

Xavier Classical Education Tenets

1. Classical Western Civilization

- At Xavier Charter School Western Civilization study is the cornerstone of all other subjects.
- The priority is that students be historically grounded.
- The primary founding purpose is to provide American students with a coherent narrative of their civilization's rise, looking for evidence throughout history of who America is as a nation.
- History education is America's core civic responsibility.
- Classical education distinguishes features that eventually led to the West's expansion to world dominance and the West's unique creativity. It is a fundamental responsibility of a classical education to preserve a nation's (in this case, America) civic culture, identity and the store of historical memory about that nation that underlies it.
- Xavier does not glorify conquest, enslavement, oppression, social injustice, and similarly hopeless characteristics.
- As a Western Civilization school, Xavier does not focus on multiculturalism at its core.
- The classical education approach is pro-human; pro-humanity.
- The purpose of Western Civilization study is to inform and educate youth but also to encourage them to invest themselves as good human beings, understanding the responsibilities of a human being, and influencing the world through integrity, responsibility, and purpose.

2. American Classical Education

- Classical education in America promotes American culture and **ideals**. Xavier's responsibility is to "transform future citizens into loyal Americans."

Traditional Ideals:

"Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write. Let every order and degree among

the people rouse their attention and animate their resolution. Let them all become attentive to the grounds and principles of government . . ."

John Adams, 1765

a. Respect for the Founding Fathers' intellectual virtue –

"...the founding fathers were men of genuine convictions; and dedication to the highest ideals known to Man in the governmental field as exemplified by those recited in the Declaration of Independence and in the Preamble to the Constitution. This is unquestionably true of them as a group, judged by the entire record, despite the inescapable frailties of human nature to which every human being is subject and at times exhibits in some degree, as history proves."

Hamilton Albert Long, 1976

b. Individual self-government –

"For the security and enjoyment by Man of his Divinely created rights, it follows implicitly that Man is 'endowed by his Creator' not only with the right to be self-governing but also with the capacity to reason and, therefore, with the capacity to be self-governing."

Hamilton Albert Long, 1976

"A man cannot govern a nation if he cannot govern a city; he cannot govern a city if he cannot govern a family; he cannot govern a family unless he can govern himself; and he cannot govern himself unless his passions are subject to reason..."

Hugo Grotius, seventeenth century jurist, laid foundations for international law

c. Civic responsibility - ...knowledge of responsibilities as citizens of the Republic

1. Responsibility to be a good person.

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are

virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue then will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader."

Samuel Adams, 1779

2. Responsibility to support and defend the Constitution.

"That knowing the strong bias of human nature to tyranny and despotism, we have nothing else in view but to provide for posterity against the wanton exercise of power, which cannot otherwise be done than by the formation of a fundamental constitution."

Reverend Thomas Allen, 1776

3. Responsibility to participate in society as an informed voter, juror, and tax payer.

4. Responsibility to preserve liberty for future generations of Americans.

All citizens have a duty to preserve what is great about this nation for future generations of Americans.

"Our country is in danger, but not to be despaired of . . . On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important question, on which rest the happiness and liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves."

Joseph Warren--President of the Massachusetts Congress, Boston oration, 1775

5. Responsibility to revere and obey the law.

"Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap – let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in Primmers, spelling books, and in Almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor... all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars."

Abraham Lincoln's Lyceum Speech – 1838

6. Responsibility to serve his/her fellow man.

"I know of no great man except those who have rendered great services to the human race." Voltaire, 1778

7. Responsibility to respect individual humanness, worth and dignity.

There is a fundamental importance to each individual human life. Each individual, no matter what his or her station in life, is a separate and distinct being and has value. This concept of the dignity and worth of the individual is of overriding importance in American thought and civic duty.

d. Understanding of American primary sources including the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, etc. Understand the difference between a Republic and a Democracy –

Democracy -

The chief characteristic and distinguishing feature of a Democracy is: Rule by Omnipotent Majority. In a Democracy, The Individual, and any group of Individuals composing any Minority, have no protection against the unlimited power of The Majority. It is a case of Majority-over-Man.

Republic –

Its purpose is to control The Majority strictly, as well as all others among the people, primarily to protect The Individual's God-given, unalienable rights and therefore for the protection of the rights of The Minority, of all minorities, and the liberties of people in general.

The definition of a Republic is: a constitutionally limited government of the representative type, created by a written Constitution--adopted by the people and changeable (from its original text) by them only by its amendment--with its powers divided between three separate Branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Here the term "the people" means, of course, the electorate.

Hamilton Albert Long, 1976

e. Self-reliance –

...the primarily American ideal that people are able to fulfill their own destiny, rely on themselves rather than others, and believe in the promise that through hard work and perseverance life can be different and better; the idea that through self-reliance individuals have control over the course of their lives.

- Xavier teaches that America has common knowledge, virtues, ideals, language, and commitments (Core Knowledge).
- Xavier is patriotic and promotes a sense of national loyalty as opposed to being citizens of the world.
- Individuals participate in the world as citizens of America first. “Being a world citizen first, destroys a culture’s national identity.” (E.D. Hirsch)

3. Religion

- Ancient religions are studied— Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.
- The ancient religions are worthwhile in order to see the cause and effect in history at a particular time in a particular era.
- To speak of religion in a historical context is relevant, appropriate and truthful.
- Care is taken not to present religion so that students can equalize them or to find their common ground, but to understand their impact on humanity throughout the ages.

4. Reason and Logic

- The correct use of reason and logic is taught as opposed to an emotional response to knowledge.
- Logic’s purpose is to scatter a light over understanding while seeking after truth being careful not to supply the tongue with debate and controversy.
- Plato stated that one should not *“inflamm the emotions at the expense of the intellect.”*
- Logic cultivates reason to better enable human beings to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, better from best.”
- The purpose of logic is not a stirring and fomenting of the thought process, but a leading to an end – truth.
- “Dialectic” or logic is *“the search for truth through resolution of disagreement through rational discussion. It results in probable truth or the most reasonable resolution of opposite opinions.”* (Cheryl Swope)

5. Classical Virtue versus Modern Values

- Although “virtue” seems almost archaic today, Aristotle spoke of it as *“excellence at being human.”*
- *“...powers of moral habits enable us to be what we ought to be, to achieve our telos...our end purpose in life.”* (Cochran)
- Four Cardinal Virtues –
 - a. **Temperance** – virtue of the appetites (moderation)
 - b. **Prudence** – virtue of the intellect (wisdom)
 - c. **Fortitude** – virtue of the will (heart)
 - d. **Justice** – harmony of the soul (right ordering of the other three)
- Modern Values embrace characteristics society most prizes: tolerance which encompasses being kind, non-judgmentalism, happiness, comfort/convenience and fairness.
- What is the study of Classical Virtue? – *“the study of Man as he is, but also Man as he ought to be.”*

6. The Good, the Beautiful, and the True

- Xavier’s purpose is to seek **truth**, in order to discover and to act on what is **good** and **beautiful** in this life.
- How is “good” measured? Is it defined by the majority? Is it measured by self-satisfaction or personal fulfillment? **The good** of any thing is found in its ability to accomplish what it was created for...to realize its purpose for existence as intended by its maker. Only in this realization can something truly be called **“good.”**
- **“The good”** is possible only in the light of truth (logic and reason). Not truth as it is often defined today, by personal preference or popular consensus, but truth as it is...independent from opinions and emotions.
- And where **goodness** and **truth** exist, there you will find **beauty**.
- Beauty is not left to chance or whim, but is written in our nature as humans and in the natural world.

- A student's purpose is to seek **truth**, in order to discover and to act on what is **good** and **beautiful** in this life.

7. The Great Conversation

- The Great Conversation is the name given to the exchange of ideas that has been going on for thousands of years.
- The ideas have to do with our world, relationships, truth, knowledge, existence, hope, despair, and purpose - in short, who we are and why we live.
- Socratic Discussion and Response (7-12) based on logic and reason through the spoken and written word is both the process and culmination of classical training.
- Direct/Explicit Instruction/Group Response (K-6) is the process of laying the foundation of facts and content through memorization, direct/explicit instruction and group response.