

June 29, 2009

Strategic Plan

Building on the Foundation

**Classical School
Appleton, Wisconsin**



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Introduction:

The Classical Charter School Association (CCSA) is a Wisconsin not-for-profit corporation with a Board of Directors who govern the school in accordance with their contract/charter with the Appleton Area School District. In general, the Charter responsibility of the CCSA is to define the educational program of the Classical School.

In 2008, the CCSA Board of Directors determined that the 2001 Strategic Plan needed to be updated to accurately reflect the mission, vision, values and strategies of the Classical School. The Board completed the project in June of 2009.

Executive Summary:

Below is an executive summary of the foundational elements of the Classical School. The elements together describe our purpose, the core values, and the strategies, which will enable us to achieve our mission. Beyond this, there is an in-depth description of each of these elements with definitions and action plans.

Mission Statement:

The mission describes the purpose and intent of the organization. The mission should provide all constituents with a sense of direction and meaning. The mission statement should be simple, easily remembered and energizing.

Building a just and excellent educational foundation

Values and Beliefs:

- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Cooperation
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Perseverance
- ❖ Stewardship
- ❖ Compassion
- ❖ Courage
- ❖ Citizenship

Curriculum and Philosophy:

The mission of Classical School is to provide excellence and justice in education for school children through a common foundation. Educational justice at Classical School means equal access to the basic skills and content needed for future learning. Our mission is accomplished by successfully teaching a contextual body of organized content. The school recognizes the value of providing access to a broad cross-section of the community so that students from all backgrounds can benefit from the school's educational offering. We promote knowledge-centered education, cultural literacy, and the values of a democratic society.

Strategy Areas:

Curriculum
Staffing and Development
Facilities

Governance
Relationships / Community
Communication

MISSION STATEMENT

Building a just and excellent educational foundation

CURRICULUM AND PHILOSOPHY

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Curriculum Overview

Classical School provides an excellent education through an academically rigorous curriculum. The foundational curriculum is E.D. Hirsch's *Core Knowledge Sequence* which includes science; mathematics; language arts; English; history; geography; music; and visual arts. A knowledge-based curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning a broad, contextual body of common knowledge.

While the *Core Knowledge Sequence* is wide-ranging in overall scope, it also stipulates the learning of a specific, sequenced, shared, and solid body of knowledge at each grade level. The specificity of the curriculum ensures consistency within each grade level and prevents repetition and gaps in content from year to year. Each level develops a shared base of background knowledge from which to build future learning.

Instruction focuses on unabridged classic literature; literary analysis; grammar; and composition during and after students achieve mastery in reading skills. Writing is emphasized in all grades and content areas. Starting in kindergarten, students receive rigorous instruction in math and reading. Students are placed in skill-leveled classes for math instruction for all grade levels and for reading instruction for grades K through 3. SRA's Direct Instruction program is used for reading (Horizons and Reading Mastery) and spelling (Spelling Mastery). The Saxon Math program is used to deliver math instruction through geometry. Shurley English is used to teach strong grammar skills. Spanish language instruction is provided daily in grades kindergarten through eight. Instruction is delivered in Spanish and aims for mastery in aural, oral, and written proficiency.

The students at Classical School are challenged and stimulated through this rich curriculum. Students who complete our program through the eighth grade will have achieved strong skills in reading, math, English, grammar, speech, Spanish, and self-discipline. They will also have received a solid knowledge of American and world history, geography, literature, physical and life sciences, and the fine arts.

Philosophy of Education

E.D. Hirsch's research (especially as summarized in *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*), as well as the success of Core Knowledge schools around the country, suggests that education should be:

- **Knowledge-based.** The first task of education is to build a student's knowledge in various subjects by various means to the end that the student not only masters the subject but has sufficient background knowledge to enter into fruitful public discourse (this latter Hirsch calls "Cultural Literacy"). *How* a student is taught, while important, is secondary to *what* a student is taught.
- **Carefully sequenced and integrated.** Knowledge is most effectively gained by presenting age-appropriate material with sufficient repetition and in increasing depth and scope. Material in one

subject should reinforce material in another. The content and timing of what is taught must therefore be carefully managed not only within a grade level but as students pass to different teachers and higher grades.

- **Culturally specific.** Education is custodian of a cultural trust that should be passed on to the next generation, enabling it to thrive within that culture (in our case: American, citizen of a democracy, etc.). Hard decisions must be made about what to include in this body of knowledge, teaching items of the greatest importance in our culture.

The Core Knowledge Foundation summarizes these principles in the phrase *specific, sequenced, shared, and solid*. The philosophy is embodied in the Core Knowledge Curriculum Sequence.

Educational Distinctives

The School Day

The school day is structured around direct teaching and learning where every educational minute matters. We believe in knowledge-centered education rather than learner-centered education. The teacher is the leader of classroom instruction, directing the lessons through modeling, coaching, and practice. The transmission of content knowledge is accomplished through teacher-directed instruction and discussion rather than project-based, child-directed, cooperative, or exploratory learning.

The Teacher's Role

Teachers at Classical School are knowledgeable professionals who champion academic learning. They use their personal teaching styles and a variety of learning opportunities to teach the specifics of the curriculum, and they accept the responsibility to effectively use class time to give children an excellent education. Classical School teachers promote kindness and respect in their actions. They take the responsibility of being the classroom instructional leader, rather than following the student's lead.

The Parents' Role

Parents are an integral part of their children's education, and we acknowledge that schools are accountable to parents. Indeed, Classical School was founded by parents. The grading system and report card were designed to give parents accurate information about the academic progress of their children. We take pride in providing an educational choice for parents and in the knowledge that all our students are a part of our school because their parents chose Classical School.

Parent volunteers are essential to the success of both the children and the school as a whole. Each family at Classical School is asked to volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per year and attend at least one Advisory Council meeting. Volunteer opportunities include classroom and committee work, library assistance, and involvement in the Classical School Advisory Council, as well as many other opportunities.

Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with a core set of books such as *Cultural Literacy: The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* and *The Knowledge Deficit* by E.D. Hirsch. These books are the basis of the school's educational philosophy. It is necessary for the success of our school and students that parents be informed and in fundamental agreement with the philosophy and practice of our school.

VALUES

These are the guiding principles that define the way in which the organization intends to act in the pursuit of its vision and mission. The values of Classical School characterize the day-to-day interactions of its students, staff, teachers, and board.

❖ **Integrity**

Living life honestly, faithful to good principles and high ideals, following our code of values.

- ❖ **Cooperation**
Doing our part to advance common purposes.
- ❖ **Respect**
Showing consideration for others through kindness, politeness, and courteousness. Listening to and following those in authority.
- ❖ **Responsibility**
Fulfilling our obligations, acting with self control and being accountable for our commitments and actions.
- ❖ **Perseverance**
Doing what needs to be done with earnest dedication and determination.
- ❖ **Stewardship**
Caring well for our life, our world, our talents, and those entrusted to our care.
- ❖ **Compassion**
Showing concern for the needs and interests of others.
- ❖ **Courage**
Finding the strength to venture and persevere in the face of difficulty.
- ❖ **Citizenship**
Doing our part as citizens of a community for the common good, following the laws and rules, and serving the community.

BELIEFS

The beliefs of the organization support the convictions upon which the philosophy of Classical School rests. We believe in...

- ❖ A content-focused curriculum, in which every educational minute matters.
- ❖ A broad base of shared knowledge as a necessary foundation for the development of critical thinking.
- ❖ Challenging individuals to achieve personal excellence.
- ❖ Educating students for a life of productivity, service, and citizenship to enable those students to contribute to a democratic society.
- ❖ Honoring and supporting the role of teachers and staff throughout the educational process.
- ❖ Respecting the input and involvement of parents.

Core Strategies and Goals:

The general strategies and particular goals that enable the Classical School to achieve its mission. These strategies and goals will be reviewed at appropriate intervals through on-going planning.

Curriculum:

Support and enhance the current Classical School curriculum centered around Core Knowledge and Spanish, and assess and adjust as needed to ensure an excellent education for our students.

Staffing and Development:

Attract, develop, and retain highly-qualified Classical School administrative staff, faculty and volunteers who understand, implement, and champion the philosophy and curriculum of the school.

Facilities:

Develop a strategy and plan to advocate for the additional building needs of Classical School. Phase 1 (K-6 Campus) and Phase 2 (7-8 Wing) have been completed. Phase 3 (Gymnasium and library) has not been built.

Governance:

1. Recruit and develop qualified Classical School Board members who understand and support the philosophy and curriculum of the school.
2. Review and exercise oversight over Classical School policies, regulations, and procedures.
3. Ensure responsible fiscal management consistent with the Charter.
4. Act as stewards of the Charter, including compliance therewith.
5. Assess the ongoing performance of the Classical School board, administration, staff, and students.

Relationships/Community:

Build and nurture partnerships between the Classical School, parents and other various community groups to increase awareness, understanding and acceptance of the particular mission of the Classical School within that of the overall Appleton Area School District.

Communication:

Communicate, using multiple methods, to share information in a timely and effective manner between all the constituencies of Classical School.