



THE LOST METHOD

How does it work?

Thousands of parents are rediscovering what education can mean.

“**Rather than assuming a full classroom, a good teacher, and 7 hours at school equates to “education,” these parents realize that what happens in those 7 hours matters.**”

THE FOUNDATION

The educational system called “classical education” was developed over two millennia with the goal of developing young minds to be wise. At the core of classical education is the trivium. The trivium’s three phases of learning are adapted to three phases of development in children—grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

GRAMMAR

Young children (grades k-6) are uniquely adapted to memorize. They learn chants, songs, and rhythmic verse well, and can absorb an enormous amount of information, much of which is retained for a lifetime. By exercising this ability, students remain practiced in the art of memorizing and

retaining information. Modern educators often overlook memorization once the student learns to read and write well in about the third grade. As with many skills, if you don’t develop memory at this phase, you’ll lose it. Students at this stage so enjoy memorizing that they will make up playground songs or chants on their own!

LOGIC

Early adolescent children (grades 7-8) become argumentative. Their ability to draw conclusions from a series of facts begins to develop. This is called the dialectic or logic phase. Most modern educators overlook this phase, except with regard to higher math. Classical schools teach formal logic, logical fallacies, and reasoning skills through tools like the Socratic method and Aristotelian logic. These subjects are foreign to most of us unless we learned them in college. They practice students in the science of accurate thinking. In this phase, the subject matter is not as important as what conclusions the students may draw from their knowledge.

RHETORIC: AN ESSENTIAL SKILL

In high school, students begin to develop a sense of how others perceive them. They become self-conscious about fashion, vocabulary, mannerisms,

and various other forms of expression. Classicists called this the rhetoric phase and saw a window of opportunity to infuse wisdom and eloquence in students. These last a lifetime. Students in this phase learn to speak and write well. They learn to relate to their audience with clarity and persuasion. Without the ability to communicate, the best ideas go unheard and are impotent.

INSPIRED TO LEARN

Beyond the foundation of the trivium, the classical method inspires learning. Because classical education cuts with the grain through the developmental phases of the trivium, it naturally appeals to students. Rather than “bawling words into the ears” of students, classical education engages their minds. Gifted classical teachers inspire students to investigate, contemplate, debate, and pursue knowledge. By encouraging students to love learning, a lifelong gift is communicated.

INTEGRATION

Finally, integration between subjects makes sense of the world. Math, science, philosophy, and history are interwoven in a way that relates all subjects to a whole. As students integrate subjects, scriptural truth is integrated as well. This affects students deeply. The continuity between a student’s faith and his rational mind is a reward few Christians enjoy. Classicism provides this perspective unlike any other form of education. The peace of knowing Christ’s truth as it integrates with His world provides a powerful shield against the hostile questions posed in college and later in life.



NO RIGHT ANSWERS?



Over 2000 years ago, Socrates taught his pupils by asking them questions. In today’s classrooms, teachers refuse to judge anyone’s idea.

Socratic discussions have all but disappeared from the K-12 classroom in the past 50 years. Why? Modern educators don’t see the point. Since they believe all people express their own truth, it’s a waste of classroom time to hear anyone’s opinion.

Classical Christian education continues to invest classroom time in Socratic discussions. Christ taught that He was Truth, that Truth could be found, and that there was only one Truth. Socrates believed this principle as well, though he did not know Christ.

In this context, classical Christian education believes that students learn to discern Truth more accurately when they have a well-trained mind. Discussions in our classroom develop the skill of discernment. Everyone is encouraged to answer, but not every answer is correct. That’s why we invest the time. There is Truth and we value it enough to help students develop the skill to understand it.

“**Socrates sought to guide his student into authentic knowledge. He did it via a method of discreet, guided questioning. He engaged his student in deep dialogue [forcing] the student to think his way to a sound conclusion. Socrates wanted to teach his students to think. The goal of thinking is truth. With this method, knowledge is supported by understanding and the student goes beneath the surface to penetrate the truth of the matter.**”

R.C. SPROUL

STAGES OF THE TRIVIUM

The lost tools of learning

GRADES K-2

Traits

- Excited about learning
- Enjoys games, stories, songs, projects
- Short attention span
- Wants to touch, taste, feel, smell and see
- Imaginative and creative
- Easily memorizes

In the classroom

Guided discovery; explore; find things; use lots of tactile items; sing; play games; chant; recite; color, draw, paint; build; use body movements; short creative projects; show and tell; drama; hear/read/tell stories; field trips.

GRADES 3-6

Traits

- Excited about new, interesting facts
- Likes to explain, figure out, talk
- Likes collections and organizing items
- Likes clever chants and rhymes
- Can assimilate another language well

In the classroom

Lots of hands-on work, projects; field trips; make collections, displays, models; integrate subjects through above means; immersive language; recitations, memorization; drills, games.

GRADES 7-8

Traits

- Still excitable but needs challenges
- Critical, enjoys debate
- Wants to know "behind the scenes" facts
- Curious about *why* for most things

In the classroom

Time lines, charts, maps (visual materials); debates, persuasive reports; drama re-enactments, formal logic; oral/written presentations; guest speakers, trips.

GRADES 9-12

Traits

- Idealistic, interested in justice and fairness
- Moving toward special interests or topics
- Can synthesize and do more independent work
- Desires to express feelings, own ideas
- Concerned with how others view them

In the classroom

Drama, oral presentations; guide research in major areas with goal of synthesis; speeches, debates; give responsibilities, e.g., working with younger students; in-depth field trips, even overnight; worldview discussions.



PRE-GRAMMAR



GRAMMAR



LOGIC



RHETORIC



Credit: Inspired by Tom Garfield, Logos School