



Grammar School Symposium: Introduction to Classical Education and Grammar School Teaching with Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lesson 7: Why Classical Education?

Outline:

Progressive Education compared to Classical Education

- Who: Student
 - **Child-centered** is only a problem when we are so focusing on the child's desires and wants that we do not bring something to the child that he does not know yet that he needs.
 - We would not want the child to decide what to study and when. This allows a child to act like an adult before he has the wisdom to make proper decisions about what he should study.
 - Education needs to be **entertaining and amusing** to get children to pay attention. This is influenced by our massive entertainment industry.
 - Our whiteboard cannot really compete with Hollywood. We end up looking silly when we try to be as entertaining as what the children see. **Truth, goodness, and beauty will hold the attention of a soul.**
 - Can we hold up the more beautiful thing?
 - Some of the techniques of entertainment can be useful, but the educator should not be thought of as an entertainer.
 - There is a lot of **activity and anxiety** in modern education.
 - There is so much to do in so many subjects that students are feeling burdened and anxious.
 - Modern education is an education in anxiety.
 - What is it that we think a human being is for? A human being is a soul to be cultivated rather than a chance generated animal who is conditioned to perform certain tasks.
 - The root of a modern anthropology is that students are some version of a higher animal (rather than eternal souls).
- What: Curriculum
 - The **utilitarian curriculum** of progressive education often includes threats and punishments (good grades, bad grades, rewards, parties, shaming).





- The curriculum is designed to make us useful for certain tasks rather than the cultivation of a soul.
- The focus is on jobs, good jobs, which means good pay. This is motivation by the dollar bill.
- Tests that we give in modern schools are often going to be **quantifiable tests**, machine readable and transferrable via the internet. These can lead to a test prep educational pedagogy, especially if tests are high stakes.
- Who likes test prep classes? This is a deadening instructional period. When we do a lot of test prep, students begin to lose the love of the art or subject at hand.
- The ideas that are often encountered in the modern curriculum are **contemporary ideas**. The newest is the better thing. We are used to the latest being the greatest.
- The classical approach does not ignore the contemporary but it wants to balance the contemporary with what has gone before.
 - C.S. Lewis says we should read old books with new books, because cultures don't usually go wrong in the same way. He suggests that we should read two old books for every one new book.
- Where: School Community
 - **Popular Youth Culture**: We have teachers who want to be hip and cool. We want to participate in social media and the classroom and the school can take on youth culture elements.
 - Example: Use smart phones in the classroom. Students keep their phones all day long.
 - Examples: Dress, Architecture, Design
 - **Secular**: In the history of education, the church has always been a part of the educational process.
 - Religion is a deep part of culture.
 - We cannot simply rip out religion from the educational endeavor.
 - Even in secular schools there ought to be the great freedom to engage the history of religion and its impact on our culture.
 - Religion is a historical reality.
 - To describe a scientist's faith might not be studied very often.
 - Our country wrestles with this in light of the separation of church and state.
 - **Experimental**
 - Every 10-15 years, the models for curriculum and pedagogy tend to evolve and change.
 - Public school teachers are used to adopting a new approach. The newest is always the best.
 - The problem is that we have not seen the promised results.



- The classical perspective is not to follow the latest report, we need to filter some things. The classical tradition says that we have learned a lot over 2000 years of trial and error.
- Why: The World
 - Work: There is a school to work emphasis.
 - From the classical perspective, there is not anything wrong with learning skills and tasks that we must be prepared for. This is not the grand purpose of education.
 - A lot of schools and parents are thinking about getting into college, getting a degree, getting a job, and getting money.
 - What is primary is the education of a soul on truth, goodness, and beauty by means of the liberal arts and great books.
 - If we make the primary thing secondary and the secondary thing primary, we lose them both by disordering them (C.S. Lewis).
 - The classical tradition enables you to learn to learn (and therefore to learn any profession). You can acquire skills at any time.
 - Credentials
 - Popular “Success”

Why Classical Education

- It provides a coherent theory of knowledge.
 - It assumes that humans are created so they can understand and apprehend truth, goodness, and beauty. Truth can be known, enjoyed, and delighted in. It is not relative. The world is like a web of interrelated truths. To know anything that is true is to know about God who is true.
- It cultivates the human.
 - It is the best way we know to cultivate our capacities to become the fullest versions of ourselves. We want human beings, not mere workers.
- It develops and imparts power (arts).
 - Kids are attracted to stories that include magic because we want capacities and powers. The liberal arts bring capacities and power to more deeply understand and engage the world around us (understand, learn, make, create, connect).
- It cultivates a love of beauty.
 - Beauty is real and we can imitate the beauty to create more beauty. Beauty is the radiance of truth. To know something that is true contains something of the beautiful.
- It develops character.
 - It involves virtue. We learn the virtues so important to being human beings.
- It trains leaders.



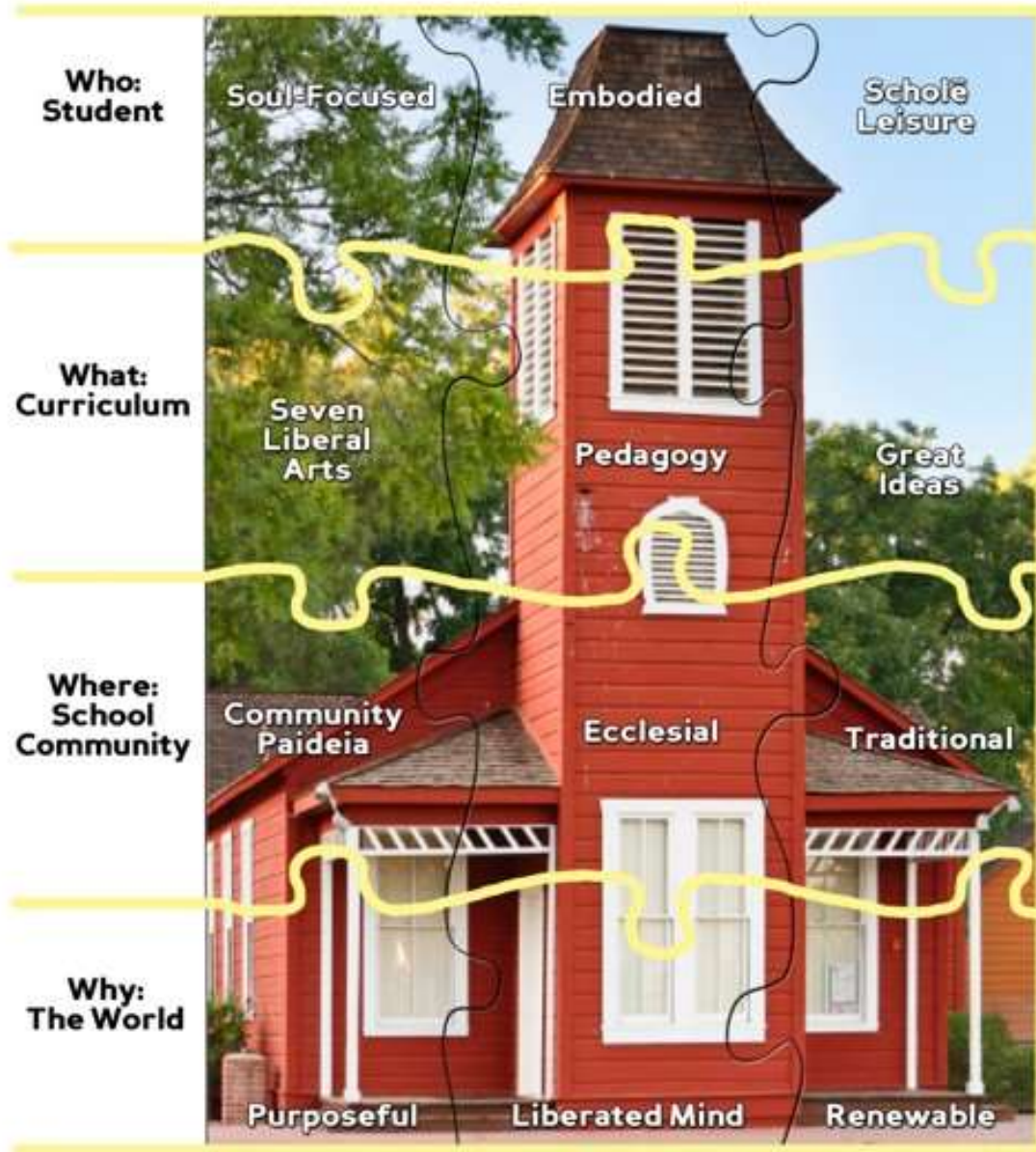
- To have these capacities is already to be equipped to serve others as servant leaders.
- It cultivates community.
 - We can go nowhere alone. We need to be in vibrant, real, loving community.
- It is tried and proven.
 - Classical education has educated the great minds of the past.

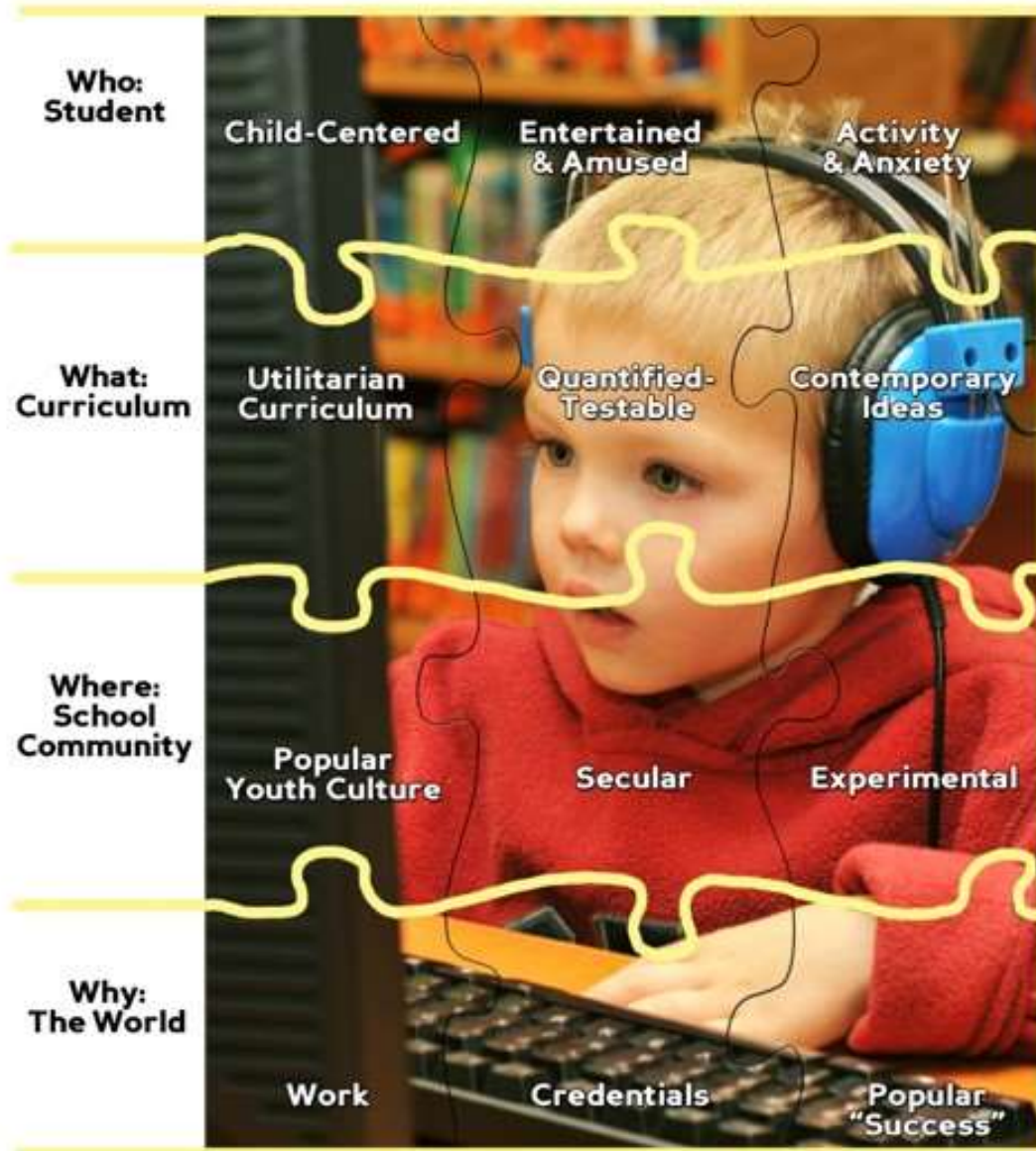
The Perfection of the Intellect

- “That perfection of the Intellect which is the result of education, and its beautiful ideal, to be imparted in their respective measures, is the clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things, as far as the fine mind can embrace them, each in its place, and with its own characteristics upon it. It is almost prophetic from its knowledge of history; it is almost heart-searching from its knowledge of human nature; it has almost supernatural charity from its freedom from littleness and prejudice; it has almost the repose of faith, because nothing can startle it; it has almost the beauty and harmony of heavenly contemplation, so intimate is it with the eternal order of things and the music of the spheres.” John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*
- Why? The fruit of a classical education is:
 - Clear vision and comprehension of all things
 - As far as the mind can embrace them
 - Prophetic from its knowledge of history
 - Heart-searching from knowledge of human character
 - Charity that makes itself free of littleness and prejudice
 - Repose/Confidence because nothing can startle it
 - Harmony from contemplating the right order of things
- Why? A classically educated person should have:
 - **Understanding, Insight, Wisdom:** Clear vision and comprehension of all things.
 - **Full Human Capacity:** As far as the mind can embrace
 - **Wise Insight into Human Affairs:** Prophetic from its knowledge of history
 - **Wise Insight into People:** Heart-searching from knowledge of human character
 - **Humble Love for All:** Charity because free of littleness and prejudice
 - **Confidence:** Repose/Confidence because nothing can startle it
 - **Balanced, Whole, Ordered:** Harmony from contemplating the right order of things
- Why? Someone who has been classically educated has:
 - Insightful understanding of the world
 - Fully cultivated, developed capacities
 - Wise insights into human affairs and into individual people’s hearts
 - Humble love for everyone
 - An unshakeable confidence



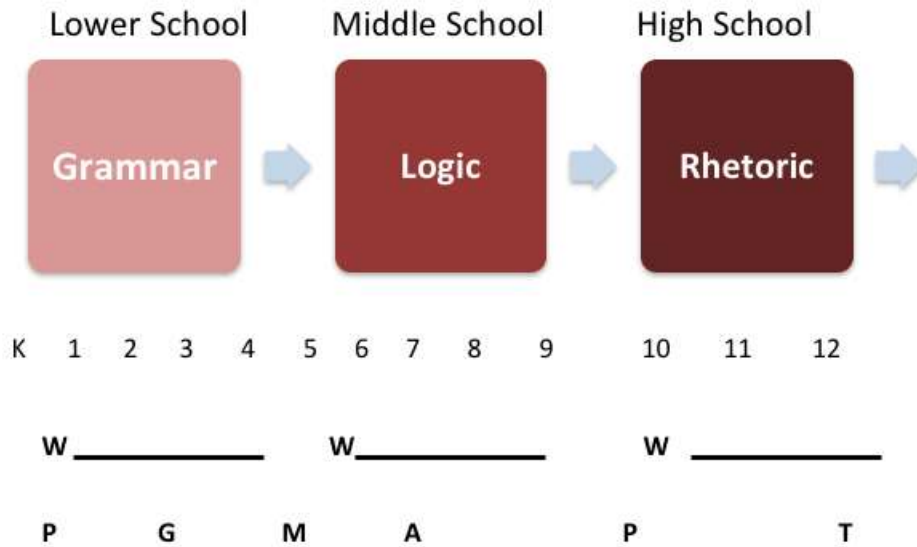
- An ordered, contemplative soul







Classical Scope & Sequence



Stages of Learning: W-W-W





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