to take one area a year and go in depth with the study of that area.
 - Observe other teachers in an upper school for those in a classical school.
 - Homeschool teachers can seek out other homeschool parents for discussion, observe others teaching co-op classes or for study groups with the other homeschool parents.
- Study in depth the scope and sequence of the material you are to teach.
 - Take a college course in the area
 - Study a college course’s syllabus and work through the material on your own

Study the Craft

- Study the principles that are rooted in classical philosophy.
 - Why we do certain practices.
 - Implement them in the classroom
 - Receive feedback on how we are doing
- Honor and respect should be given to the nuisances of the discipline and the pedagogy.
- Skilled pedagogy comes from deep knowledge of the content.
 - One example is a drama class that has the students stand rather than seated at desks. One familiar with the discipline knows the importance of having students creating rather than sitting reading from a textbook.
- Knowledge of the content forms excellence in practice
- Lectures are not helpful if you just watch them.



- Lectures are directed at a broad audience and not targeted to an individual situation.
- You can maximize the benefits from the lectures:
 - Be the filter as you listen, thinking about your particular students and discipline.
 - Watch the lectures with colleagues and engage in discussion on how you may apply the information
 - Either observe teachers at other school with different styles or watch videos or read about teachers with other styles.