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Welcome to our fifty-sixth 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.

Paideia: The Virtuous Citizen

The third article in a multi-part series on MCA's understanding of citizenship

At MCA paideia is the synthesis of intellectual rigor and equal access to a quality education. This is the bedrock upon which we are growing. According to Robert Hutchins, former President of University of Chicago, "The best education for the best is the best education for all." Children's abilities do differ, but this should not influence the quality of education all receive. Hutchins said, "Every child is educable up to his or her capacity... children are educable to varying degrees, but the variation in degree must be the same kind and quality of education."⁴

For us, paideia provides the goal of our efforts, our target. For us, paideia tells us we are shooting for the ideal person, that person full of wisdom and virtue whom we can only imagine and that person as he or she relates to others, particularly in this republic. But, we are not grasping for a mere chimerical, hypothetical, imaginary person. We are grounded in reality. We are grounded in truth. We know first hand and second hand how the human heart, mind, and body can amaze us, and how they can fall short. We are setting about to restore to education standards of morality and excellence, and the elevation of young students to lives of virtue and achievement⁴ and effectiveness for the good of themselves and the society around them. We want them to use all of their faculties—physical strength, moral goodness, their wit—to achieve real results.

We want our students to live up to their full potential. So, we never tell them, "You can be anything you want," first because that is a lie (I can never be jet pilot and take off from an aircraft carrier, although I truly want to be a pilot.) and secondly because sometimes what we want we shouldn't want. We do not tell them to follow their own hearts because we know throughout history that we are all fundamentally flawed. Our hearts can be deceitful above all things. We do, however, tell our students, "We want you to be all that you can be, and we are helping you to become that person. We want you to excel and to flourish."

We help them through our vision of classical education. Our vision is broad, deep and coherent. It culminates, as our vision statement reminds us, in that virtuous citizen who "rules and is ruled; is independent, yet simultaneously in relation with others; and, is grounded in an honest search for knowable, universal truth, goodness, and beauty." Furthermore, it says our students will have: "1) an awareness of themselves as members of a community, from local to national to global; 2) a devotion to intellectual and moral integrity, including an ability to fashion credible ideas and to argue logically; 3) a respect for the rule of law; and 4) an appreciation of American constitutional republic."

MCA's democratic and moral classicism is well suited for this purpose because it has a profound and far-reaching goal: the wise and virtuous soul. First, it addresses the whole person, individually, socially, politically, and morally. Secondly, it teaches our students to discriminate and to make sound judgments.

Close your eyes for a moment and picture the noblest person you can imagine. *That* is what we are after. Classical education can do that because it re-unites knowledge and skills, form and function, as well as the how and the what, those areas that John Dewey and his followers tore asunder beginning in the early 1900s. Classical education always keeps in mind the whole picture, the one metanarrative, and making the associations between the abstract truths, the transcendental ideals, and the practical.

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⁴ Vieth, Gene, and Andrew Kern. *Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America*. Capital Research Center, 2001.

