



# THE ACADEMIC JOURNAL

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Character Scholarship Community



Welcome to our forty eighth 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.

## Classical Education: Curriculum

Over the next several issues of the "Academic Journal," we will offer explanation and insights into MCA's classical education: what it is, why we choose this path, and how we pursue it with integrity. Here we discuss the curriculum. We hope you are enriched.

*From our Vision: "...we will maintain our delivery of a robust, liberal arts curriculum..."*

Central to a classical education is the implementation of the trivium and quadrivium: the seven liberal arts. The ancient idea of "liberal" meant to be educated in way that would set a human being free to be all he was meant to be. They were labeled liberal "arts" because they were more than just subjects; they were ways, or paths, to making knowledge and to making wisdom and virtue. This time-tested tradition of education served well the medieval scholastics, renaissance thinkers and scientists, and the founders of our nation. It serves well today's student because it is an education that truly liberates.

Dorothy Sayers, who was largely responsible for the latter day revival of classical education, in her *Lost Tools of Learning* related the trivium (three paths) to the developmental stages of a child's life. Grammar, the first of the three



paths, approximated the stage in a child's life when the acquisition of information and facts was easy and natural. The logic, or dialectical stage of the trivium began when children were ready to ask probing questions and to understand and construct logical arguments. The rhetorical stage occurred when students began to express their arguments in speeches, writing, debates, and through other means. While these descriptions are helpful, the seven liberal arts encompass much more than the developmental stages of life.

The trivium (three paths) addresses the arts of language: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. These are not specific subjects, but are rather the art of learning language that is woven into the fabric of the curriculum. Grammar is the art of grasping basic concepts; logic, or dialectic, is the art of conversation; rhetoric is the art of persuasion.

The quadrivium (four paths) addresses the arts of mathematics: arithmetic,



geometry, music and astronomy. Arithmetic is the art of numbers; geometry is the art of numbers in space; music is the art of numbers in time; astronomy is the art of numbers in time and space.

In the ancient world, the seven liberal arts prepared the student to study the higher things: natural science, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and theology. In a contemporary setting, each of the liberal arts and the higher sciences has its counterpart.

At Millennium Charter Academy, grades K-8 use the curriculum of the Core Knowledge Sequence, fashioned originally by E. D. Hirsh, Jr. to ensure the transmission of important Western cultural thought to the generations to come. This curriculum is rich in literature, history and science and lends itself well to teaching classically. The North Carolina state standards provide a framework for teaching skills, and the Core Knowledge sequence fills the framework with rich and meaningful content. At the high school level, the curriculum framework is modeled on that of other successful classical schools while also meeting state requirements. Teachers who are themselves classically educated develop these courses, providing our high school students with a rich, meaningful and thoughtful education.



*Pamela J. Braley*, Upper School Director