

Curriculum Criteria

At Oak Grove Classical Academy, we strive to provide our students and families with the best curriculum available. We desire not only to provide great content in our classes, but to stress the importance of giving our students the “tools of learning.” Once these tools are firmly established in the “*toolboxes*” of our student’s minds, no subject is outside of their grasp. In the grammar years, a greater emphasis is placed on the foundational tools of reading, writing, grammar and mathematics. We’ve researched and evaluated many different curricula and have selected those which best align with the distinctives of our school.

Chosen curriculum must be:

- **Classical:** A classical curriculum has two important aspects. First, it follows the *trivium* by teaching to the developmental strengths of each child and by following the chronological historical cycles; secondly, it is language-focused. Classical education emphasizes literary classics, both past and present of Western Civilization. The best curriculum also encourages study across the disciplines and overlaps and intertwines, bringing greater depth and retention to learning.
- **Biblically Based:** At the heart of each subject must be the acknowledgment that all truth originates from God. Selected curriculum must be consistent with the Bible or designed so that Christian teaching can be integrated throughout.
- **Parent Friendly:** Due to the nature of the University Model School, parents at home in varying degrees of involvement. In early grammar years, the parent serves as a co-teacher and eventually, by the rhetoric stage, parents become guides for students in their independent studies. Especially during the grammar years, the curriculum must be easily adaptable in the satellite classroom, and structured in such a way that parents can effectively teach regardless of their expertise in any particular subject.
- **Able to Cultivate Delight and Wonder:** A classical education should not be rigid or dull, but full of life! Thus, our choice of curriculum must have lessons that are easily adaptable for hands-on activities by the teacher and co-teacher, to further enhance the learning experience. We want our children to not only learn, but to love learning.

Core Subject Descriptions

Language Arts:

Parental Role: Co-Teacher

A strong classical education begins with development of the skills of reading, writing and spelling. At Oak Grove, our language arts program links all the different methods of learning to help students with different learning styles. For example, reading is primarily a visual task, writing, a kinesthetic task, and spelling, an auditory task. Instead of isolating each of these skills they are intertwined and taught together.

In the early grades, reading instruction is phonetics-based and taught in conjunction with spelling. The English Language has 45 sounds which we spell in 70 basic ways (which we call phonograms). The quickest, most natural way to learn to spell, write and read is to learn these phonograms. Additionally, there are 28 spelling rules that work consistently in the English language with few exceptions. Together, the phonograms and spelling rules make up the backbone for spelling and reading instruction. This approach capitalizes on a child's initial enthusiasm to learn and stimulates logical thinking.

English grammar is taught by teaching concepts first and then practiced. Definitions of the parts of speech are introduced early using jingles. This proven method of incorporating music, rhythm and rhyme helps students remember information and enjoy the process of learning.

Handwriting is taught with many different manipulatives and activities that enhance the student's enjoyment of handwriting.

Our choice of Language Arts curricula include:

1. *Spell to Write & Read* by Wanda Sanseri
2. *Shurley English* by Brenda Shurley
3. *Handwriting Without Tears* by Jan Z. Olsen
4. Exposure to classic children's literature

Math:

Parental Role: Co-Teacher

The grammar years of math lay the foundation for the high-level abstract thinking required by algebra, trigonometry and calculus encountered in upper grades. We believe the memorization of math facts—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division—are essential in building a strong mathematical foundation. However, the study of mathematics is more than simply committing to memory a list of facts. It includes memorization, but it also encompasses learning the underlying concepts that are critical to problem solving. Our curriculum focuses on teaching the mathematical concepts through the use of manipulatives first, then progressing to pictorial examples. Concepts are presented in a spiral progression allowing the student to review previously learned concepts while building upon these basic skills for higher level math.

Our ultimate goal for math at Oak Grove is to produce students who understand mathematical concepts, are able to apply this knowledge in real life applications, and enjoy the study of math.

Our choice for Math curricula and resources include:

1. *Singapore Math*
2. A variety of manipulatives including base ten blocks, counters, clocks, measurement tools, etc.

History:

Parental Role: Co-Teacher

At Oak Grove, the study of history is based on the belief that God is the author of all history and His sovereign hand is evident throughout all events of all time. History is studied through great works of literature and also through the lens of the greatest book ever written: the Bible. This approach encourages students not to categorize “secular” and “biblical” history but to help them see all these events as part of God’s redemptive plan.

History is studied chronologically and in cycles. The student will complete each historical era three times by the completion of 12th grade. The history cycles begin with the study of the Ancients and the Old Testament in first grade, and continue through Ancient Greece, Rome and the New Testament in second grade, the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation in third grade, Explorers through 1815 in fourth grade, and 1815 through present in fifth grade.

The first cycle occurs in the stage of grammar where the focus is on memorization of names, places and knowledge of facts. The history cycle repeats a second time in the middle school years or the Logic phase. It is during this stage of development, that students begin finding connections between events by using tools like timelines, outlines, and original sources. The focus becomes not the “what” of the events, but the “why.” The cycle repeats a third time in the high school grades or the Rhetoric phase. As students are studying the art of rhetoric, they are able to persuasively discuss, interpret and express their own thoughts on the events of history.

Numerous subjects, such as, literature, writing, vocabulary, geography, fine arts, and church history, are coordinated with this curriculum. A variety of learning modes will be utilized: hands-on projects, writing assignments, art, and read-alouds will help students enjoy and succeed in learning about God’s Sovereign Hand through the course of human history.

Our choice of history curricula and resources include:

1. *Veritas Press History Series* by Marlin and Laurie Detweiler
2. An array of age-appropriate historical fiction and reference books.

Science:

Parental Role: Co-Teacher

The study of the sciences follows a roughly corresponding cycle to the historical periods. First graders, who are studying the ancients, learn about things the ancients could see: animal life, the human body and plants (biology). They will make collections, take nature walks and grow plants. Second graders collect facts about the earth and sky (earth science), as they study the Medieval-Early Renaissance period when Copernicus observed the heavens. Third graders work on basic chemistry as their history reading spans the period from 1600 to 1850, the years when the first great chemists lived. In fourth grade, basic physics is introduced as the students study modern times and the impact those scientists made on our world.

The scientific method will be introduced, however, the emphasis is to foster a sense of awe and wonder at God’s creation. Our goal through the study of science is that students will know and understand the basic processes of the natural world, the progress of discovery and technology in history, and be able to explain how these advances affect worldviews.

Our choice for Science curricula include:

1. *Real Science for Kids* by Dr. Rebecca W. Keller
2. *God's Design for Heaven and Earth* by Debbie and Richard Lawrence

Latin:

Parental Role: Co-Teacher

The study of Latin and Greek has been foundational to classical education for centuries. Some of the reasons for studying Latin include: a greater ease of learning the romance languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian), higher SAT scores, and a deeper appreciation for Western Civilization. Additionally, Latin will give students a greater knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary since more than half of English words originate in Latin.

Dorothy Sayers said it best, "I will say at once, quite firmly, that the best grounding for education is the Latin grammar. I say this, not because Latin is traditional and mediaeval, but simply because *even a rudimentary knowledge of Latin cuts down the labor and pains of learning almost any other subject by at least fifty percent* [emphasis added]. It is the key to the vocabulary and structure of all the Teutonic languages, as well as to the technical vocabulary of all the sciences and to the literature of the entire Mediterranean civilization, together with all its historical documents. Impart exceptional mental discipline as students learn to navigate the complexity of Latin." (Sayers n.d.)

Formal Latin instruction will begin in the third grade. Our selection for Latin curriculum:

1. *Latin Primer* by Martha Wilson
2. An array of other resources including chants, songs, Latin prayers, vocabulary, activity sheets and anything else we find that we think will enhance the study and enjoyment of Latin.

Parental Roles

In a University Model School, the parent's role goes far beyond simply asking children each evening, "Is your homework done?"

	Co-Teacher	Guide for Dependent Study	Guide for Independent Study	Private Tutor	Course Monitor	Project Assistant	Positive Motivator & Cheerleader
Kindergarten							
1st Grade							
2nd Grade							
3rd Grade							
4th Grade							
5th Grade	Transitional						
6th Grade							
7th Grade					As Needed		
8th Grade							
9th Grade							
10th Grade							
11th Grade				If Needed			
12th Grade							
Electives							

CO-TEACHER

Courses that require a Co-Teacher role occur primarily in the lower grammar school grades (K-3/4), depending on the academic needs of the student. In these grades, Language Arts and Math encompass more study time than any of the other subjects. As a result, responsibilities (including the introduction of some concepts) are often divided between the classroom teacher and the parent-teacher at home. In Math, parents will primarily reinforce concepts and skills at home and play a vital role in drill work. Detailed lesson plans are provided to support parents in this teaching role.

PRIVATE TUTOR

Courses involving this role occur primarily in the upper grammar school grades (3/4-6) where student success is often the result of the private tutor (parent) at home, willing, able and ready to assist. Parents receive printed instructions from the classroom teacher on a regular basis outlining homework assignments. They prepare and review as needed for upcoming classes and spend much of their instructional time conducting follow-up study over covered material.

GUIDE FOR DEPENDENT STUDY

This role usually applies to parents with students in grades 7-10. Many courses at this level begin to cover subject matter that is unfamiliar to many parents. At the same time, the student is at a dependent age where disciplined study habits must continue to be developed, not by parental force, but through positive encouragement and through the

student's growing awareness of personal consequences. In order for these classes to be successful, the teacher is dependent upon the parents to make certain that their students keep up with the course material assigned and to communicate to the teacher if difficulties arise. In some cases, private tutoring might even be necessary.

GUIDE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

Academic courses in the 11th and 12th grades usually involve this role for the parents. Here, parents have the opportunity to supervise the progress of their student's independent schoolwork and provide additional guidance those students may need before entering college. Courses offered by Oak Grove Classical Academy at this level will mimic that of a junior college program or higher level where independent study and research skills, time management skills, a strong work ethic, and self-discipline are essential.

COURSE MONITOR

Many elective courses, such as PE or Art, involve equipment and/or expertise that require most of the teaching to be done in the classroom, leaving little for the parent to do at home. In these classes the primary responsibility of the parent is to maintain and express interest in the course by keeping up to date with what is taking place in the classroom and notifying the teacher of any concerns. Other elective courses, such as a foreign language or theatre, require additional practice or memory work to reach proficiency. In these cases, the parental and student responsibilities will be spelled out in advance by the classroom teacher. Parents need to willingly support students in the School of Rhetoric who have elected a mastery track in an elective such as Speech, Debate, Art, or Music as these students will be expected to put in additional time to reach mastery.

PROJECT ASSISTANT

With student projects, parental mentoring is needed on an intermittent basis. In many respects, this role is similar to that of the Course Monitor; however, at one or more times during the semester, help at home might be needed in support of a particular project. For example, additional assistance might be needed for student costuming, puppet making, science experiments, etc.

POSITIVE MOTIVATOR & CHEERLEADER

Parents can experience great satisfaction and joy when they study each of their children to identify what motivates his or her best effort. With practice, they can learn how to tap those positive inner drives and passions to encourage each child toward success. Children not only need motivators, they also need cheerleaders—those who believe in them at all times, "go wild" when they do well, and lift their spirits when they are down. Children never forget parents who motivate them and parents who never stop believing in them.

Note: Parent Roles & Descriptions adapted from Character Driven College Preparation by Dr. John W. Turner, Jr.