Building Habits, Cultivating Character

The Classical Academy

"We value an education that cultivates virtuous character including excellence with honor, moral courage, compassion, and relational grace."
TCA Core Values

Training a child's character begins with the notion that character matters. Cultivating traits that allow students to be successful in school and flourish in their adult lives begins with bringing to life excellent qualities of character. In this virtue centered learning community, we are dedicated to our mission of developing exemplary citizens. Charlotte Mason believed character traits were in essence habits—"Habits of thought and habits of deed. Habits of gentleness, courtesy, candor, respect for others, and truthfulness" to name a few—and define a virtuous person.

Character and temperament stem from habits of behavior. "As Aristotle taught, people do not naturally become morally excellent or practically wise. They become so, if at all, as the result of lifelong personal and community effort." (*Jon Moline*) What we desire most for our students is a heart change. To change at a heart level requires an understanding that kindness and generosity, integrity and virtue matter. This takes the effort of a community to master but results in becoming part of a civil society aimed at the good, the true, and the beautiful.

While acquiring knowledge is important and necessary, becoming a person of virtuous character is essential to human flourishing. At the elementary level, we begin by nurturing our students with good ideas, worthy work, and carefully chosen curriculum. Through the best of stories, fables, and fairy tales, we build a foundation of what is precious and noble. Through hands-on experiences in science, we build a love of nature and an appreciation for beauty. Through the study of math and history, we build an understanding of truth.

To build these habits and cultivate virtuous character we first recognize and respect the child as a whole person—one with flaws and ignorances to be sure but one with every capability of mastering themselves, acting with moral courage and treating others with compassion and relational grace. Therefore, we expect failures and setbacks as habits are being learned and respond to every child with respect and encouragement as we offer plenty of opportunities to practice and improve. Charlotte Mason suggests "root out the bad habit gently by keeping the child close by and reinforcing the good habits with positive attention and authentic praise." When children understand there are musts in life and they build healthy habits of mind, body, and spirit, they acquire an authentic character and freedom that will serve them well their whole lives.

As part of this endeavor to cultivate character, teachers masterfully support and facilitate healthy habits of mind, body, and spirit to cultivate the continual growth of self-discipline. Students in elementary school receive feedback and evaluation on their progress in establishing these healthy habits in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. This brings a level of accountability to the continued development of habits and prepares students well for navigating junior high and high school where personal accountability to continue growing in virtuous character is expected. In the end, we desire for every student to be prepared "to be their best, do their best, and give their best" as they enter the world outside of The Classical Academy in pursuit of the rest of their lives.