

How Is Classical Christian Education Different from other schools?

Integrated Subjects

To integrate subjects means to remove barriers between areas of study and to make connections among subjects because all truth ultimately belongs to God.

“Subjects” are a hallmark of modern education: algebra for an hour, then literature, then physics, then Bible if it’s a Christian school. But when subjects are isolated from each other, students make fewer connections, even between subjects that fit well together such as history and literature. They learn not to use all their skills in every class and never develop the habit of taking everything in life from a Christian perspective.

Classical Christian education strives to integrate material both laterally — every subject with every other subject — and vertically — every subject as it belongs to God.

Teach Deep, Not Wide

As we integrate subjects, our goal is to teach *multum non multas*, which means *much, not many* in Latin. This simply means that our goal is to teach deeply rather than broadly. What counts is not the number of subjects taught, but how well students learn to think while doing them.

Modern education gives students a small, shallow taste of a plethora of subjects, with the hope that they choose the one they like best to specialize in. Classical education uses subjects to teach thinking skills, the **tools of learning**: skills of language, communication, logic, investigation, puzzle-solving, and general common sense. Students then have the tools of learning and thinking skills they need to specialize later on, wherever life takes them. This leaves their path open, rather than restricting them.

Classical schools choose to implement these ideas in a number of ways. Many schools integrate the humanities into a single class by reading classic literature while studying the history of the time, and asking theological and philosophical questions about it. Teachers in the upper school are generally encouraged to communicate so they know what students are learning in their other classes, and to encourage students’ questions that bring in content from other classes.

All Truth is God's Truth

The most important reason we integrate subjects is because every subject should be oriented toward God. Every subject can be learned with a Christian worldview, giving students the mental habit of seeing Christ everywhere in everything. God reigns in history, his consistency is shown in math, his powerful creativity in science, and human nature is explored in literature.

The humanities are especially important to integrate around biblical Christian ideas and worldview. History, literature, writing, language, philosophy, theology, and the Bible all tie together. When students read an **old book**, place it in historical context, and **discuss** and write about it, they learn to examine the **great ideas** with a Christian worldview. Should Beowulf have fought the dragon, knowing he would leave his people without a leader? What effect did Plato's philosophy have on Augustine's theology? What makes for a just war? Did Aquinas think of authority differently than we do?

But the importance of integration does not stop with worldview; it extends into the idea of **paideia**. You can read more about paideia, but in short, paideia is the culture and mindset that a child's surroundings teach them, regardless of what they're supposed to learn for a test. When we acknowledge **paideia**, we acknowledge that people learn as much from the culture of their school as from the curriculum. Integrating subjects trains students to see their whole life Christianly and it trains them to think carefully whenever they encounter a new idea, not just when they have to prepare for a test.