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## WHAT DOES A CLASSICAL CLASSROOM LOOK LIKE?

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**COVENANTAL:** Education is a God-ordained process of teaching the next generation to love the Lord with all of their heart, soul, strength and mind. The command for this process is given to the parents, not the school. This by no means invalidates schools but rather defines them. Schools serve families by working in partnership with parents to bring up the next generation and must work tirelessly to inform, encourage and advise parents of their role in the education process. The parents are accountable to God for the education of their children; the school is accountable to the parents. The school Board and Administration are accountable to God for the success of the school's corporate mission. Teachers are accountable to the parents, the administration and the Lord for the effectiveness of their individual mission.

**CALM:** The students' attention is gained by having a calm, undistracted classroom. The focus of a classical education is to give students the tools of learning in their minds. Where other educational approaches focus on stimulating and exciting children with primary colors and posters, the classical classroom seeks to draw the student to a calm, thoughtful work environment with historic or artistic pictures displayed. Instead of using multiple posters and displays to organize and stimulate skill development, a classical classroom teaches the child to find the information in his student notebook and apply it to his mind. The classical classroom is also orderly and free of clutter, which allows the teacher to be a model of organization for the students. In keeping with the desire to teach our students to understand and appreciate beauty, truth, and goodness, our classrooms are decorated with deliberate avoidance of kitsch or sentimentalism.

**ORGANIZED:** Because the focus of grammar school is to give children the grammar of each subject, there is much to learn and memorize and little time to waste. Papers and tasks are efficiently managed, students are taught to take responsibility and parent help is utilized as much as possible. Where other approaches encourage students to consult one another during instruction, the classical classroom directs students to their teacher's lessons. The process of learning is built through developing routines and seeing them carried out.

**WELCOMING:** While being organized and calm, the classical classroom is not stodgy or cold. The covenantal nature of education requires parents to be part of the process. Where other educational approaches often err in creating a "professional versus parent" classroom, the classical classroom encourages parents to be involved with helping and learning and teaching as much as possible. The classical teacher seeks to develop ways to include parents in this process such as grading math fact papers, spelling tests, making copies, listening to Bible verses or other common tasks. This is done with clear guidelines about maintaining privacy and respecting the teacher's ultimate authority over the classroom.

**INVIGORATING:** Seeing all of knowledge as a legacy to be passed on to the next generation is exciting and fun. Though students memorize large amounts of information and are taught to achieve high standards through diligent work, the classical classroom is still fun and

exciting. Though our modern culture emphasizes fun through entertainment, the classical classroom emphasizes fun through understanding and mastery of skills.

**ACTIVE:** The focus of the grammar years is memorization. Where other approaches place the burden of memorization on the student to develop mnemonic strategies, the classical approach places the burden on the teacher. The classical teacher creates songs, chants, pop-ups or sound-offs and other means of recitation to embed the information into their students' memories.

**STRATEGIC:** The classical classroom challenges students to use their memory bank of information through written assignments that demonstrate and develop mastery of the information. Where other approaches emphasize multiple choice, matching and short answers, the classical curriculum emphasizes the benefit of learning through writing.

**COLLABORATIVE:** While teaching the students to direct their focus on the teacher during instruction, the students still enjoy working together as they chant, recite, and sound-off. Because students are taught to take responsibility, they learn to trust and rely on one another for classroom tasks and jobs. The classical environment is rich in hands-on activities, labs, demonstrations and experiments to give meaning to the information memorized. These experiences enrich the students' academic and social skills.

**SUBMISSIVE:** The daunting task of one generation to train up the next generation requires submission to authority, standards and guidelines. The classical teacher does not view accountability as encroaching on the teacher's mission, but as empowering it. The teacher is freed by strategic curriculum planning to focus on his or her classroom. The accountability of long-range plans, lesson plans and observations motivate the classical educator to implement instruction well. Likewise, the students are taught the biblical structure of the teacher's authority deriving from the parents and the administration and the Lord. They are gently taught to be respectful, obedient and diligent. They are lovingly trained to exercise self-control. The effect of this consistent shepherding is students who are focused on glorifying and pleasing God over themselves.

**FRUGAL:** Classical schools provide a legacy for their students while utilizing time, talents, money and skills efficiently and carefully. The nature of the Trivium challenges schools to determine curricula with the graduating senior in mind, creating a systematic progression of skills that are not swayed by costly educational trends. The recognition of the family's role in education challenges teachers to utilize volunteer support. The use of writing in learning reduces the dependence on worksheets and expensive copies. The nature of memorizing through singing and learning through hands-on activities allows teachers to utilize their time well by using the chanting times to set-up hands-on activities. Classical education was at its height in the poorest economies of mankind; its effectiveness is not thwarted by small budgets or small beginnings.