



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on June 21, 2012

On the Revival of “Classical” Education

The homeschool movement has spawned many great innovations in education. It’s what educational freedom is all about. With the public schools committed to dumbing-down the American people, homeschoolers have been free to discover the true meaning of education, so that their children can use their brains for the full benefit of themselves and society. Actually, that has not been all that difficult, for there was a time in America when education was quite effective. Indeed, we were the most literate nation on earth, which enabled us to build a vibrant free economy based on the inventive genius of a free people. But then the Progressives took over, and it’s been downhill ever since.



What we now have in America is an atheist government school system that is being used to impair the brains of millions of children so that they can be led into a socialist society without opposition. And that is why two million American parents refuse to put their children in these government schools, which have become intellectual wastelands. Children emerge from the system diminished in brain power, bewildered, ignorant, and morally depressed.

One of the educational ideas that has been restored from the remote past is that of a classical education. If you search in Google for “classical education,” a plethora of offerings appears. Even [Wikipedia](#) has an article on the subject. It reads, in part:

The Classical education movement advocates a form of education based in the traditions of [Western culture](#), with a particular focus on education as understood and taught in the [Middle Ages](#). The curricula and pedagogy of classical education was first developed during the Middle Ages by [Martianus Capella](#), and systematized during the Renaissance by [Petrus Ramus](#). Capella’s original goal was to provide a systematic, memorable framework to teach all human knowledge. The term “classical education” has been used in Western culture for several centuries, with each era modifying the definition and adding its own selection of topics. By the end of the 18th century, in addition to the [trivium](#) and [quadrivium](#) of the Middle Ages, the definition of a classical education embraced study of literature, poetry, drama, philosophy, history, art, and languages. In the 20th and 21st centuries it is used to refer to a broad-based study of the liberal arts and sciences, as opposed to a practical or pre-professional program.

In other words, under the rubric of “classical education” there is room for a great deal of flexibility. Whether limiting classical education to the trivium and quadrivium of the Middle Ages is a good idea considering the needs of the 21st century can be debated. The term “classic” should not be used to limit education, but to expand it as a parent or an educational institution may see necessary. And since there are no rules that limit how one educates, parents must always ask: What does the educator mean by “classical”? I am in basic agreement with the overall goal of what is usually called classical education:



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the development of intellectual curiosity and competence; above all the development of brain power.

The human brain, given us by a very generous God, is the most powerful organism in the universe. It has created the atomic bomb and the jumbo jet, sent a man from Earth to the Moon and back, produced exquisite beauty in music, art, and literature, and put God's word on parchment. A child's brain should be taught to honor its Creator by being given the power to use that brain purposefully.

What gives the brain its power is its ability to deal with symbols. Every human being is born with a language faculty. Language is a system of sound symbols that are used to represent reality so that we can communicate with one another and manipulate the objects we learn to name. Language has four important functions: first, to know God by being in communication with Him as Adam was in the Garden of Eden, and also through prayer and private conversation; second, to know reality by naming every aspect of it; third, to know others by communication; and fourth to know oneself. We daydream in language. Our inner dialogue is in language.

In other words, man was exalted in a way that no other species was by his Creator. Thus, increasing and expanding one's vocabulary is necessary not only for the advancement of man's purpose on earth, but also to carry out God's commandments. Besides having been given the faculty of speech we were also endowed with a voice-box that could express thoughts and ideas by sounds. An extraordinary physical phenomenon that no other creature has.

The importance and power of language was well understood by the ancient Hebrews when they wrote the Old Testament. It was understood by the Greeks and Romans. It was well understood in the monasteries of the Middle Ages. It was understood by early Americans, in particular Noah Webster, who wrote the first American dictionary. But in 21st-century America, language among the young has been reduced to grunts and groans. Letter writing has degenerated into abbreviated email and text lingo, and black members of the underclass speak ebonics, a new primitive language based on English.

Yet, the key to intellectual development and power is knowledge and use of language. That is why so many classical education programs include instruction in Latin. This is not the Latin spoken in Latin America, as believed by former Vice President Al Gore. This is the language spoken in ancient Rome, but also used by scholars and theologians throughout the Christian Western world to communicate with one another. Meanwhile, the Italians have no desire to revive Latin as the modern language of Italy. All the European Romance languages have their origins in ancient Latin: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, etc. Many English words are derived from Latin, which is why it is still taught in classical education.

The only language that has been revived from its ancient roots is the Hebrew spoken in modern Israel. It is amazing to hear the language of the Old Testament used in everyday speech by radio and television commentators, athletes, political leaders, military men, fashion models, children at play, and people in the supermarket and shopping mall.

The ability to deal with language, of course, begins at home as the child learns to speak his own language. If the family is bilingual, the child will learn two languages, which gives him or her an advantage in developing a wide range of accented speech. A good vocabulary spoken at home also helps a child enhance his own language development. But it is when formal learning begins that a child can make great strides in developing his mastery of language by learning to read with alphabetic phonics, writing by cursive script, and learning to count by arithmetic.

Generally, a classical education puts great emphasis on how and what a child is taught in those primary



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years. The child's brain at that period can be easily impaired by the wrong kind of teaching. The public schools do everything wrong, which is why so many children become learning disabled by the third grade. That is why homeschoolers are anxious to do everything right. But our popular culture has been so badly corrupted by the wrong-doers that it takes considerable effort to know how to do the right thing.

Despite how much we may approve of teaching a child Latin, which was once the lingua franca of the Western Christian world, its only practical use today is in learning the roots of our multisyllabic words. Today's world language is English, and that is why it is being arduously studied by the Chinese, Indians, Koreans, and everyone else, while it is not being effectively taught in American public schools.

In America, literacy is in decline. In 1972, 2,817 students achieved the highest verbal score of 750 to 800 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). In 1987, that number was down to 1,363, and in 1990 it was down to 1,226. So even the smartest are getting dumber. With the re-norming of the test, it is virtually impossible to tell how much further our literacy has declined.

Meanwhile, a review of the reforms being advocated by the Progressive establishment should convince any thinking citizen that public education is headed toward oblivion: a longer school year, a longer school day, higher teacher pay, national certification, restructuring, more social services, early preschool education, smaller class size, etc. All these reforms will cost the taxpayer much more money, but not one of them promises academic improvement.

In 1990, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) held a conference on "Education's Future Agenda." Its report on the conference stated:

Stanford University's Elliot Eisner suggested that many of the reforms aimed at raising academic achievement have the wrong purpose in mind. The purpose of school, he said, is not merely to help students achieve academically in school, but to prepare them to lead fulfilling lives.

Of course, the educators never ask how can you lead a fulfilling life in a hi-tech society if you can't read. Prof. Eisner continues:

We shouldn't be thinking about effective schools or about effective teaching simply in terms of high-level achievement within the context of schooling. ... I don't think that the major aim of school is to help kids do well in school. ... Schools exist for the kind of life that kids are able to lead outside of schools. ... Hardly anyone now believes the idea that there is a "best way" to teach something, and that we will eventually converge on that best way.

And that is why parents must think for themselves when it comes to the education of their children. The university elite haven't the faintest interest in education as anything but a means of social control.

Classical education, or just plain good education, should be designed to help the student understand the great problem of the 21st century: how to deal with politicians and educators dedicated to destroying our constitutional Republic. Will learning Latin help a youngster in that endeavor, or a course in political science that teaches the difference between socialism and capitalism, the difference between individualism and collectivism, the difference between freedom and dictatorship?

Surveys indicate that over 45 percent of the American people believe in socialism. Despite the fact that the enormous benefits of capitalism are all around them, and that a constitutional Republic has given them the greatest freedom any people have enjoyed in all of human history, 45 percent of Americans have been so dumbed down as to actually prefer national slavery to individual freedom. It boggles the



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mind. But we have only ourselves to blame. For too long Americans have tolerated a government education system that doesn't educate, deceives the public about education reform, and extorts from the taxpayer billions of dollars in the name of educational improvement.

The homeschool movement is a welcome sign that a growing number of Americans have come to their senses and are doing something about educating their children. The revival of classical education is also a sign that parents have discovered what children should know if they are to thrive in a free society. Is it too late to save America? I think if you attended one of the many homeschool conventions being held across America, you would come out an optimist.



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