

Virtuous Character



The Classical Academy

“As Aristotle taught, people do not naturally become morally excellent or practically wise. They become so, if at all, only as the result of lifelong personal and community effort.” ~ Jon Moline

Our efforts to foster and develop a community of people purposefully striving toward virtuous character have been in the forefront of our mission since our inception. The choice to adopt a classical approach stems from the fact that character has always been the primary goal of classical education. “In contrast to knowledge acquisition or skills mastery, growing virtue in our students is about strengthening their internal moral structure and their moral imagination. It is fundamentally a project of formation, changing a person for the good in pursuit of it.” Kolby Atchison, *Virtue Formation*.

A virtuous life can only be attained through constant and consistent practice. We recognize children as whole persons and believe that we can never teach only a mind or only a heart—we must endeavor to teach the whole child. To this end, we have a responsibility to foster growth in both wisdom and virtue.

Ancient educators such as Plato argued that students must be taught virtue. Our founding fathers recognized that a free, democratic society worked only with a moral people. Students, therefore, need praise, encouragement, and commendation equally as much as they need training, guidance, and correction.

In *Norms and Nobility*, David Hicks asserts that “a wise and virtuous citizenry is rooted in a love for liberty and virtue.” Because the classical approach educates both the heart and the mind recognizing the student as a whole child, the student is truly prepared for a full and productive life.

Becoming virtuous begins with self-mastery. In his essay, *A Student's Guide to Liberal Learning*, James V. Shall explains that “The classical writers used to relate self-discipline to liberty. The person who was most free was the one who had the most control over himself. The person who was most unfree was the one who was ruled by pleasures, money, or power. Self-discipline does not, however, solve the question of what is knowledge or truth or good; self-discipline is a means, not an end in itself.” Therefore, we begin to train habits in kindergarten and strive to instill habits of mind, body, and spirit by practicing specific behaviors throughout their educational journey. Habit formation is never easy, but once habituated to the true, good, and

beautiful, making the best and most productive choices becomes second nature and a wise and virtuous person emerges, and an exemplary citizen is formed.