

Classical Conversations Homeschooling Group

What Is Classical Conversations?

Classical Conversations supports homeschooling parents by cultivating the love of learning through a Christian worldview in fellowship with other families. We believe there are three keys to a great education: classical, Christian, and Community.

CLASSICAL

The first key to a great education is that it is “classical.” By that we mean the classical model of education which has proven effective over time. This model has cultivated great leaders in the arts of freedom. Aristotle, Newton, C.S. Lewis and Thomas Jefferson are just a few examples of great thinkers who were educated classically.

A classical education is ideally suited to children's natural learning style. The classical model divides the learning process into three stages: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. In the grammar stage, children devour facts. In the dialectic stage, children ask many questions as they sort and evaluate these facts. In the rhetoric stage, teenagers synthesize their knowledge and apply it.

CHRISTIAN

From beginning to end, the Classical Conversations curriculum is founded on the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. Classical Conversations teaches that all subjects are not only interconnected but that God is the author and creator of each subject. Each subject informs us more about the true nature of God, and a better understanding of God informs us about each subject that is taught.

COMMUNITY

Classical Conversations plants and supports local communities who meet once a week across the United States and in several other countries. Being part of a like-minded and committed community provides parents and students encouragement, fellowship, and accountability.

Foundations (K4- 6th Grade)

We believe a great education starts with a firm foundation. Children along with one of their parents meet together with a parent-tutor to learn the first skill of learning: how to memorize

anything in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Students in this program lay a firm foundation in history, science, languages, arithmetic, and geography. (Ages 4 to 11 meet weekly for 24 weeks in the mornings.)

The Program

Once a week at 9:00 in the morning, children stream eagerly into the church building with their siblings and one or both of their parents. They hide presentations in their backpacks. They are excited to learn something new with their friends.

Opening Assembly

Families take turns opening with prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and a family presentation. Directors lead scripture memory work recitation and make announcements.

Classes

Each class is made up of eight students in approximately the same age group and is led by a trained parent tutor. Students and parents attend this class together. From 9:30 to noon, the tutor leads the class in five thirty-minute segments that cover new memory work, a science project, a fine arts activity, public speaking, and memory work review time.

Tutors of different age groups all cover the same memory work, but they may choose different ways to present the material based on the ages of the students. For example, in geography all the classes practice the same five European countries on one week. The youngest classes might place candies on each country as the tutor says them aloud. The older children may trace the countries with a dry erase marker, and the advanced students may trace or draw the countries on paper.

The Partnership

Participation in a Foundations program establishes a three-way partnership between tutors, parents, and students.

- Tutors model teaching and memorization techniques for parents and students.
- Parents attend class and, as primary educators of their children, direct home study and set standards for memorization, testing, and overall academics.
- Students participate in class and practice memory work at home.

At home, parents are encouraged to review the memory work daily and study more about the topics as interested. Families choose a complete math curriculum and a phonics/reading program that suits them.

All three partners in this relationship encourage one another and enjoy learning together.

Essentials (4th Grade-6th Grade)

We believe our children will succeed if they are taught the essentials of language, writing, and arithmetic. We want our students to be able to communicate their ideas well no matter what field they enter. Students enjoy learning English grammar and writing with their friends. We also believe drilling the basic arithmetic facts using games will prepare them to succeed in higher mathematics. (Ages 9 to 11 meet weekly for 24 weeks in the afternoons.)

The Program

At 1:00 in the afternoon, after the Foundations program and a lunch break, students grab their notebooks and pencils and head to a classroom to learn all about English grammar and writing with their friends. Essentials is a complete language arts program. Surprisingly, there is not too much writing during class, but there is a lot of talking! Students compose sentences and learn the rules of writing by talking about them (what we call the dialectic model). Parents learn about English grammar and writing, too, because they attend class with their students. They watch a parent tutor model the lesson so that they can continue the lesson at home.

Classes

Essentials classes usually have about twelve students between the ages of nine and eleven, who attend the class together with their parents. During the lesson, younger students tackle easier samples while older students tackle more complicated ones. In this setting, younger students learn from the older students, who are given the opportunity to act as mentors. Parents adjust assignments at home according to age and ability. The class time is divided into three segments:

1. 45 minutes for English grammar
2. 45 minutes for writing
3. 30 minutes of math drills

What makes Essentials a classical program?

A classical education capitalizes on the fact that we learn in three stages:

- Grammar stage: We memorize the vocabulary and basic facts related to a subject.
- Dialectic stage: We learn to sort, analyze, and understand the vocabulary and facts.
- Rhetoric stage: We can apply our understanding to the subject in the form of teaching the subject to others, writing original papers, giving original speeches, or solving problems.

Essentials is a dialectic-stage program. Students memorize the parts of speech and rules for constructing a sentence, which is grammar-level learning, but they are also asked to sort and analyze and use that information to identify words and write their own sentences. You can tell a dialectic program by the amount of dialogue going on. There will be a lot of questions and answers going on in this class!

Challenge (7th Grade-12th Grade)

We believe through challenging course work and small group activities, students learn how to learn any subject. They learn to see how every subject glorifies God. They learn to be great leaders. (Meets weekly for 30 weeks)

The Program

Challenge is an aptly named program covering a full curriculum of subjects for middle and high school students. There are six levels: A, B, I, II, III, and IV. Typically, students begin A when they are 12 and progress through each level completing Challenge IV as a senior, but older students are welcome in any level so you might find a 13 or 14 year old in Challenge A. The course work is sufficiently challenging to accommodate an older student. We identify Challenge “levels” rather than grades because we want students to enroll in the level they are prepared to study.

Each level progresses through math, Latin, science, and literature with additional seminars which include economics, history, philosophy, theology, logic, and drama. Courses were developed in order to cultivate skills in speaking, logical thinking, debate, persuasive writing, conducting science labs and writing lab reports. Students participate in challenging projects together such as Mock Trial, Team Policy Debate, Science Fair, Speech Events, economics projects, and much more!

The Partnership

What sets Challenge apart is that one trained parent-tutor serves as a year-long mentor in all subjects. These tutors are often called the “leading learner,” because they are learning the subjects along with the students. Tutors are responsible for leading the group activities and discussions. Parents are still the primary teacher at home, making sure students understand the

material and complete the assignments so that they are prepared to participate in Challenge seminars.

Students spend the entire day with their tutor and study six subjects together. This allows them the opportunity to discover how all knowledge works together in an indivisible “universe” rather than a disconnected, “multiverse.” They learn to see that all subjects were not only created by God but are currently operating under God’s authority, working together. Tutors are trained to lead discussions and help students ask good questions, pursue truth, see the integration of subjects, and point them to the plumb line of God’s Word.

Parents and students follow a detailed Challenge Guide which outlines assignments to be completed at home. The skills students’ practice will ultimately prepare them to become leaders of the seminars by Challenge IV.

*Parents are not required to attend Challenge seminars with their students, as most parents are attending Foundations and Essentials programs with younger students, but some parents attend math or Latin seminar to learn with their student. Parents are also invited to visit seminars several times a year to observe presentations or debates.

Challenge A introduces middle school students to the rigorous course work of the Challenge program. This program bridges students from the parent/tutor-directed elementary level to a more self-directed stage of learning.

Challenge B encourages students to stretch themselves and excel in academics and the classical skills of logic and debate. Courses in formal logic, current events and mock trial, history shaping scientists, origins and beliefs, Latin, pre-algebra, and distinctive literature and short stories all make Challenge B a power-packed program.

Challenge I continues to hone students’ classical learning skills through a focus on American literature and American government and its economic systems and policies. The study of philosophy, Latin, physical science, algebra, free market economics, and Shakespeare deepens and broadens students’ thinking and prepares them for later Challenge levels.

In Challenge II, students study Western ideas focusing on European and cultural studies. British literature, Latin II, traditional logic, advanced algebra, Western cultural history, American drama, and biology provide a well-rounded academic core. Group discussions and projects gain depth and importance at this level.

Challenge III conceptualizes abstract ideas, which improves clear thinking. In addition, Challenge III encourages students to polish their literary writing, presenting, and analytical skills. Latin, Shakespeare and poetry, American history, chemistry, advanced logic and philosophy, and higher level mathematics integrate student learning skills across academic subjects.

Challenge IV is the capstone of all the Challenge levels. Student-led seminar discussions evaluate the most in-depth reading material of all the Challenges. The combination of ancient literature, theology, and world history encourages investigation of history (His story) in remarkable intensity. The assignments require analysis from a biblical perspective and help students develop a philosophically integrated worldview. Research in physics, more development in language usage, and logic studies in calculus complete the academic study.

Contact Information:

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You can also contact our church office for more information!