



Academics in the Classical Tradition

Classical education in its purest historical sense meant acquiring through the difficult struggle with Greek and Latin certain habits of mind - intellectual discipline, respect for language and ideas, appreciation of the excellent and beautiful - and certain habits of the heart - reverence for tradition, sympathy with other creatures, and a profound respect for human beings and their capabilities. When the six founders launched The Academy in 1981, their goal was to make “a classical, academic education available to students from western Massachusetts”.

Today there are four key characteristics of an Academy education that fall squarely within the classical tradition:

- our emphasis on the time-honored academic disciplines in the curriculum we ask students to study;
- our willingness to make critical judgments about quality and hold up models of excellence;
- our emphasis on becoming a well-rounded person;
- our confidence that a small school is the best kind of school.

Our course catalog doesn't look much like a smorgasbord of academic confections. We may require only one year of Latin, but we require four years of almost everything else if one wants to graduate. A student in classical Rome or in a medieval European university might read Caesar and Sophocles with more ease, but he would also have to acknowledge that his curriculum and The Academy's curriculum emphasize the same things - intellectual discipline, precision in language and thought, and a deeply felt delight in learning for its own sake.

The Academy believes that the academic, liberal arts tradition is a challenging, intellectually stimulating ground on which young people can both learn to use their minds well, and furnish those minds with the kind of broad, basic knowledge needed to succeed in college and as citizens of the world. We believe in emphasizing connections among the academic disciplines because “real world” challenges require citizens to think beyond the discrete boundaries of academic disciplines, to look at things from many different angles.

We believe that a school community based on values- self-reliance, industry, integrity, and compassion - encourages development of intellectual and social standards that reflect those values. We believe that affirming the uniqueness of each individual and at the same time insisting that individuals subscribe to a set of commonly held standards - civility, respect, concern for others - produces a healthy tension that helps students learn, grow, and become productive citizens.

Not all of what students learn at The Academy comes from books. We require participation in our arts and sports programs because a well-rounded person is someone who can throw a pot as well as a lacrosse ball, someone who can use the quadratic formula and formulate an argument, someone who can appreciate the art on the walls and sing on key.

At The Academy, as in ancient Greece and Rome, arts, music, and athletics are viewed as integral, rather than incidental, to one's education. The ancients built theaters, adorned their streets with public art, and celebrated athletic prowess. Academy students make art, make music, and play sports every day; these activities are integrated into the schedule and are accessible without “try-outs” or cuts. Everybody plays. Everybody learns. Everybody stretches to master something that doesn't come easily.