



RMCA

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Third Grade Curriculum Guide for Parents

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Dear Parents,

We are pleased to provide you with a “Parent’s Guide to RMCA’s Curriculum.” As a school dedicated to excellence, we are continually developing and improving our curricular choices. Therefore, we will occasionally and purposefully make changes to our scope and sequence as we continue to grow and refine our practice of education. Our focus is to partner with you, the parents, in “equipping students to impact their world for Christ by igniting a life-long passion to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty.”

For His Glory,

*Sylvia Robinson, Ph.D.
K-8 Principal*

Bible

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching Bible?

With Christ at the center of our school, we seek to follow His example in learning and doing the will of God. One of the primary ways we can know His will is through the Word of God. It is of utmost importance that students learn the stories of the Bible at an age when it is easy for them to memorize facts such as names and places.

What do third graders learn about The Bible?

The materials for grades 3–5 help students understand and imaginatively experience the context in which the Bible stories happened. These grades focus on understanding Bible times, the books of the Bible, and the kinds of writing in the Bible. CSI's Bible curriculum presents the story of God and his people in chronological order and teaches the events in context, so students understand more fully what it means to be part of God's family.

They learn these concepts through the following stories:

- The Story of Creation
- The Story of the Flood
- The Stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph
- The Story of Moses and the Exodus
- The Stories of the Wilderness Wanderings
- The Story of Joshua and the Promised Land
- The Stories of the Judges and Ruth

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *The Calling of God's Tribe* by Christian Schools International (CSI). This curricula is rich with an in-depth look at the Old Testament stories that reach both head and heart.

Supplementary Materials include The Bible, Bible workbooks, maps of Bible Lands and Times and the DreamWorks video *Joseph*.

Students attend “Convocare” (Latin for “gathering”) every Wednesday afternoon, where they learn to apply biblical principles in their lives as students and participate in an age-appropriate worship service.

Dictation & Memorization

What is our classical, Christian approach to dictation and memory work?

The practice of dictation, writing words and sentences as read aloud by the teacher, is helpful in developing listening skills and in helping students connect aural and spoken language. Both dictation and memorization model well-constructed language in various forms for children. Memorization is a key practice in the grammar stage of the classical trivium, when students learn facts easily through chanting, songs, and repetition. The mental discipline of memorization exercises the minds of students and gives them easy recall of facts. This prepares them for higher levels of reasoning by keeping them from being slowed down by trying to recall things they should already know.

What do third graders write from dictation and memorize?

- Various Bible passages correlating with Bible curriculum
- Old and New Testament Books of the Bible
- 50 States
- State Facts
- First 16 Presidents
- Preamble to the Constitution
- 13 Colonies
- The Battle Hymn of the Republic
- Various patriotic songs and hymns

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: Dictation and memorization passages are selected from various areas of the curriculum.

Culminating Activities include reciting memory work at Convocare.

Reading

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching reading?

Reading is the most important skill students learn at school. You might wonder why studying reading is more important than, say, Bible. The answer is that teaching a child to read well will equip him to read the Bible for himself, as well as to study all the other subjects. God reveals Himself to mankind in two major ways, through His Creation and through His written Word. It is imperative for children to learn to read and comprehend in order to know God through His Word.

What do third graders read?

In third grade, students begin the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” This means that they will be expected to transfer their reading skills to other subject areas and read independently for understanding. However, this does not mean the end of direct instruction in reading skills. By utilizing reading anthologies that are themed, teachers coach students in the practice of reading comprehension skills.

The major reading themes for third grade include:

- Friendship
- Imagination

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Open Court Reading Third Grade* by SRA. This curricula contains a wonderful collection of literary genres and provides the teacher with many resources for instructing students in comprehension, including audio versions of the stories that encourage the students to read for details. Like many published curricula, this program requires that our teachers make certain adjustments to account for our classical approach to reading instruction. For example, SRA requires students to exercise “critical thinking skills” regularly, which is not an emphasis area at the grammar stage of the trivium. See also the page on “Literature” for additional titles/texts.

Supplementary Materials include an Independent Reading Management Kit that allows teachers to manage and assess students in their independent reading. One unit of study discusses the work of Picasso, and the classes study more of his art at the prompting of the story.

Spelling & Vocabulary

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching spelling and vocabulary?

Being able to spell correctly and use precise vocabulary is an essential part of written (and spoken) communication. When we can communicate ideas clearly, our relationships grow stronger. Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." This could be said of words aptly written as well.

What do third graders learn about spelling and vocabulary?

The emphases of third grade spelling & vocabulary curriculum are to:

- Solidify sound-letter relationships, including basic alternate spellings
- Employ more visual strategies in learning to spell
- Expand the difficulty of the words to several syllables
- Use the spelling words in context
- Increase the vocabulary of students in all areas of study (i.e. to learn the vocabulary associated with the "grammar" of each subject)

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Daily Oral Language Plus* from Great Source Education Group provides daily practice and review of vocabulary and spelling rules.

Supplementary Materials include dictionaries, thesauruses, and word lists from other content areas being studied. When appropriate, Latin derivations are discussed.

Composition & Penmanship

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching composition?

God, in His great wisdom, intended for us to learn by observing others. In fact, He sent his Son for this very reason (Matthew 11:29). Proverbs 24:32 exemplifies this principle with the words, "I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw." When we hand our children a piece of paper and pencil and ask them to write a story, they will often become frustrated because they have no model. Children need to be taught writing in a logical, sequential manner, starting with the basics. A classical education provides children with these logical, sequential steps in learning. Teaching writing classically in the grammar stage (grades K-5), involves imparting the following skills incrementally, moving on to the next step only after the previous skill has been mastered. This classical method to composition includes instruction in penmanship.

1. Trace over letters.
2. Print letters.
3. Copy words.
4. Copy sentences.
5. Copy whole passages.
6. Take dictation.
7. Write narrations.

← --- Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

In an effort to have children practicing good writing habits, classical methodology does not encourage much creative writing and original composition until fourth or fifth grades. It is more important for them to spend their formative grammar school years copying well-written, beautiful language in order to cement good writing habits.

What do third graders learn about composition?

- Complete sentences
- Word choice (thesaurus & dictionary skills)
- Journaling
- Copying

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: Writing assignments that accompany both Shurley Grammar and Open Court SRA Curriculum are used to teach simple forms of composition.

Supplementary Materials include imitation writing from *Aesop's Fables*, and *Quick and Fun Writing Activities*.

Grammar

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching grammar?

Language is a way to share ideas. Sharing ideas in a way that is comprehensible requires orderliness. To both honor a God of order and be equipped to share ideas, students must learn to write in a way that is grammatically correct and syntactically sound. The psalmist metaphorically speaks of using beautiful words in this verse, “as I recite my verses for the king, my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.” (Psalm 45:1) Our particular method of grammar instruction (Shurley Grammar) concentrates on the parts of grammar instead of the whole and uses classical methodology (chants and repetition). This instructional method compliments our Latin program beautifully.

What do third graders learn about grammar?

The following topics are emphasized in third grade grammar study:

- Synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms
- Use of *a/an*
- Common, proper, singular, and plural nouns
- Verbs
- Pattern I sentences (singular noun—verb)
- Pattern II sentences (singular noun—verb—direct object)
- Declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences
- Eight parts of speech
- Editing sentences, paragraphs, and letters

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Shurley Grammar 3* by Shurley Instructional Materials and *Daily Oral Language PLUS 3* by Great Source. Shurley Grammar is very classical in its methodology as it teaches using chants and repetition. Daily Oral Language and the supplemental materials listed below are incorporated for variety and to help students apply their knowledge and use of grammar in varied settings.

Supplementary Materials include *Mad-Libs* and challenge pages from Open Court SRA curriculum

*****Parents, please note that a “Parents’ Guide to Helping Your Child With Shurley Grammar” is available from your child’s teacher or from the school office.**

Mathematics

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching mathematics?

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.” (Romans 1:20) God teaches us through mathematical laws that he is eternal and infinite. His creation is marvelously precise and utterly vast. Math allows us a means of measuring and computing our world so that we can more fully understand how great its Creator truly is.

The grammar stage of math instruction focuses on mastery of facts through a connected and sequential approach using constant repetition and speed drills. The foundational facts of math include basic addition and subtraction facts, multiplication tables, the procedure for performing multi-digit multiplication and other similar procedures, and concepts such as the commutative property of addition. Furthermore, students must learn certain math symbols and vocabulary terms.

What do third graders learn about math?

- Addition and subtraction facts
- Place value to 1,000,000
- Addition and subtraction of two-, three-, and four-digit numbers
- Estimation, rounding, solving, and mental math
- Metric and customary measurement
- Fractions and decimals including comparing, equivalent, mixed numbers, renaming, adding, and subtracting decimals
- Multiplication and division facts to 12
- Time and money including calendars, a.m. & p.m., time to the nearest minute, elapsed time, counting coins and dollars, and counting back change
- Geometry including shapes, angles, perimeter, area, volume, and solid figures
- Two-digit numbers multiplied by single-digit numbers

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *3rd Grade Math* by Bob Jones University (BJU) Press is strong because it presents one major math concept at a time and it daily reviews telling time for third graders. This curriculum is presented in eye-catching color graphics with the use of various manipulatives which encourage students to enjoy the study of mathematics. RMCA's third grade teachers find that they need to augment the unit on division and provide additional fact drills in the interest of being more classical in their math instruction.

Supplemental Materials include fact drills and manipulatives.

History & Geography

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching history and geography?

God has had a plan for the salvation of mankind since the beginning of the world, of history. In order to understand history, it must be studied within the context of God's plan for mankind. While the "grammar" of history begins with the study of names, dates, places and events, our Christian approach to history considers these facts in the broader picture of God's justice and mercy toward the nations.

The study of geography allows us to understand science because location, natural resources, climates, and weather patterns affect God's ingenious ecological balance of the earth. Geography also allows us to understand history. Since the origin of people groups and languages (at the Tower of Babel in Genesis), location has affected the economies, lifestyles, and interdependence of nations.

What do third graders learn about history and geography?

- Roman Empire
- Exploring the Americas
- Japanese warlords
- Moghul emperors of India
- Battle, fire, and plague in England
- Scientific discovery
- American Revolution
- French Revolution
- Industrial Revolution
- Slavery

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Story of the World* presents the entire history of the world chronologically. Third graders study *Volume III, Early Modern Times*. Third through fifth grade teachers emphasize the role of American history within the context of world history. *Daily Geography* by Houghton Mifflin emphasizes physical geography and map skills recommended in the NCSS geography standards and National Geography Standards, to help students learn and review basic geography concepts.

Supplementary Textbooks/Materials include *History of the USA* Book I and part of Book II, various materials on states and capitals, and history songs.

Culminating Activities and Field Trips include a trip to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and a fishing trip at the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Literature

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching literature?

God inspired much of the Bible to be written in the form of either story or poetry. Jesus Christ did most of his teaching through parables. Stories and poems are powerful teaching tools that evoke emotion, promote recollection, and encourage self-reflection.

There are several parts to the grammar of literature. The first part is to develop a taste and appreciation for prose and poetry that have excellence of form and expression. Literature study also plays a part in helping a child learn to read and read well. While we do use reading textbooks, we realize the importance of familiarizing our children with excellent literature, using whole books with literary power that teach the difference between good and evil and promote Godly values. Finally, reading comprehension is basic to literature study. The child has to understand what has been read or the learning is lost.

What books do third graders read?

This is a list of “basic” literature. Advanced titles are not listed here.

- A Lion to Guard Us
- Pocahontas & the Strangers
- Squanto, Friend of the Pilgrims
- The Thanksgiving Story
- The Courage of Sarah Noble
- Meet George Washington
- Phoebe the Spy
- The Cabin Faced West
- The Bears on Hemlock Mountain
- Meet Thomas Jefferson
- Sarah Whicher’s Story
- Robert Fulton, Boy Craftsman
- Sarah, Plain & Tall

What books are read aloud to third graders?

The following books are typically not all read in one year. Occasionally, one or two others may be substituted. Sign of the Beaver, Secret of the Andes, The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Johnny Tremain, Justin Morgan Had a Horse, Toliver’s Secret, Poem Stew, The Hopeful Trout, The Journeyman, and Swift Rivers.

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: Individual literature titles as listed above.

Supplemental Materials include Voyage of the Dawn Treader & Sarah, Plain & Tall videos.

Science

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching science?

Science began in the Garden of Eden when God commanded us to rule over the earth (Genesis 1:26) and Adam proceeded to classify the species (Genesis 2:19-20). In order to obey God's command to subdue and care for the earth, we must obtain an organized and systematic understanding of God's creation. This is the purpose of science.

A classical approach to science at the grammar stage concentrates on the accumulation of facts and concrete thinking. Identification of plants and animals is followed by simple classification. Accompanying this is familiarization with the facts and the vocabulary that define the world around us including the laws of physics. Finally, a classical approach to science education includes learning the history of science and the scientists that have contributed to Western Civilization.

What do third graders learn about science?

- Butterflies/Insects (body parts and life cycle of insects)
- How Matter Changes (properties of matter, energy, & combining substances)
- Light (properties of light, spectrum, and the eye)
- Electricity (electrical energy, electromagnets, and static electricity)
- Simple Machines (force & work, and various simple machines)
- Earth & Space (the solar system, constellations, and weather)
- Earth & Its Layers (Earth's composition & forces, and surface features)
- Earth Beneath You (rocks, soil, and natural resources)
- Muscles & Bones Work Together (muscles, major bones, & how bones move)
- Scientific Method (preparation for Science Fair project)

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *SRA Real Science* brings science to life for students. *SRA Real Science's* unique approach allows students to learn from their curiosity as they build a solid foundation of knowledge about life, earth, physical, and health science. RMCA teachers take a balanced approach when this text mentions the age of the earth by explaining that while it is a fact that God created the earth, not all scientists nor Christians agree on exactly how old it is.

Supplemental Materials include various science fair books, *Rocks & Minerals* by Edupress, and a Bug Box from the Butterfly Pavilion.

Culminating Activities & Field Trips include trips to the Fiske Planetarium, National Center for Aeronautical Research, and Butterfly Pavilion, and Guest Speakers Ben Stone (Ball Aerospace) and Dr. Mees (Optometrist), as well as the opportunity to participate in the annual RMCA Science Fair.

Latin

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching Latin?

The study of Latin promotes mental discipline and leads to mastery of English. The mental discipline that learning a precise language such as Latin instills in students paves the way for systematic, rigorous, and analytical thought. Latin education is like mental calisthenics. Latin is an inflected language, while English is not. An inflected language is one in which the words of the language are comprised of roots and endings. The roots remain relatively stable, and the endings change depending on what job the word is doing in the sentence. English words are used different ways but look the same. For example, glass of milk, or milk a cow. The first “milk” is a noun but the second is a verb. In inflected languages, such as Latin, the jobs are very easily determined by the roots and endings attached to those roots. A noun would have certain endings, a verb something else, and so on. Dorothy Sayers in her essay, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” says that the inflected languages interpret the uninflected. This means that understanding the grammar of an inflected language such as Latin will help a child understand the grammar of an uninflected language such as English when it is time. And since over 50 percent of English words have Latin roots, students greatly expand their English vocabulary by learning Latin.

The classical principles for Latin instruction are to memorize the grammar (or forms), recite the Latin grammar in the form of chants, drill grammar forms for mastery, and over-learn. RMCA’s English Grammar instruction using Shurley Grammar is enhanced by the students’ study of Latin in third through fifth grades.

What do third graders learn about Latin?

- Constellations and numbers
- Recognizing English and Latin verbs and nouns
- Vocabulary and English derivatives
- Prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, and “to be” verbs
- Present and future tenses
- First conjugation and declension
- four Latin prayers & five grammar chants

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Prima Latina* by Memoria Press is a preparatory course for *Latina Christiana*. It is intended for teachers with no background in Latin, and was developed for children in kindergarten thru third grade. The course was designed for students who are still becoming familiar with English grammar.

Supplemental Materials include the instructional CD that accompanies *Prima Latina*.

Art

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching art?

A Latin phrase, “Imago Dei,” reminds us that we are created in the image of God: created to be creative as God is the author of creativity. A student’s desire to be creative is a gift, and can be guided and nurtured through art. In a Christian approach to art, students are taught that art is first and foremost a way to glorify God, reflecting his truth, goodness, and beauty.

The classical study of art at the grammar stage includes learning about the history of art in Western civilization as well as the basic elements of art such as line, form, shape, space, value, color, and texture. As one might suspect, the classical method of art instruction at the grammar stage is imitation—of masterpieces, of course. As an important part of our classical curriculum, students receive art instruction from a specialist on a weekly basis.

What do third graders learn about art?

As an example of how a progression of difficulty is used to teach art elements, the study of “color” in third grade consists of reviewing primary and secondary colors and warm and cool colors, and developing the concept of complementary colors.

- More advanced understanding of art elements
- Study of famous artists and their corresponding countries (geography) and time periods
- Exposure to many mediums, styles, and types of art as is age appropriate
- God is the author of art as the Creator.

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *How Great Thou Art Curriculum* presents artistic concepts and history in a Christian framework in order to teach a progression of the basics of art well.

Supplemental Materials include *Our Christian Heritage in Art* by Kathryn L. Bell, various art textbooks, copied materials from numerous sources, and occasionally brief videos on various artists, time periods, and techniques.

Culminating Activities include opportunities to participate in “Art in the Afternoon” with a guest artist and exhibits in the annual RMCA Art Show.

Music

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching music?

When we praise God with music, it glorifies Him and brings us joy. Psalm 92:1 says, “It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High.” We should teach children to enjoy music that truly lifts the spirits of its listeners. And as we teach children to enjoy others’ beautiful music, we should encourage them to develop their own God-given musical talents for the purpose of bringing a Christian influence on our culture.

The “grammar” of music includes the elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm. A classical, Christian music education also includes a familiarity with the canon of music of Western civilization. Students receive music instruction from a trained specialist twice weekly.

What do third graders learn about music?

- Rhythm—students practice playing rhythms through repetition
- Melody—students read music to sing, play, and recognize melody
- Instruments—students read music and learn finger positions to play recorders
- Introduction to the lives and works of specific composers
- Music history & hymns—including the Hymn of the Month that is learned school-wide and shared at Convocare

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *The Music Connection* from Silver Burdett and Ginn helps students learn to appreciate music from across our country and around the world. The music instructor finds that students enjoy playing and singing songs whose melodies they recognize and therefore must augment this curriculum with more familiar arrangements. In the spirit of classical instruction, the instructor also uses additional “listening” music that does not accompany the principal curriculum.

Supplemental Materials include *The Music Connection 3* by Scott-Foresman and accompanying CD, as well as other musical arrangements and CDs.

Culminating Activities include performing at the annual school Christmas concert and student recitals.

Physical Education

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching physical education?

Our purpose is to help children understand fitness from a biblical perspective. First, students should understand that since the body is the vehicle for the soul (1 Cor. 6:19), it is important to maintain good health. Second, we are naturally inclined to laziness and should develop self-discipline in our bodies. Third, playing by the rules encourages submission to authority and respect for others. And finally, putting aside selfish ambition helps prepare students for Christian leadership. Physical education is instructed by a specialist twice each week.

What do third graders learn about physical education?

The first few minutes of each P.E. class are spent on activities that develop cardiovascular and muscular strength and endurance, increase flexibility, and prevent injury. Students develop motor skills as they learn and practice the basic skills, drills, progressions, safety issues, and game rules for the following activities in an age appropriate manner:

- Soccer
- Football
- Basketball
- Hockey
- Volleyball
- Baseball and Kickball
- Jump rope
- Dance (including aerobic endurance and creative movement to music)

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Physical Education for 3rd to 5th Grades* by Christian Schools International (CSI) and *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School (12th edition)* by Dauer & Pangrazi provide age appropriate progressions, a variety of activities and sports, and CSI includes ideas for biblical integration. The physical education instructor finds that these materials lack some creativity and must, therefore, augment some activities and instructional methods with her own ideas.

Supplemental Materials include *Games for Elementary School Grades* by Richardson and *P.E. for Children: Concepts into Practice* by Tomas, Lee, & Thomas.

Culminating Activities include a “game week” between each unit of instruction where students can practice the skills they’ve learned. “Game Week” also includes playing games just for the fun of it. Of course, students also look forward to competing and practicing good sportsmanship on RMCA’s Annual Field Day.

Appendix

Curriculum Defined

The word “curriculum” means “what it intended to be taught.” It actually comes from the Latin word *currere*, meaning *to run*. It is the same root from which we get the word *course*, as in a running track. This view of curriculum, as a set *course*, helps us to view our curriculum in a somewhat different way than exists in most public schools. While the popular fad in education is to individualize instruction, classical education defines a course, or curriculum, through which every student progresses. Our curriculum is deliberately chosen, based on what has been tried and true and taught to children across the centuries. Of course, there are always adjustments to content as new knowledge is discovered, but the basic truths and methods do not change.

There are, however, some categories of curriculum which must be considered when discussing a school’s curriculum. This guide is intended to spell out the “written curriculum,” the documentation that describes the scope and sequence of what students will be taught in each subject. There are two more kinds of curriculum that certainly exist but are not usually described in written form. They are the “living curriculum” and the “cultural curriculum.” The “living curriculum” is the result of what an individual teacher brings to the “written curriculum.” While each teacher may be provided with the same list of learning objectives, she brings her own experience and teaching flair to that topic. So, the “written curriculum” may be taught in a slightly different way and to a slightly varying level of detail depending on who is teaching it.

The “cultural curriculum” refers to the atmosphere in which the “written curriculum” is taught. The culture of the school itself (and each classroom) provides a foundation upon which the learning experience is created. Therefore, the written curriculum described in this document must be considered in light of the living and cultural curricula of the school.

Our Instructional Values

Are there certain beliefs that you hold which guide you in your curricular decision making?

Yes. At RMCA, our core beliefs about instruction drive what happens in our classrooms. These instructional values are listed below:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). Therefore spiritual formation and intellectual development are not mutually exclusive. All subject matter is taught from the perspective of a Christian worldview. Biblical faith, precepts and principles are integrated into learning and activities.

The classical Trivium promotes intellectual development. Therefore, teachers grow in the understanding and application of classical practices.

Growth and learning is the aim of education. Therefore students are active participants in the learning process, not passive recipients of information. Teachers model growth and learning before their students.

Subject matter is interrelated. Therefore, subjects are naturally integrated and multidisciplinary approaches to learning are used when appropriate.

Teachers are instructional and moral authorities. Therefore, they purposefully and systematically guide and direct the learning of their students while modeling the highest Christian virtues.

The preservation of innocence cultivates healthy social and emotional development. Therefore, instruction and subject matter are age-appropriate.

Students possess differing learning styles and intelligences. Therefore teachers engage students in a variety of activities and utilize varying teaching methods and materials.

Christian & Classical Education

What do we mean by Christian Education?

Since God's truth is revealed in the Bible and in His creation, we teach that knowledge is interrelated and can instruct us about God Himself. We seek to integrate God's truth and love into the academic, physical, social, and spiritual education of each student. Ideals and standards of scholarship consistent with the understanding of the lordship of Jesus Christ are continually fostered. Students are encouraged to view their world through God's truth.

Parents, teachers and students are all expected to take an active role in the learning process. We believe that education is most effective when the responsibility for learning is shared among all those involved.

What do we mean by "classical" education?

One of the most valuable developments of western civilization, classical education utilizes traditional liberal arts as a means of instilling wisdom and virtue in our students. Our liberal arts curriculum is delivered by way of the "Trivium" – a word that describes three modes of learning: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Grammar is concerned with the basic facts, rules, and required skills of any given subject. Logic involves learning to think and reason in the language of various subjects. And rhetoric requires students to express their thoughts in a compelling and persuasive manner.

While each area of the Trivium is addressed at every grade level and in all subjects, the developmental stages of children lend themselves to particular modes of learning. For this reason, we emphasize the grammar mode of learning with kindergarteners through fifth graders, who find skill acquisition and repetition to be easy and comfortable. Once students begin to question and contradict, overlapping into fifth grade and up through about the eighth grade, they are ready to emphasize logic. As students begin to know, think about, and explain their world, they are being prepared to begin their lifelong pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Choosing the Best Curricula

Some schools attempt to ensure the religious content of their curriculum through the use of textbooks written and published especially for Christian schools. Many schools use such textbooks exclusively, for all subjects. This is commendable if the quality of instructional material is at least on a par with that which is available from secular sources. Unfortunately, however, much of what I have seen in this area is sadly deficient.¹

Such textbooks may be "Christian," but if they fail to capture the interest of students and fail to convey the subject matter clearly, their use becomes counterproductive. My own experience is that a teacher can more successfully supplement a good secular textbook with her own Christian input in class discussion than try to correct the educational deficiencies of an amateurish Christian textbook. Administrators making purchasing decisions can help improve the overall quality of the Christian textbook market by buying only those specific products that measure up to high academic standards, rather than bring in a publisher's complete line which may include a mixed bag of books, some excellent and some inferior. Such selective buying should eventually raise the quality of our own textbooks by forcing them to compete directly with secular books. On the other hand, buying inferior books just because they are "Christian" has the same weakening effect as when a businessman hires incompetent friends rather than qualified workers who can get the job done right.²

Should resources known to be authored by non-Christians be banned from the Christian school? Should we reject Webster's English Dictionary on the basis that non-Christians have been contributing editors? The answer is, no. God, in His wisdom, has given insights to all people. This is known theologically as "common grace." Many of the great discoveries, advances, and even educational resources have occurred as a result of the work of non-Christian people. One reason for using a book authored by a non-Christian is that we should be vigilantly looking for the evidence of a non-Christian worldview. However, in a work written by a Christian, we may be lulled into a false sense of security.³

The bottom line is, the whole issue needs redefining. Choosing the best curricula should not be about whether the author was a Christian or a non-Christian. The question we ask when choosing our resources should be, "Which curricula conforms to our mission statement and will assist us most effectively to work out our educational purpose and goals in the Christian school?"⁴

¹ & ² Reed, Cecilia "What Makes a School 'Christian'" in "Here, Fix My Kid" at <http://ww7.com/herefixmykid/#what>

³ & ⁴ Edlin, Richard *The Cause of Christian Education*, Vision Press: 1998.

Excerpt from “Who’s Teaching My Child?”

By Brett King, RMCA Headmaster

Living the values they teach is a teacher’s most potent strategy to influence the development of Christ-like character in our kids. Consider this passage from Luke 6:39-40: “He also told them this parable: ‘Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.’” I have always been humbled and challenged by this passage. After all, I want my own children, when they are fully trained, to be like the Great Teacher, Jesus. It seems, therefore, that it would be beneficial to entrust my children to teachers who pursue the same goal in their own lives. This connection is one of the key reasons why a godly character is the foremost qualification for teaching at RMCA. Modeling is the most powerful teaching tool, and it is only one aspect of RMCA’s strategy of forging character in our students.

Kids need to both see and hear biblical principles. Direct instruction surrounding the character of God and the precepts of scripture is a natural outgrowth of our teachers’ walk with the Lord, and an integral piece of the planned curriculum. From memorizing Bible verses to applying a biblical worldview to interpreting historical events, students are naturally taught the “*meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws of the Lord...*” (Deut. 6:20) One parent expressed surprise at the request of a history teacher that students bring their Bibles to history class. This is a common and even expected practice at RMCA. Teachers seek to develop in students the connection between the benefits of morality as defined in scripture and the consequences of immorality so often revealed in history. Simply put, we teach students that ideas and behaviors have consequences.

Our teachers aren’t perfect. But their own commitment to Christ-likeness has an immediate and a cumulative impact on their students’ character development. As you assess your schooling options each year, please consider the moral influence of the teachers to whom you are entrusting your most precious commodity.

Recommended Resources

The Case for Classical Christian Education by Douglas Wilson, Crossway Books, 2003.

The Cause of Christian Education by Richard J. Edlin, Vision Press, 1998.

The Educated Child by William J. Bennett, Free Press, 2000.

Piety and Philosophy by Richard A. Riesen, ACW Press, 2002.

Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning by Douglas Wilson, Crossway Books, 1991.

Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right from Wrong by William Kilpatrick, Simon & Schuster, 1993.

“Why Sonlight Uses Certain Books that Some Homeschoolers Won’t Touch” article on <http://www.sonlight.com/thatbook.html>