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*“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
Deuteronomy 6:6-7*

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*

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>

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 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.

“More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given.”

-Bertrand Russell

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.

*"For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain."
-Dorothy Sayers*

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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 kindergartners learn about The Bible?

The materials for grades K-2 focus topically on Bible stories and their application. Familiar Bible stories emphasize God's love for each of us. Unit titles include God Cares For Me, God Wants Me To Be His Child, God Teaches Me, God Helps Me To Live For Him, God Sent Jesus To Die For Me, and God Has A Plan For Me. Bible stories used to teach these themes are:

- Creation
- Adam & Eve
- Baby Samuel, Isaac & John the Baptist
- Mephibosheth
- Jesus' Miracles
- Jesus Is the Good Shepherd
- Daniel & the Fiery Furnace
- David (Goliath, Psalms, Jonathan)
- The Birth of Christ
- Simeon & Anna
- Parables
- Jonah
- Jesus & the Disciples
- Jesus' Death, Burial & Resurrection
- Samson
- Noah
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Moses & 10 Commandments
- Joshua
- Josiah
- Paul's Ministry
- Joseph
- Esther
- Moses

Principal Textbook/

Curriculum: God and Me by ASCI Purposeful Design Publications. At every grade level, this series provides students with the tools for a dynamic personal relationship with Jesus Christ by focusing on personal Bible study, prayer, devotions, praise, and worship. Missions and service are fundamental themes repeated throughout the series.

"...teach me your ways so that I may know you and continue to find favor with you..." Exodus 33:13

Supplementary Materials include Getting Started Character Education Curriculum by ACSI.

Appendix

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 (I 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.

What do kindergartners learn about physical education?

Little bodies need to move around frequently, so our kindergartners enjoy one or two recess breaks each day. Children are encouraged to play together, build social skills, and exhibit good sportsmanship. Indoor classroom games keep the children moving as well.

Culminating Activities include class trips to local parks.

Life Skills

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching life skills?

Throughout the day, kindergartners are encouraged to “do the right thing” because it is pleasing to God. These skills are taught during all the subjects and between the subjects. Students are reminded of what pleases God at all times.

What do kindergartners learn about life skills?

- Be obedient
- Be honest
- Share with others
- Get along with others
- Take turns
- Be unselfish

Memorization

What is our classical, Christian approach to memory work?

The practice of memorization models 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 kindergartners memorize?

Kindergartners memorize the Five Pillars of Character, as well as selections from the following list:

- Genesis 1:1
- Romans 6:23
- Colossians 3:23
- Luke 1:37
- Psalm 139:14
- 1 Corinthians 13:4
- 1 Peter 5:7
- John 10:27
- Psalm 91:11
- Psalm 23
- Isaiah 41:10
- Psalm 37:3-4
- Jeremiah 29:11
- John 3:16
- Psalm 118:28
- Ephesians 6:10
- Psalm 46:1
- Titus 3:1
- I Peter 2:17
- Matthew 7:12
- Matthew 19:14
- John 10:14
- I John 4:19
- Isaiah 40:8
- I Thessalonians 5:16-18
- Psalm 145:3
- Psalm 40:8
- I John 5:3
- Matthew 7:12
- John 15:13
- Galatians 5:22-23
- Jeremiah 17:7
- Psalm 34:4
- II Corinthians 8:21
- Colossians 2:7
- 82 high-frequency sight words

“I have bidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Psalm 119:11

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 kindergartners read?

In kindergarten, students focus on early literacy skills and begin learning to decode the English language in its written form. Students begin kindergarten at many different levels of reading ability and are encouraged through direct instruction and modeling to develop their reading skills. They quickly catch the excitement of being able to read decodable books. Direct instruction in reading, particularly phonics skills, is emphasized. By utilizing reading anthologies that are themed, teachers coach students in the practice of decoding skills.

The major reading themes for kindergarten include:

- School
- Shadows
- Finding Friends
- The Wind
- Stick to It

Each theme reinforces the following reading skills:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Letter Recognition and Print Awareness
- Comprehension Skills and Strategies
- Vocabulary (high-frequency words)
- Writing
- Listening, Speaking and Viewing
- Grammar
- Study and Research Skills

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Open Court Reading Kindergarten* by SRA.

This curricula contains a wonderful collection of literary genres and provides the teacher with many resources for instructing students in comprehension. See also the page on “Literature” for additional titles/texts.

Culminating Activities and Field Trips include trips to see stories performed theatrically as they are available.

Art

What is our classical, Christian approach to teaching art?

It has been said that the eyes are the window to the soul. Usually, this expression means that one’s disposition can be determined by looking into someone’s eyes. It is arguable that this window is not one sided. For, what one sees is also taken into the mind and affects one’s soul. As Christians, it is important that we enjoy art that reflects the glory of God’s creation and avoid looking at things that promote thoughts and actions contrary to God’s Word.

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.

What do kindergartners learn about art?

Kindergartners naturally enjoy drawing, painting, coloring and constructing crafts. This innate love of art is nurtured as students participate in a variety of art activities and projects that compliment holidays and other curricular areas throughout the year.

Culminating Activities include various assigned family projects, 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.

What do kindergartners learn about music?

Kindergartners learn to sing all kinds of songs around holiday themes, classroom activities, and Bible stories. Music is enjoyed throughout the day as a normal part of the classroom routine.

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 defines 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.

Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." - Albert Einstein

What do kindergartners learn about science?

- Senses
- Living and Non-living Plants and Animals
- Weather
- Earth's Land and Water
- Earth and Space
- Matter
- Changes
- How Things Move
- Your Body
- Taking Care of Your Body
- Feeding Your Body

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *Real Science K* by SRA. *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.

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.
2. Copy words.
4. Copy sentences.
5. Copy whole passages.
6. Take dictation. (not addressed in kindergarten)
7. Write narrations. (not addressed in kindergarten)

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 kindergartners learn about composition?

Kindergartners spend time tracing letters, and copying letters, words, and sentences.

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 manner 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 kindergartners learn about math?

- Recognizing 0 to 100 and writing numbers 0 to 50
- Ordinal numbers, first, next, last
- Counting to 100 by 1s, 5s, and 10s, counting on, counting 1 more, 2 more, 1 less
- Addition and subtraction readiness
- Fractions, equal parts, halves to tenths, halves of sets, comparisons
- Geometry, shapes, solid figures, spatial relationships, and patterns
- Estimating numbers and length
- Standard measurement
- Time to the hour
- Calendar
- Money
- Problem solving
- Simple graphs

*“The laws of nature are but the
mathematical thoughts of God.”
- Euclid*

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: *K5 Math* by Bob Jones University (BJU) Press is strong because it presents one major math concept at a time. This curriculum is presented in eye-catching color graphics with the use of various manipulatives which encourage students to enjoy the study of mathematics.

Supplemental Materials include teacher developed center activities and the Calendar and Circle Time activities from Saxon Math.

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 are read aloud to kindergartners?

Read-alouds may include the following, as well as additional selections:

- Five True Dog Stories
- My Father’s Dragon
- The Family Under the Bridge
- The Box Car Children #1
- A Grain of Rice

Principal Textbook/Curriculum: Literature texts as listed above.