

## Four Myths about Classical Education

As thousands of parents adopt Christian and classical education, many others are left with questions. Unfamiliarity with the classical method seems to have given rise to some common myths. While you may find some truth in each myth, we believe your concerns about classical education will begin to fade as your knowledge increases. In fact, you may be surprised by the same enthusiasm that has motivated thousands of parents to return to an education that works.

**Myth #1: *Classical education was fine back then, but we need modern education in a modern world.***

**Fact:** Classical education teaches students facts, provides them with logical tools to use those facts, and perfects the student's ability to relate those facts to others. This fundamental skill-set is more valuable today than it has ever been. The process of teaching students to think extends far beyond filling their heads with knowledge.

So is the classical method applicable in a modern, technological age? We must recognize that the technology we have today was invented, by and large, by the classically educated. The disciplines of science and the development of technology that we witness today have come to us because of those engaged in the "Great Conversation" or the great exploration of our world over the centuries. Although Man has inhabited the earth for thousands of years, great advances in technology have come to us in the last two centuries. It is no coincidence that the groundwork for these achievements was laid within the last 400 years when classical education was at its height. Classical education teaches children the timeless skills of thinking, reasoning, logic and expression. It is a method that has proven its worth.

**Myth #2: *My child is not intelligent enough to attend a classical school.***

**Fact:** Students at Cedar Tree vary in intelligence from "exceptionally bright" to "below average." We believe all children benefit greatly from the classical method. In fact, if you were educated in Western society prior to 1850, you were classically educated. A classical education challenges children to work hard at learning, but with proven methods that leverage their natural abilities at different stages of development.

Nonetheless, because Cedar Tree is not adequately staffed or funded to deal with special needs children, we cannot accept students with severe learning disabilities.

**Myth #3: *Classical education is too extreme.***

**Fact:** Classical education teaches children "with the grain"—complimenting their developmental stage with appropriate teaching methods. Yes, the classical method differs from today's conventional education. However, classical education was the norm 100 years ago because it worked. Historically, the world's great authors, scientists, statesmen and politicians were classically educated.

Conventional education has taken an experimental approach to educating our children over the past four decades. Many different methods have been tried and later scrapped. This constant state of change in education creates an environment where anything “traditional” seems extreme. In reality, the reverse is true. Rather than an extreme experiment, classical education is a process of learning that builds effective, successful students. In pursuing classical education Cedar Tree is seeking a return to a system that gave us the great thinkers and leaders of our Western heritage.

**Myth #4: *Classical education is unnecessarily difficult or harsh.***

**Fact:** Children enjoy learning. They are wired for it. To assume that a child will not be able to succeed in a challenging environment is tempting, but simply untrue. A demanding curriculum does not result in unhappy children. While adults may be uncomfortable in learning new things, most children thrill to the process of discovery. Children are excited to learn Latin and beam as they become able to describe the world in a language most adults do not understand. The rich and complex texture of classical literature is strangely amplified by youth. Science and the history of Western civilization come alive for those who hunger to know about their world. For the unconvinced, a visit to Cedar Tree is sure to demonstrate that our students love to learn.

Classical education does require order in the classroom. But this does not translate into stoicism. Questions and observations by students are encouraged. The classical method at Cedar Tree encourages a stimulating and enjoyable learning environment for students.

The spark of truth in Myth #4 may lie in student grading at Cedar Tree. Parents of students in classical schools find that a “C” truly means their child is doing average work in a particular subject. It is important that grading standards be upheld and that students earn their marks. This can create some frustration among students who are accustomed to achieving “easy A’s” in other schools. Some parents express concern that outside entities may not understand the value of an education at Cedar Tree. Other classical schools that have graduated college-bound students find the benefits of classical education more than outweigh the relatively lower GPA’s. The relative success of classically educated students on standardized tests more than compensates for their slightly lower GPA’s.