



# THE ACADEMIC JOURNAL

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Character Scholarship Community



Welcome to our fortieth edition of "The Academic Journal," a bimonthly bulletin in which you can read about MCA's educational philosophy, instructional methodology, and the various viewpoints and positions of our faculty, staff, students, and families.

## A Classical Liberal Arts Education: A Few Brief Thoughts

**Classical education** has a strong and sure foundation, while the implementation (outworking) of it takes many forms. The classical education at Millennium Charter Academy is deep and rich, warm and vibrant in its manifestations. It is built on both democratic and moral principles that work together to form the lives of those who embrace its precepts. The thoughts below outline some of those important precepts that are foundational to the education at MCA.

MCA cultivates excellence rather than conformity. Our primary focus is the individual. We are not driven by a one-size-fits-all. We seek to equip each student to be the best he or she can be, to actually embody truth, goodness, and beauty. For example, we not only allow for, but also encourage argument based in logic and civil discourse. We are about human flourishing.

Classical education is built on the shoulders of giants. Our students not only consider current authors and ponder current thinking, but they also read and dialog with the greats of the past. Our students examine ideas throughout recorded time, from the ancient Hebrews to Aristotle to John Locke to Fyodor Dostoevsky to Margaret Thatcher and Martin Luther King, Jr. Classical education does not practice chronological snobbery, that is, we do not value any idea simply because it is either old or new, but rather we value it on its own merits. Our model is both classical and contemporary, grounded in the past while looking toward the future.

Our approach adheres to objective truth, goodness, and beauty- all transcendent, all outside of ourselves. Truth, we argue, is not relative, but objective. With intellectual integrity we press through the untenable idea of "my truth" and "your truth." Truth is simply language that lines up with reality.

Furthermore, we seek truth for its own sake, not for pragmatic reasons. The end goal is the embodiment of truth itself. Although we want our students to go to college and to get a job, our ultimate goal is wisdom, not wealth. We do not see our students as mere economic units nor do we see them as mere biological units. They are much more than money generators or amoral, material organisms; they are creations with an integrated mind, body, and soul.



**Finding our place in the story.**

(Camille Flammarion's 1888 printing of a wood engraving by an unknown artist)

Classical liberal arts schooling is typically found in smaller venues, such as MCA, where numbers allow us to



individualize and do not require us to standardize. Seeking to educate the individual to the greatest extent possible, we avoid generalizing our discipline and our delivery of education, as well as categorizing students by gender, race, economic class, disability, and other aggregate categories.

Our curriculum provides a wide and deep education. We do not specialize. We do not teach metal-working or medicine. We do, however, feed our students on meaningful information and allow them time to ponder the implications. For example, we might teach the tens table of multiplication, but before moving on we might ask, “What does  $10 \times 10$  have to do with  $100 \div 10$ ? With  $1/100$ ? With  $10\%$ ? What about  $10\% \div 10\% \div 10\%$  *ad infinitum*? We teach children to read, write, and to think logically and creatively. We want our students to be the best mom, dad, lawyer, butcher, banker, or sonker-maker they can be. In other words, we do not train; we educate broadly and deeply. We want our students to think well and to live well.

Classical education acknowledges a framework within which all knowledge is related and thus prevents divisions between the various fields of study. We do not prefer science over the arts, nor vice versa. When done well, a classical education naturally and necessarily integrates all aspects of learning.

Democratic classicism is fundamentally and originally an educational model necessary for a democracy, equipping all with the intellectual tools for self-government, personal success, and freedom.

Our philosophy requires focus on content and skills that build over time, from acquiring information to grasping it intellectually to using it purposefully. The Trivium provides three pathways to cultivate minds that are both creative and independent. We build knowledge and skill bases (grammar) in order to have a foundation upon which to think well (dialectic) and to articulate well sound ideas (rhetoric).



Signing of the American Constitution by Sam Knect

We understand that the heart and the mind are inseparable. In this model of education, we bring together the head and the heart because we are defined by what we love, not *if* we love, but what we love— by our affections. And while it is true that the mind and the heart are mutually enlivening, it is also clear that the mind is mainly the servant of the heart. That is, the mind serves to know the truth that fuels the fires of the heart. We have the opportunity to help a student order his/her affections, to love what is good and to hate what is not.

Education, then, is not merely the accumulation of facts and skills. It's not amassing knowledge. The end goal of education is actually the formation of wisdom and virtue within the hearts and minds of individuals. The result is action because what one learns becomes a part of who one is. And, once the learner lays hold of truth, then desiring what is good, the learner must act upon it. In other words, classical education at MCA is the formation of an intelligent, virtuous citizen who leads in a constitutional republic and who pursues truth, goodness, and beauty.

*Kirby R. McCrary, Headmaster*

*Resources: Think, John Piper and The Liberal Arts Tradition, Kevin Clark & Ravi Jain*

