



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

Questions and Answers

Outline:

What was your career path to becoming a teacher and leader of faculty development at Great Hearts?

- Jerilyn Olson was homeschooled through eighth grade and then attended a public school that used the classical school model.
- She planned to become a lawyer but was asked to come teach at Great Hearts and fell in love with teaching.
- Later she participated in teacher recruitment and then moved into the area of teacher support and development.

What are some qualities that comprise a good classical educator?

- They are continually reading and digging deeper not only in their content area.
- Good classical educators are ones that look for making connections and want to learn more.
- View education as the responsibility of all who interact with a child and that education is as important as a child's health.

How do we help teachers regain a love for their material?

- Create opportunities for teachers to study different aspects of their content area.
- Exposure to different areas in their content area can rekindle a desire to teach and share their knowledge in teachers.

What does the faculty look like at a school that is flourishing?

- A faculty that is flourishing will spill out to other areas.
- There is a sense of invitation and a pursuit of excellence and reflection.
- Flourishing schools have a tightness of community.
- Headmasters encourage teachers to take on new challenges either at their current school or at another school.

Could you describe the process for growing a teacher into a master teacher? How do we set the vision for a teacher's career path?

- There needs to be a sense of progression.



- Lay out a vision how to become a master teacher and then layout the support to help teachers get there.
- Apprentice programs allow new teachers to assist lead or master teacher before moving into a lead teaching position.
- Teachers should be encouraged to watch other classrooms especially in other schools. Based on what those observations they should articulate what makes a good teacher.
- Master teachers can work to improve their skills in teaching adults in order to help new teachers build their skills.

What does it look like to be a master teacher at a Great Hearts School? What is a master teacher's responsibilities?

- We should not be looking to take a master teacher fully out of the classroom.
- Master teachers coordinate other teachers in planning, end of unit exams and set the tone. They can also be grade level leads.
- Master teachers are an extra set of eyes for school leaders especially in the content area.

How do you help teachers navigate the fine line between practical techniques and the deeper principle those techniques point towards?

- Teachers need to be given concrete feedback and ways to improve.
- We teach a technique but it should point towards something more.
- We should not be overly reliant on techniques.
- More techniques are not always the answer but instead look at how to better implement the techniques teachers already have.
- Teachers need to know the why behind the technique.
- Techniques should grow and develop as there is mastery.
- Teachers need to be flexible and able to adapt the techniques to the current situation.

How does the metaphor of gardening apply to creating a healthy classroom culture?

- There will be a cycle of planning, interacting and reflection.
- Planning allows us to make sure the environment is ready and that we are ready.
- When interacting you look at how you respond to your students.
- When responding consider how you address problems and how you move ahead in your class.

What are some of the "potholes" or ditches school leaders should avoid when developing their teachers?

- One issue is not having balance in your teacher formation.
- Leadership tends to lean towards one area, either the depth of the discipline, the practical craft or the formation in the liberal arts.
- Not hiring teachers that will stretch each other.



- There should be a common non-negotiable vision but there needs to be diversity in how teachers work.
- Problems can occur if leadership has full control of the vision, not allowing for diverse implementation and tries to fit all area classes to the same mold.
- If teachers have full control of the vision issues may arise as teachers change or leave.