

Good afternoon. I'm Marcy Cassady, Head of the Academy's Upper School. Together with my co-founders Gerry and Amanda Proietti, Heads of our Middle and Grammar Schools, we welcome you on behalf of our faculty colleagues and the Academy's pioneering families.

It's mind-boggling for us that we're planning for the Academy's third year this fall - that it's *only* our third year. In terms of lessons learned, it feels more like a decade ago that we had our first Open House to describe the school of our dreams, a school that would embody the lessons of all our lives. On the basis of those lessons learned, I can speak to you with more confidence today than ever before about the defining attributes of Louisville Classical Academy, those being:

- a classical education
- in a non-institutional setting
- delivered on the scale of the extended family
- by models worthy of imitation
- among genuine peers.

Before discussing each of them, I should clarify that here at LCA, a classical education is the time-honored liberal arts education, and 'liberal' in this sense simply means 'free.' In ancient times, a liberal education was for a free person – a *libera* – as opposed to a slave. The slave had his choices made for him, so he needed only to learn a job. But, the free person had to make his own choices, and he needed an education that equipped him to make good ones. He needed to be able to reason and to do that reasoning on the basis of as much knowledge as possible.

And so, the classical education is one that trains the intellect, our faculty of knowing and reasoning and understanding. Every child has that faculty, but for some children, it's a passion – a particular source of delight. That's an intellectual child.

We run considerable risk in publicly owning the fact that we founded this school to be a home for the intellectual child, for the word 'intellectual' has taken on negative connotations in our culture. That's a shame, because its true meaning is a capacity that all of us can celebrate. Certainly, it is related to intelligence, but not quite the same thing. I have many friends in law and medicine, two professions that are understood to require considerable intelligence; some are intellectuals and some are not. The intellectuals are the ones who are not content to do what they do and do it well, but who are also driven to reflect on 'why.' They're the ones who read constantly in a search for understanding and meaning and love nothing more than a conversation with others of like passions, especially over a favorite beverage.

We founded the Academy because intellectually oriented children are the most under-served students in America. The child who finds joy in books and ideas and thoughtful conversation finds little affirmation in settings dominated by social, recreational, or athletic priorities – and that describes the typical school, public or private.

How do the five attributes of LCA listed above serve the intellectual child?

I. Classical education develops the intellect more fully than any other approach. Why?

*First, human intellect is bound up with our capacity for speech and written language, and classical education's foundation in Greek and Latin develops language skill to the highest possible level. The perennial evidence of SAT scores – in which students of classical languages outscore students of modern foreign languages by a wide margin – suggests that the superior reading and thinking skills of the Greek and Latin student makes *all* his learning effort more productive in measurable ways. Our students begin Greek and Latin in third grade, and those who remain in this program through their high school years can reasonably expect a perfect 800 score on the language segment of the SAT, which one of this year's graduates attained without any formal test prep.*

Second, classical educators understand profound mathematical understanding to be critical to reasoning. We believe the basic operations of arithmetic need to be automatic, so that working memory is freed up for higher order demands. But, speed and accuracy of calculation are only means to an end. The end goal is to be able to think mathematically – to use math in solving problems and studying the natural world. Beyond that, there's an abstract world where the absolute beauty of mathematics can unfold. We believe the math curriculum developed in Singapore in recent decades is the best foundation available for that level of fluency in the language of mathematics.

Third, we give respect to the child's spirit in our curriculum choices. For a program of this rigor, the student has to be a willing partner. What makes a willing partner? Desire – a desire to understand the nature of things. That desire blazes brightly in our three year olds – their questions never stop. But, for too many children, the questions *do* eventually stop. It's as if the desire for knowledge is like a flame that must have something to consume. When schools do not supply inspiring and worthy things to learn, the flame goes out. Here, we provide plenty of good things to consume, such as the Junior Great Books program, a rich study of history, and training in logic.

We have shared our curriculum vision more specifically through the Scope and Sequence on pages 6 and 7 of the Open House Catalog. See here what we value and love and know to be possible for students of these ages – because we've done it. While we enrich our courses with substantial reading in the great books of the western canon, our scope and sequence is fairly standard, except for the addition of the Foundations class where we place the work and books associated with classical education that get shortchanged when they have to be embedded in other classes. On page 8, note the adaptation of this vision to our current enrollment.

See also the period on Wednesdays called Recitation. Here, we gather each week as a whole school to develop memorization skill on works of prose and poetry with great cultural significance. So far this year, we've memorized much of the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and we've just begun the Gettysburg Address. We also learned the U.S. Presidents in order along the way. Throughout the humanities curriculum, teachers are realizing the power of having our students *know* these important phrases and the ideas they embody as we reference them in conversations.

As we grow to capacity, we will come ever closer to offering all courses in our Scope and Sequence each year.

II. We have chosen a non-institutional setting.

Our campus is a partner in all that we do. It's a home, a place of beauty designed to be a sanctuary from the pressures of the highly regulated, industrialized, and competitive world beyond – and that can describe the modern school as accurately as the adult workplace. Something about institutions, right down to their architecture, can be stifling to the human spirit. *This* architecture does just the opposite.

We have rehabilitated the kitchen and dining hall in recent weeks, and our landlord First Christian Church has remodeled the basement level into a wonderful space that we are placing on today's tour. The project was only completed this week, so we have not yet invited the fire marshal back to assess whether it meets codes for use by a school, but we're optimistic. Additional future plans include finishing the garage into an entry and reception area with use of the breezeway as a cloakroom. When fully utilized, we project that our campus will comfortably accommodate the sixty or so students that we envision as our capacity for now.

III. We have chosen an exceptionally small scale.

LCA may be the only school you ever encounter with no desire to outgrow the place of its founding. We refer to our scale as feeling like an extended family, and that scale is a major factor in the transformations parents see in their children here.

Intellectual development cannot be mass-produced. It takes relationships with mentors who are models worthy of imitation. We foster those relationships with classes of no more than ten students and an overall student teacher ratio of three-to-one this year. In my experience, at even class sizes of 15, the attitudes between students and teachers take on the character of 'us versus them', and the critical spirit of mentorship is lost.

Intellectual development is also accelerated when the program of study respects a child's individuality in terms of its fit with his talents and challenges. Here, we do that by ignoring grade levels. Students are placed on a class-by-class basis to insure a challenge in every subject area, and each class is likely to have students from two or more grade levels.

While that scheduling flexibility might seem to be an optimal fit for bright kids with significant learning differences, we stress that we do not have training or competence in special education. Also, we acknowledge that our curriculum is challenging for even the child with grade-level skills. We will do our best to place every child who is drawn to this program for the right reasons, but where a significant number of skills are behind grade level, we are ethically bound to exercise an abundance of caution for the sake of the child.

IV. LCA prioritizes the quality of its teachers above all else.

The nature and knowledge of the teacher matters far more than student-teacher ratios. Classical education requires teachers whose native curiosity has led them to continue their own learning and to learn beyond their primary fields. The children who would seek a school like the Academy are the most demanding of students. We have to win their respect in order to become their mentors, and it is a daily challenge to stay a few steps ahead of their challenging intellects. The teachers who have joined us in taking up that challenge are described on pages 3, 4, and 5 in the Catalog, and I'm proud to call each of them colleague and friend.

V. The Academy offers intellectual children the support of genuine peers.

If we do a competent job of admissions counseling, LCA will be a community of diversity of all kinds – ethnicity, philosophies, and hobbies – but our students will have one thing in common: a genuine pleasure in learning for its own sake and a sincere respect for that trait in others. A community of genuine peers gives the intellectual child a comfortable space in which to develop academically and socially. At this scale, there's no place to hide, no way to withdraw. Our students must learn to deal with their peers, and in doing so, they grow the skills they need.

Enrollment Options

For most prospective families, the most striking element of our program is the range of enrollment options. We offer our full Core Program – all that you see outlined in our Scope and Sequence – in three extended days on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. That enables appointments and lessons to be scheduled without pressuring school days, and it also gives parents a chance to supplement our program in keeping with their priorities. Those who need five days can add our Monday-Friday Program, or as many segments of it as they need. Mondays and Fridays are staffed by Academy teachers from a range of disciplines who give homework support and supervise students in their own curiosity-driven pursuits when all the work is done.

Independent Status

As to the relationship between LCA and First Christian Church, we are a lessee – not a ministry – of the Church. We were allowed to lease this site because the Church respects our vision of education, and it rightly believed we would share in the care and maintenance of the property. But, the Academy is not a Christian classical school. Its founders felt called to an unmet need in Louisville – a classical school for children of *every* faith tradition and philosophy. While we are not a religious school, we are deeply concerned with developing wisdom in our students. We use the tools of reason to study morality and ethics, an undertaking that can complement faith, but we leave all religious teaching to families.

Science Instruction

We use college-preparatory science education materials that include the theory of evolution. At the same time, we share the concerns of those who see a tendency to extend theories of evolution beyond science and into human questions that don't lend themselves to the methods of science. Misuses of Darwin's work have given us Social Darwinism and a justification for heinous acts over the last century. We take concerns about that seriously in our courses that deal with human culture. But in science class, we give the theory of evolution its place as a framework for asking questions.

Homework

We've set homework guidelines that allow for about 5 hours a week in the Grammar School, 10 hours a week in the Middle School, and 15 hours in the Upper School. Even Upper School students can complete most of their Core Program prep on Mondays and Fridays, although all students should expect to review math and foreign languages on most school nights. LCA students seldom complain about homework; they respect its quality, which apparently makes a difference. If the issue is pressing for you, ask students and parents about it this afternoon.

Accreditation and Graduation

Accreditation is our goal, and we will be eligible for accreditation review by the state of Kentucky after our third year. Meanwhile, our graduates are having no difficulty with college admissions. We need only document LCA's program of study and our faculty's advanced degrees. One of our two graduates this year has already been accepted to Centre College, the only school to which she applied, which is regarded nationally as highly selective. The other has been accepted to six schools and counting in the U.S. and Canada from whom she is weighing substantial merit-based scholarship offers.

LCA's founders all wear a lot of hats in these early years, and I'll be happy to hand off my bookkeeper and custodian hat as growth permits, but I hope to continue as guidance counselor for the Upper School. The most rewarding advocacy of my career has been that which I do for our graduates in their matriculation to higher education. I believe this program to be the finest college-preparatory experience in our region for the intellectual child who aspires to highly selective colleges, and it is a joy to represent our graduates in the college admissions process.

We know that our graduates will go off to college with pressure to enter degree programs that are purely vocational. But, if we've done our jobs, they will take a liberal education with them. They will be equipped to create liberal learning out of every class, however large or whatever its goals, for they will be equipped to think.

Thank you for your interest in Louisville Classical Academy!