



**GULF COAST**

★ *Classical Academy* ★

## The Classical Difference

Latin. Literature. Logic.

- 1) Classical education is language focused.** This is not to diminish the value of other subjects by any means. However, where many schools today may make technology or extracurriculars the focus of their schools, classical schools center their curriculum on the mastery of Latin and Greek—the foundational languages of not only Western Civilization, but also of the English language itself. Language instruction thus begins in second grade and carries on until the end of high school.

“Latin is not a dead language, but an eternal one.”

**Becoming Multilingual:** Latin never truly died, but rather evolved into French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian (the Romance languages). About 90 percent of the vocabulary of these languages comes from Latin. To learn Latin is therefore to begin a study of six languages at once.

**English Vocabulary and Grammar:** Studying Latin aids students in mastering English. Since 50 percent of all English words are derived from Latin—along with 80–90 percent of all polysyllabic words— students will greatly expand their vocabulary. The regular grammar of Latin is also ideal for learning English grammar or the grammar of many other languages.

**Other Benefits:** Studying Latin, a highly organized and logical language, much like studying math, sharpens the mind, cultivates mental alertness, creates keener attention to detail, develops critical thinking, and enhances problem solving abilities.

Gulf Coast Classical is blessed to have two expert classical language teachers!

- 2) Classical education also emphasizes reading, and the focus is on reading the classics—the great books that have formed Western Civilization.** The motto of our curriculum is “Saving Western Civilization one student at a time.”

Where many schools today encourage students to read simply at their “grade level” and to choose books based mainly on student interest or cultural trends, classical schools have their students read classic works of literature, which are not only masterly written, but also expose students to ideas and worldviews that are both wholesome and noble. Along with this, art and music are also taught from the perspective of learning the classic works of the West and why and how to appreciate them.

- a. Beatrix, Potter, Little House Prairie, Chronicles of Narnia, Iliad and Odyssey, the plays of Shakespeare, the writings of Caesar and Cicero

- 3) Classical education is focused on traditional forms of instruction and practice.** Classroom time is spent reading, writing, and discussing classic works and great ideas. Students read and annotate in physical books, master their fine motor skills through penmanship and drawing, and use simple forms of practice such as drills and recitation to master content, especially at the grammar or elementary years of learning.
- 4) Classical schools are careful and purposeful in their use of technology in the classroom.** Classical schools believe that the teachers—who are creative, intuitive, and personal experts of their content—should be the main leaders of instruction in the classroom, not devices or tablets. So, in a classical school, technology is a tool that can be used, but it does not replace the teacher. Classical schools aim to create thoughtful students who can communicate ideas well through speech and writing. Many of the trendy apps and programs schools use today do not facilitate this. In fact, there are many issues in schools today due to their use of technology, and studies are continuing to show that technological devices not only distract students from learning, but also inhibit their growth in communication and interpersonal interaction. This is also why at many classical schools, and at Gulf Coast also, cell phones and iPads are not permitted during the school day.

## 5) Classical education separates student learning and development into three stages:

**Grammar Stage:** The first years of schooling are called the “grammar stage” — not because students spend four years learning English, but because these are the years in which the building blocks for all other learning are laid, just as grammar is the foundation for language. In the elementary school years — what we commonly think of as grades one through five — the mind is ready to absorb information. Children at this age find memorization fun. Therefore, during this period, education involves not self-expression and self-discovery, but rather the learning of facts. Rules of phonics and spelling, rules of grammar, poems, the vocabulary of foreign languages, the stories of history and literature, descriptions of plants and animals and the human body, the facts of mathematics — the list goes on. This information makes up the “grammar,” or the basic building blocks, for the second stage of education.

**Dialectic or Logic Stage:** By fifth or sixth grade, a child’s mind begins to think more analytically. Students this age are less interested in finding out facts than in asking “Why?” The second phase of the classical education, the “Logic Stage,” is a time when the child begins to pay attention to cause and effect, to the relationships between different fields of knowledge, and to the way facts fit together into a logical framework.

A student is ready for the Logic Stage when the capacity for abstract thought begins to mature. During these years, the student begins algebra and the study of logic and begins to apply logic to all academic subjects. The logic of writing, for example, includes paragraph construction and learning to support a thesis; the logic of reading involves the criticism and analysis of texts, not simple absorption of information; the logic of history demands that the student find out why the War of 1812 was fought, rather than simply reading its story; the logic of science requires that the child learn the scientific method.

**Rhetoric Stage:** The final phase of a classical education, the “Rhetoric Stage,” builds on the first two. At this point, the high school student learns to write and speak with force and originality. The student of rhetoric applies the rules of logic learned in middle school to the foundational information learned in the early grades and expresses his conclusions in clear, forceful, elegant language. In this final stage of learning, classroom learning focus on writing persuasive papers, Socratic seminars, debates, and speeches.

## 6) What is the fruit of classical education? How are graduates of classical schools different?

Students who receive a classical, Christian education outperform students from all other types of schools on standardized tests.

- One of the distinguishing features of classical schools is that it refuses to “teach to the test.” Instead, students are immersed in the great conversation of Western Civilization. The goal of classical schools is the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of its students above all. However, when it comes to the standardized tests obsessed over in conventional schools, students from classical schools perform remarkably well.
- Member schools of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) produce students whose SAT scores are, on average, 325 points higher than public schools, 191 points higher than conventional religious schools, and 138 points higher than secular private high schools.
- Finally, there has been a very recent large-scale study (the Good Soil Report) that has also shown that students from classical Christian schools are more likely to remain in the Christian faith as they progress through college and adulthood. Classical Christian Schools teach the Bible and foundations of the Christian faith but include with that a teaching of all subjects from a Christian worldview. As students advance through the classical program, they read and study the Bible at increasingly levels of comprehension and complexity. They also learn church history and read some of the great works of Christian literature, such as the Pilgrims Progress, Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, and Orthodoxy by G.K. Chesterton. Finally, as I have already mentioned, students also learn the language of the New Testament—Biblical Greek. In sum, the beauty and depth of the Christian faith is fully explored in a classical school.