Chicago Classical Academy

A classical option for Chicago families

Chicago Classical Curriculum Overview

	Lower School (K-6)		Upper School (7-12)	
	• *Knowledge-rich curriculum & traditional classroom environment* • *Language-rich; traditional instruction in phonics, grammar & composition* • *Conceptual understanding of math and science* • *Dual-language program*		• *Emphasis on logic, classical composition, and rhetoric* • *Literature and history instruction are rooted in primary sources and in great books* • *Western tradition occupies the central place, though not the sole one*	
English	**Phonics & grammar:** Students learn to read and write through traditional instruction in phonics, grammar, and composition using the Riggs program **Literature**: Classic literature that reinforces topics in history, geography and science; emphasis on poetry memorization and recitation **Textbooks/resources:** *The Writing and Spelling Road to Reading and Thinking* (Riggs Institute), *My English Orthography Notebook* (Access Literacy), *Well-Ordered Language,* Tammy Peters and Dan Coupland		**Literature:** classic literature, complete works will be read **Grammar & composition:** *Get Smart and Stay Smart,* Elizabeth O'Brien	**Literature:** Greek & Roman classics, British, American and Modern literature; complete works will be read **Composition I and Composition II** **Senior thesis:** based on a topic that emerges from the high school curriculum, a culmination of a classical school education
History & Geography	**Core Knowledge sequence:** In World and American History, students learn stories of major events and figures from prehistory to modern times. Content builds year upon year to help children gain a greater understanding of the development of human civilizations, world cultures, the formation of the United States, and principles of American democracy. Geography will be introduced in kindergarten and will be approached as a distinct subject throughout the elementary years.		**US & World History:** Primary source packets developed by Hillsdale **Civic education:** complete study of US Constitution & founding principles	**US & World history:** course will be taught primarily through the study of primary source documents and focused on Western and American political and cultural tradition. **Government:** US Constitution & supporting documents
Foreign Language		**Greek & Latin:** *English from the Roots Up*	**Latin:** *Wheelock's Latin* (teacher led)	**Latin I & II:** *Wheelock's Latin*
	Spanish will be offered starting in kindergarten*			
Math	**Singapore Math:** fluency with numbers and operations; focus on problem solving and mathematical reasoning; proof-based geometry; introduction to algebra *All K-6 students share the same math block to ensure that each student is placed at the appropriate level and achieves fluency before starting the upper school*			**Algebra I & II, Geometry, pre-Calculus and Calculus I & II:** focus on problem solving and proof-based approach to learning **Textbooks/Resources:** Weeks & Adkins, Euclid's *Elements; Trigonometry,* Gelfand and Saul; *PreCalculus,* Sullivan; *Calculus,* Kline; *Calculus,* Stewart
Science	**Core Knowledge sequence:** Beginning in kindergarten, students are introduced to the natural world through observation, experience and through book-learning. Topics are presented systematically and provide the essential building blocks for deeper understanding in the upper grades. Heavy emphasis is placed on science biographies. **Computer Science*:** Students are introduced to the basics of both software and hardware in a systematic way, including introductions to programming, coding and theory.		**Biology, Chemistry & Physics** **Computer Science*** **Textbooks/resources:** Prentice Hall Science Explorer series, Hewitt *Conceptual Physics;* focus on science biographies	**Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy** **Computer Science*** Four years of high school science, including Biology and Chemistry are required.
Other required courses			**Logic:** formal course in logic	**Rhetoric:** study of classic speeches from Greek, Roman and American political traditions; formal instruction **Economics:** Basic principles of free market, micro and macroeconomics **Moral Philosophy:** formal study of morality; man as moral being
Fine Arts	**Core Knowledge sequence:** a historical survey of major traditions in music and art serves as a backbone for studio art and music class. Students are exposed to fine paintings, great music and other inspiring works of art from the beginning. A good understanding of the arts grows out of at analytical and historical study as much as creative expression.			**Art History*:** a 3-year comparative study of the role of art across different time periods and cultures (includes music, sculpture, and architecture); taught in parallel with history courses
Physical Education	A minimum of one hour of structured physical education will be required in the early grades; additional free time outdoors will be encouraged whenever possible.			Physical ed requirement for students not participating in sports
Electives*	*Electives will be offered starting in 4th grade to all students in good academic standing. The elective block will be otherwise used for remedial classes.*	Studio Art Band Drama/Theatre *(in conjunction with upper school)* Choir *(in conjunction with upper school)* Computer Science		Studio art Band/Orchestra Newspaper Drama/Theatre Writing/Poetry Debate team Choir Shop class *Additional options based on student interest*
Athletics			Junior and varsity teams based on interest & coach availability. All students will be welcome to participate in the junior teams.	

**These classes are staffing-dependent; curriculum map is subject to change.*

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Classical Curriculum

A classical education is defined by both content - a thorough and cumulative study of the liberal arts - and by method - a traditional approach to teaching that relies on a child's natural stages of mental development. There are five key elements to our approach:

Liberal arts: In classical antiquity, grammar, logic and rhetoric were considered essential knowledge for an active civic life. Throughout the K-12 program, ChiClassical teachers will emphasize the mastery of basic content (grammar), development of abstract thought (logic), and the art of expression (rhetoric). Within this framework, students will be introduced to the great works of art, music, and literature, to heroes and to legends, to scientific discoveries that have advanced our civilization.

Language-based approach: This is a language-based curriculum. Students learn by reading, writing and speaking. From an early age, students are taught grammar and composition, precision in word choice, and proper form. Language will figure heavily in all academic areas: art and music instruction, science (science biographies) and history (original texts and documents). Latin instruction will help students master English vocabulary, further their understanding of grammar and develop discipline and structure in composition.

Structured curriculum: History is used as organizing principle that structures knowledge from all disciplines into one sensible whole. Literature, art, and science are all studied through a historical lense, helping students build a clearer understanding of the thematic connections in the material being covered. The strong foundation in history allows students to integrate new information into an organized framework.

Civics: A strong civics component throughout the K-12 program ensures that all students graduate with a clear understanding of American history, government and individual rights and responsibilities. Students will study our form of government and the underlying philosophy, will read the original founding documents, study landmark judicial cases, and delve deeply into the U.S. Constitution.

Character: Lastly, a classical curriculum cannot exist without a moral component. Character development will be infused throughout the curriculum, and students will be encouraged to emulate the virtues of the heroes and heroines, scientists, explorers, and historical figures they encounter throughout their studies.

Lower School

The elementary grades are devoted to providing students with a core foundation they will fall back on the rest of their life. Students will explore math, science & the humanities in a rigorous and systematic way. Subjects are linked together within their historical context, and primary sources are at the core of the learning from the very beginning. The elementary school curriculum takes advantage of (and further improves) a young student's natural inclination towards memorization and the developing analytical capability during the middle school years.

For the elementary grade, we will adopt the Core Knowledge curriculum. This outlines the precise content that every child should learn in every subject. Core Knowledge is a first-of-its kind effort to identify the foundational knowledge every child needs to reach these goals. It guides how to teach, grade-by-grade, year-by-year, in a coherent, age-appropriate sequence.

Reading is a critical part of a strong education. It is an essential tool that is linked to every measure of success in a student's educational career. Elementary students will be taught to read using a phonics-based program such as Riggs. In addition, grammar will be explicitly taught every year alongside spelling, vocabulary and composition. We will encourage every student to read books that challenge both ability and comprehension. Detailed level-appropriate reading lists will be available for families to use as a guide. The ultimate goal is not only the mastery of skill but to nurture a love of reading and encourage each student to read more, read widely, read often, read for school and most importantly, read for pleasure.

In addition to Core Knowledge & Riggs, Chicago Classical will use a blend of Saxon and Singapore Math curriculums. The math curriculum is designed to teach the concepts behind numerical relations focusing on developing 'number sense' from an early age through practice and memorization. Without mastery of basic operations, students will continue to unnecessarily struggle in any higher level math or science class. A few key principles in the early grades will help eliminate this struggle: (1) No calculators. The human mind is the original calculator. (2) Practice, practice, practice. (3) Material will be repeated and cumulative assessments and reviews ensure that students have truly mastered the material.

Upper School

In high school, a broad liberal arts curriculum, complete with math, science, humanities, world languages, fine arts, music, and athletics will be offered. In addition, students will be required to study formal Logic, Rhetoric, and Latin. The general curriculum framework will mirror that of the elementary grades but instruction will rely heavily on primary sources, particularly in history and humanities classes. Complete works of great literature will be read. Students will be introduced to the timeless moral dilemmas faced by generations that came before them, gaining insight into their own complex human souls and - we hope - be inspired to be great as well as good.

Students will take formal composition that will solidify their knowledge of grammar and offer an opportunity to put together the elements or writing they have acquired throughout their literature, Latin, and grammar study in elementary grades. For the rhetoric sequence, students will study the classic speeches, from Greece and Rome to those in the American political tradition. History classes will explore human beings' great conflicts and achievements. A great deal of attention will be given to the Western and American political, religious, intellectual, cultural, and economic traditions.

In mathematics, a theoretical or conceptual approach will be taken, enabling students to understand the logic behind the algorithm and not merely to perform the operations. Students will be placed in classes according to ability ensuring that each student masters the required material. This conceptual approach is key to the science curriculum as well. The students should gain a genuine understanding of the physical world.

A distinctive element of a classical high school curriculum is the senior thesis. Every student will write and deliver orally a senior thesis on a topic of his or her choosing that emerges from the curriculum. A satisfactory performance on the senior thesis will be required for graduation. This project will be looked upon as the culmination of their classical school education, demonstrating the knowledge and skills the student has acquired and showing that he or she is ready to truly engage with the world around them.

The senior thesis is more than just a reflection of a students cumulative knowledge, but the initial step of joining the 'Great Conversation' - the term coined by Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins from the University of Chicago describing the ongoing conversation of great minds from the dawn of history all the way to present day. And with that, we can feel confident about letting our students into the world.