

Four Myths about Classical Education

As thousands of parents adopt classical and Christian education, many others are still left with questions. Unfamiliarity with the classical method seems to have given rise to some common myths. While you may find some truth in each myth, we believe your concerns about classical education will begin to fade as your knowledge increases. In fact, you may be surprised by the same enthusiasm that has motivated thousands of parents to return to education that works.

Myth #1: Classical education was fine back then, but we need modern education in a modern world.

Fact: Classical education teaches students facts, provides them with tools of logic to use those facts, and classical education perfects the student's ability to relate those facts to others. This fundamental skill-set is more valuable today than it has ever been. The process of teaching students to think extends far beyond filling their heads with knowledge. Modern education, to varying degrees, has succeeded in teaching facts and some skills. Classical education helps students draw original, creative, and accurate conclusions from facts and then formulate those conclusions into logical and persuasive arguments. Modern subjects based in science and technology are also taught in classical schools, but through classical methods. Parents who are exposed to classical education recognize that its "back to the basics" approach contrasts with the distractions of modern education. Is the classical method applicable in a modern, technological age? The technology we have today was invented, in large part, by the classically educated. Man inhabited the earth for thousands of years without developing technology until the last two centuries. It is no coincidence that the groundwork for these achievements was laid within the last 400 years when classical education was at its height. Classical education teaches children the timeless skills of thinking, reasoning, logic, and expression. Our subject matter is as up-to-date as that found in other schools. We simply add a depth and dimension through this time-tested method.

Myth #2: My child is not intelligent enough to attend a classical school.

Fact: Students at American Christian School (ACS) vary in intelligence from "exceptionally intelligent" to "below average." Many parents assume that a classical education is only accessible to "gifted" children. In fact, all children benefit greatly from the classical method. If you were educated in Western society prior to 1850, you were classically educated. Often, myths start from a spark of reality. Many parents observe the classroom and curriculum of ACS and assume that the children are abnormally bright. In reality, classical education

challenges children and is uniquely able to leverage their natural abilities during different stages of childhood. In short, we take ordinary children and deliver extraordinary results by employing proven methods tested for centuries. Because the school is not equipped or funded to adequately deal with special needs children, at this time we cannot accept students with severe learning disabilities.

Myth #3: Classical education is too extreme.

Fact: Classical education teaches children, "cutting with the grain," so to speak—complimenting their developmental phase with the appropriate teaching method. The classical method is different from today's conventional education. Parents are rightfully skeptical of anything that differs so boldly from the norm. However, classical education was the norm 100 years ago because it worked. Historically, the world's great authors, scientists, statesmen, and politicians were classically educated. Conventional education has taken an experimental approach to educating our children over the past six decades. Many different methods have been tried and later scrapped when they failed. This constant state of change in education creates an environment where anything "traditional" seems extreme. Unfortunately, this is where modern educational thought is upside down. Classical education provides a basic structure upon which we can build effective, successful students. We are not advocating an experiment. Rather, we are seeking a return to a proven system.

Myth #4: Classical education is unnecessarily difficult or harsh.

Fact: Children enjoy learning. They are "wired" for pleasing teachers within the learning process. Assuming that a child will not be able to succeed in a challenging environment is tempting, but simply untrue. A common assumption is that a demanding curriculum results in unhappy children. As adults, learning new things can be uncomfortable. However, most children are fascinated by what they learn at ACS. There is a certain excitement when seeing students learning Latin or Greek, languages that most adults do not understand. The rich and complex texture of classic literature opens new and exciting worlds to the youth trained by a skilled classics teacher. Science and the history of Western Civilization come alive for those who hunger to know about their world. And these are just a few examples. For the unconvinced, a visit to ACS is sure to demonstrate that our students love to learn. Classical schools maintain order in the classroom. This does not translate to stoic classes where interaction is limited to an occasional, downcast "yes sir." In fact, ACS encourages extensive interaction between students and teachers. Students are not allowed to be disruptive, but they are constantly encouraged to offer observations, ask questions, interact, and make comments. The classical method at ACS encourages and succeeds at creating a

stimulating and enjoyable learning environment for students. The spark of truth in this myth may lie in student grading at ACS. As public school GPA's continue to edge upward (even though our national scores related to other countries continue to be disappointing), parents of students in classical schools find that a "C" truly means their child is doing average work in a particular subject, according to our standard. But it is important that these grading standards be upheld and that students earn their marks. This can create some frustration among students who were accustomed to achieving "easy A's" in other schools. Some parents are concerned that outside entities may not understand the value of an education at ACS. But in speaking to many college admissions officers, ACS has found that this is not the case. They would rue the day that students from classical schools did not apply to their colleges and universities.