

Light FROM THE Light

“OF ALL THE HOLY WORKS, THE
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS MOST HOLY.”
— ST. THEOPHAN

SEPTEMBER 2011



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CLASSICAL CLASSROOM



ORTHODOX CLASSICAL SCHOOL
News & Views

Why We Need An Orthodox School

by Jennifer Sebits

“Sunday School is not that important,” my four-year-old proclaimed matter-of-factly one Sunday morning. “Why do you say that?” I curiously questioned. “Because we don’t even do any math there,” He explained. “We only learn about God.”

*We WANT OUR CHILDREN TO RECEIVE THE BEST
EDUCATION POSSIBLE, BUT HOW WISE CAN THEY
TRULY BECOME, WHEN WISDOM
IS LEFT AT HOME AND IN THE CHURCH?*

Somehow in the course of just four years, my son had learned to compartmentalize his life. And who could blame him?

He attends a school where he learns about math, language, the continents, the planets...and yet the Creator of that world, that universe, is left at home and

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Christ the Savior Academy School Board Formed

Christ the Savior Academy is now in its second phase, moving from vision to implementation of that dream.

Back in March, the Steering Committee released its report about the feasibility for the school. (To read the strategic plan, go to www.ChristTheSaviorAcademy.org.) The committee found that an Orthodox classical day school could be formed, starting with Kindergarten up to second grade and growing a grade a year until fifth grade. For the school to grow any larger would require a building project, which is not out of the question but would be addressed after the school has been in session for a time.

The Steering Committee, a group of 18 professionals with business, education, marketing, architecture and



fundraising backgrounds, disbanded after the report was complete. A board of 10 members has now been formed and has been charged with the task of implementing the strategic plan.

The board held its first meeting in August to discuss a strategy for moving forward. It has been broken into subcommittees, which include, finance and

fundraising, marketing, curriculum, staff structure, parent recruitment, governance and facility. As a first priority, the board will be contacting parents with children of age to attend the school in order to begin to get an idea of the number of children the school would have in its charter year. In addition, each committee will be drafting a timeline and task list with the goal for opening the doors to the school in the Fall of 2012.



2011-2012 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

- Father John Flora, ex-officio
- Father Paul O'Callaghan, ex-officio
- Father Aaron Warwick, ex-officio
- Alif Hourani
- Anthony Jacobs
- Gayle Malone
- Jane Mosley
- Justine Nightingale
- Jennifer Sebitts
- Elena Somerhalder

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at church, neatly packaged into the evening hours and on Sunday mornings.

At such an early age, he has already learned to separate matters of the mind from matters of the heart, or, as Orthodox Christians would say, the matters of the soul. Frederica Mathewes-Green once described the core of the soul (“nous” is the technical Greek term) as a little radio that once switched on, allows us to become aware of Christ speaking to us. The soul can be trained to register or perceive the voice of God.

That little radio is first turned on when our children are baptized into Christ. From that very day, there is a war waged to silence its voice inside our children. It is effectively silenced when we teach our children to compartmentalize their lives.

Compartmentalization is not the Orthodox way.

We confess God is everywhere:

We pray in the Triasaigian prayers, “O heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, **who art in all places and fillest all things**, Treasury of good things and Giver of life, come and dwell in us....”

“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!” (Psalms 139:7-8)

Yet, we send our children to schools where God is not allowed, or God is confessed in a different manner. We teach them about the Universe without mentioning His name, as if the Universe that He created and fills can be understood without Him.

We confess God should always be on our minds:
We are told “Pray at all times in the Spirit.” (Eph. 6:18)
“...Be constant in prayer.” (Roman 12:12)

And yet in secular schools, simply giving thanks to God for the food before them at lunch is not allowed, unless it is silent. The icons with Saints who serve as their benchmarks are banned.

To what end?

We want our children to receive the best education possible, but how wise can they truly become, when Wisdom is left at home and in the Church? And when the “important” things are taught in the school, the institution where our children spend the majority of their time.

We want our children to succeed in life, but how do we define success? If our children become doctors, lawyers, or successful businesspeople, but walk away from the Orthodox Faith, what have they gained? Have they not gained the whole world, but lost Life itself?

Conversely, we do not teach them the Faith at the exclusion of math and science, but this God who “art in all places and fillest all things” can be found in that very math and science that we teach.

As Orthodox Christians, we confess that the purpose of life is to be filled – saturated – with Christ. Everything flows from that – the art we create, the people we heal, the discoveries we make, the poor we help.

For our children to live life to its fullest, the soul must be nurtured, not silenced. They must attend schools where Truth is taught – the whole truth, which can only be found in the person of Jesus Christ, the beginning and end of all knowledge.

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THAT WAS GIVEN TO OUR CHILDREN IN BAPTISM . . .
We MUST give our CHILDREN THE TOOLS - THE TRUTH -
THEY NEED TO FIGHT THIS BATTLE.”*

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We confess every Sunday, “We have seen the Light, we have found the True Faith.” It is time for the Orthodox Community in Wichita to begin an Orthodox School, where our children’s faith can be nurtured and not silenced. We can no longer rely on Catholic or Protestant churches to teach our children their version of Christianity.

There is a war being waged to silence the faith that was given to our children in baptism. How many of the children in our baptismal registries still attend Church on a regular basis? We must give our children the tools, the Truth, they need to fight this battle. This can only be done by daily, constant meditation on Christ in every aspect of their lives – home, school and Church.

As my newborn son was about to be church-ed and later –that same day – baptized, a wise elderly man bent over and whispered, “When a baby enters this Church, he belongs to all of us.” I have since witnessed an example of this in an Orthodox mother of grown children who swiftly assisted with my baby because I looked “overwhelmed;” in the busy Orthodox mother of three who offered to pick up my other children at school so my baby could have a nap; and in an Orthodox friend who offered to run to the grocery store because it was too cold to get out with my newborn son.

How much more willing should we be to help these children and their parents wage this war? It doesn’t matter if we have school-age children or not. We, too, are engaged in this battle for their souls. After all, “when a baby enters this Church, he belongs to all of us.”

“WHEN a BABY ENTERS THIS CHURCH, HE BELONGS TO ALL OF US.”



'Classical' Is Not Just About Teaching Language: *Why Two College Math Professors Believe It's Time to Get Back to the Basics*

By Christopher and Katherine Earles



*OUR STUDENTS NEED A FRAMEWORK OF FACTS ON WHICH
 TO HANG THE MORE ADVANCED IDEAS OF LOGIC AND RHETORIC.*

Over the past eight years, we have both been involved in mathematics education as well as in the preparation of future elementary teachers at the college level. We learned of the classical model of education through Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise's *The Well-Trained Mind*. It appealed to our educational values, and we decided that when it came time to educate our children (then, not yet born), we would use the classical model as the basis of our curriculum. Naturally, we asked what mathematics education would be like under this model. Our comments in this article will focus on the elementary school years, the Grammar stage of the Trivium model.

The Grammar stage has been classified by Dorothy Sayers in "The Lost Tools of Learning" as the "poll-parrot" stage. When students are young

they love to memorize random facts, sing silly songs, recite nonsense poetry. They happily learn large numbers and large words, just so they can show off to family or friends. In the classical model of education, we leverage the natural enthusiasms of this stage of development through memorization, recitation, and practice. We do all this to prepare them for the later stages: Our students need a framework of facts on which to hang the more advanced ideas of Logic and Rhetoric.

What are the basic facts of mathematics? Most of us know already: numbers, arithmetic, measurements, kinds of shapes, parts of shapes, spatial relationships. These basic facts persist all the way up to the frontiers of research. We might invent new number systems, make measurements with abstract tools, study unimaginable shapes with

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equally unimaginable parts, and discuss complicated spatial relationships, but the basic facts are still the same, and they drive our mathematical intuition.

The learning tools, which characterize the Grammar stage are memorization, recitation, and practice. In the context of grade school mathematics, this means, among other things, doing exercises—hundreds of them—on long division and fraction addition and decimal multiplication. It means memorizing the multiplication table and the perfect squares and the prefixes for the metric system and the names of the different kinds of triangles. Drills and memorization are not very glamorous, but they are necessary means to an end. Why? Because the Logic and Rhetoric stages are waiting to build on a firm foundation. Because we want our students to graduate from the Grammar stage no longer needing to think about the rules.

Coming from families of professional musicians, we like to use music analogies when talking about mathematics. Memorizing the multiplication table and similar activities are analogous to practicing scales and chord progressions. If you want to become a competent piano player who plays well enough to derive pleasure from the activity, then you must practice the scales and chords and memorize key signatures and so forth. When you no longer have to think about these things, then you can use them to learn new pieces at a much faster pace than you could have if you had to think about the details every step of the way.

So, if we want our students to become competent users of mathematics with sufficient skill to derive pleasure or utility from the activity, then they must practice and memorize. A student who has not mastered the facts and grammar of the subject

will not be able to learn or use mathematics effectively and will perhaps even avoid it.

Not to be misunderstood, we do not expect the Grammar stage classroom to be entirely filled up with memorization and practice of arithmetic facts. Imagination has a part to play in mathematics education, particularly in building mathematical intuition. We handle physical objects to learn geometry; we make patterns and fold paper. We move ourselves through space. We measure, we count, we do things with numbers and shape. Imagination takes the rules and facts and adorns them with meaning. Even so, the primary goal must be a solid facility in the rules and facts since these are the foundation for the Logic stage where the student will begin to analyze the structure of arithmetic and geometry and to extend those structures beyond the realm of mere numbers.





THE STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE THE MOST IN OUR COLLEGE MATHEMATICS COURSES ARE THOSE WHO ARE THE LEAST CAPABLE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS.

Finally, we would like to briefly address problem-solving (a hot topic in mathematics education circles, it forms one of the ten Standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). At the Grammar stage, the emphasis is on basic facts, but problem-solving relies on having a store of basic facts with which to work. For this reason, problem solving cannot become the emphasis of the Grammar stage curriculum. Putting problem-solving first leads to shallow thinking and risks leaving the students without a solid foundation in the core facts of mathematics. Problem-solving as a curricular focus has its proper place at a higher stage, such as the Rhetoric stage, wherein students practice synthesizing the knowledge they have acquired.

In a fit of anecdotal argumentation, we would like to point out that the students who struggle

the most in our college mathematics courses are those who are the least capable in elementary school mathematics. Notably, the reverse also holds: we have seen students who have a solid understanding of elementary school mathematics, but little training in algebra, move very successfully through the college mathematics curriculum.

There's hardly been time in this article to expound on the content of mathematics in the Grammar stage, let alone its delivery in the classroom, and we beg your forgiveness for the dependence on our own opinions and experience in this discussion. We found in our research actually very little detail pertaining specifically to the philosophy of mathematics education within the classical model. In fact, its absence was frequently noted. We believe it is a conversation worth starting. 🦋

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To read the full draft proposal for the formation of Christ the Savior Academy go to www.christthesavioracademy.org or stop by the offices of St. George, St. Michael or St. Mary to pick up a copy.
- Questions about the school? Please contact [info @ christthesavioracademy.org](mailto:info@christthesavioracademy.org)



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