



Gulf Pointe Academy

A Classical Education

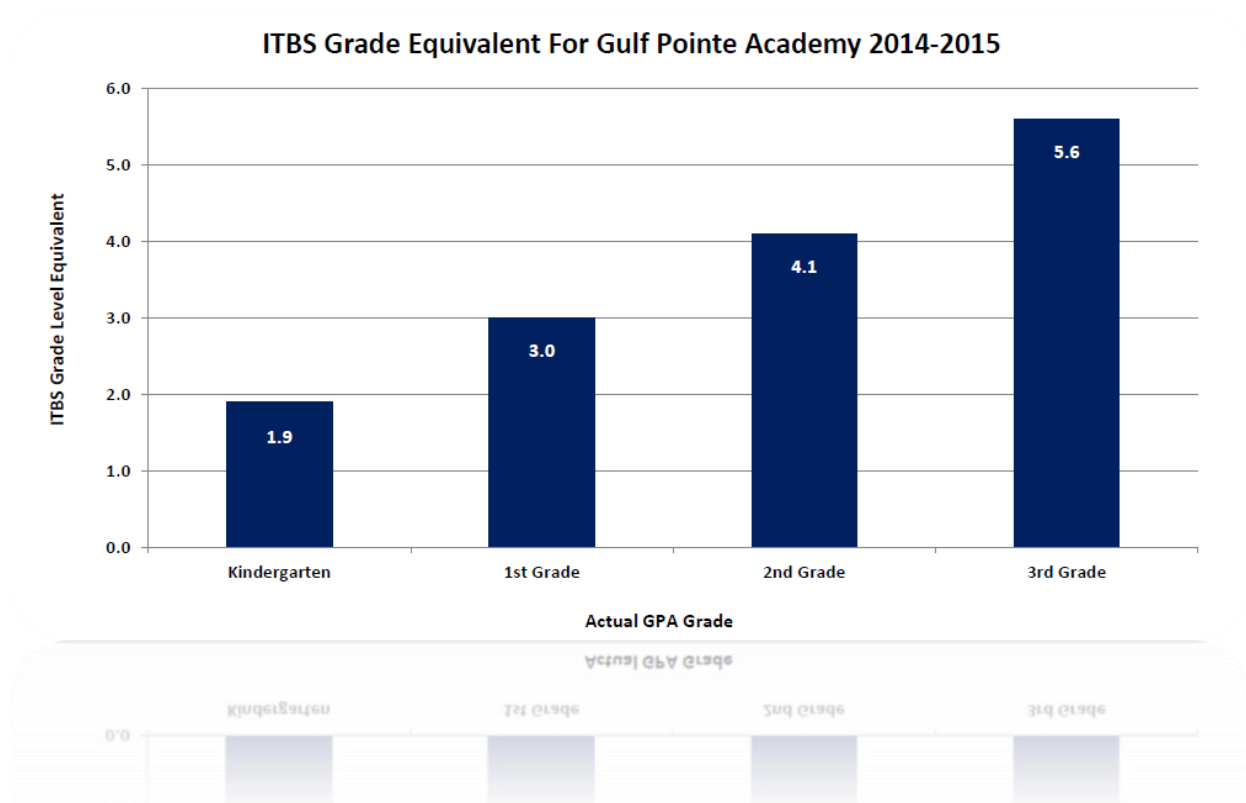
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This document was created in July of 2011, prior to the opening of Gulf Pointe Academy. It was intended to serve an explanatory purpose regarding Dianne & Rob Hamer's decision to open a private school.

Notable changes since this document's inception include:

- Gulf Pointe Academy now offers preschool through 4th grade.
- 5th grade will be added in fall of 2016.
- Rob and Dianne now have 7 children.
- We are now an official member of the Classical Latin School Association and in the accreditation process.
- Every GPA class, from kindergarten through 3rd grade, last year tested in the top 1% of the country on the Iowa Basic Skills Test (the premiere national standard test administered by accredited private schools.)



*“For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach children how to learn for themselves.”
Dorothy Leigh Sayers – Oxford 1947*

Enclosed you will read information regarding what may be an exciting opportunity for your child who is about to enter Kindergarten. First let us introduce ourselves. We are Rob and Dianne Hamer – parents of 6 children, local Santa Rosa County residents and owners of a commercial wood/plastic distribution company. We are immensely proud Americans, believe in the principals set forth by our founding fathers, and are committed to raising our children in a manner that rewards economic freedom, liberty and self-sufficiency.

We currently have two children enrolled at First United Methodist Preschool in Fort Walton Beach; Holland, who is four years old and Coral, who is three years old. We have been very happy with First United because Holland and Coral are in classes with loving and nurturing teachers, a low student-teacher ratio that allows personalized attention, and an expectation that our children come to school well-rested, well-nourished and ready to learn. We share these values and only wish that Holland was not ‘graduating’ out of First United as she moves onto kindergarten in the fall of 2011.

So we are now faced with finding a new school for kindergarten and after much experience with the public school system in America (our 3 oldest children went to public school) we have decided on an alternate route for our daughter who will be entering kindergarten in fall of 2011. Our reasons for being unhappy with public education in America are far too numerous to list in total, but below are a few of the most significant:

1. Parents do not send their children to school prepared to learn. Children regularly stay up too late, don't eat healthy, engage in completely inappropriate activities, spend too much time watching television and playing video games, and are being raised by indulgent parents. This environment fosters social, psychological, emotional and intellectual dysfunction and promotes immaturity and perpetual adolescence. We want our daughter in a classroom with children who are expected to come ready to learn.
2. A classical education delivered in a traditional classroom has been abandoned over the last century as more progressive notions of education have infiltrated and ultimately taken over the modern government classroom. Government school curriculums have been dumbed down by a bureaucracy that has created an environment completely enraptured with all-inclusiveness, political correctness and a lack of competition. In its effort to create ‘equality’ and because of its unwieldy bureaucratic nature, government schooling reduces most children to the lowest common denominator, denying kids the tools required for critical thinking that create opportunities to soar and to achieve.
3. Unions have stripped authority, power, independence and creativity away from teachers and parents and therefore the modern classroom of today is chaotic, disorganized, undisciplined, bureaucratic and poorly managed. In both teachers and students, public schools discourage individuality, innovation, curiosity, creativity and overall excellence.

After ruling out public school as an option for our four year old, we began an intensive search and review of Santa Rosa and Okaloosa County private schools. Many of these schools have very fine qualities, however none of the schools have all of the qualities we want for our child's education. Below are the most important qualities of our child's education:

1. We want our children taught in an environment that champions liberty, economic freedom, self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.

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2. We want our children to receive a Classical Education (see attached from Susan Wise Bauer) because we believe this is the time-tested path to cultivate critical thinking skills that lead to a life of learning and knowledge-seeking.
3. We believe that Latin, in addition to being the root language of English and other Romance languages, is a critical foundational skill that develops logic and critical thinking proficiency in children.
4. We want our children academically challenged, rewarded for measurable achievements and held accountable for performance that does not meet expectations.
5. We want our children to learn in a classroom where the teacher is in charge, expectations are definitive and understood, and all children come prepared and ready to learn every day.
6. We want our children taught by teachers who foster a love of learning, are compassionate and create a classroom environment that supports each child as an individual with unique interests and needs. We feel strongly that classrooms should be small and that the ideal teacher/student ratio is 1:10.
7. Finally, we want our children to learn that the United States of America is a Capitalist society and that Capitalism enables human achievement because it is morally superior and truly humane. Capitalism respects the source of human achievement: the individual mind. Only individual rights and liberty, which are Capitalism's essence, can secure a society where one can nurture the capacities required to live this life to the fullest. What are these capacities? The human mind – reason – is man's essential tool to understand reality, harness nature, sustain his life, and create a life worth living that is worthy of admiration.

If you are still reading, then you may be interested in our proposal. We have decided to create a private kindergarten program for fall of 2011. Our goal will be to grow into a small private school by the fall of 2012 that embodies the values we have outlined and enables the kindergartners to move onto 1st grade. The school will continue to grow by adding at least one additional higher grade each year through high school.

The school is called Gulf Pointe Academy and will begin with a single class of between 8 and 12 kindergartners, led by one highly qualified full-time teacher. The school will be located at 8851 Navarre Parkway in Navarre, FL.

We chose this variation of schooling for the following reasons:

1. We want a highly qualified teacher who is well compensated to be in charge of administering a classical education curriculum of our choice. The specific curriculum selected was designed by Highlands Latin School and is distributed through their publisher Memoria Press. The curriculum reflects our belief in the Trivium method (described in the attachment), which in Latin, refers to the three arts or skills:
 - a. Grammar – whose dominant mode is memorization
 - b. Logic – whose dominant mode is analysis
 - c. Rhetoric – whose dominant mode is synthesis

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2. We want a curriculum that emphasizes reading and history and celebrates Western Civilization and our Christian heritage.
3. We want our child involved in an active and regular social setting with her peers. We do not want to raise our children in an insular environment.
4. In a classical education the teacher plays a very prominent and most important role, versus some home-school curriculums that are taught via DVD's, webinars or self-direction.

Gulf Pointe Academy is a licensed Florida private school located at 8851 Navarre Parkway in Navarre, FL (Florida Department of Education School #5936.) We have applied to be recognized as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We expect confirmation in the near future.

Parents will be asked to commit the following:

1. Tuition of \$2,000 for the 2011/2012 school year. Military families will be asked to contribute 50% of this amount to acknowledge their contributions to and sacrifices for our Country. We have initially contributed \$40,000 to the 2011/2012 operating budget and invested \$250,000 in the facility. We expect to contribute significantly more within the next few years to acquire additional land and facilities.
2. Two full days per month of volunteer time. The teacher will determine based on individual parent competencies how best this time may be utilized. Examples include classroom volunteer time, enrichment program contributions, carpool or administrative support.
3. Financial resources for your enrolled child's books, supply costs, uniforms, field-trips, etc.
4. A 100% commitment to send your child to school well-rested, well-fed, ready to learn and take an active role participating in the classroom.

If you are interested in pursuing this opportunity for your kindergartner, please submit your completed admissions package by August 5th. We will be finalizing our class enrollment by mid-August and school will begin September 6th. If you would like to discuss this opportunity or have additional questions, please contact Dianne or Rob as follows:

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We look forward to meeting you and your child and working with you to create an extraordinary learning environment for our children.

What is Classical Education?

by Susan Wise Bauer

Classical education depends on a three-part process of training the mind. The early years of school are spent in absorbing facts, systematically laying the foundations for advanced study. In the middle grades, students learn to think through arguments. In the high school years, they learn to express themselves. This classical pattern is called the trivium.

The first years of schooling are called the “grammar stage” – not because you spend four years doing English, but because these are the years in which the building blocks for all other learning are laid, just as grammar is the foundation for language. In the elementary school years – what we commonly think of as grades one through four – the mind is ready to absorb information. Children at this age actually find memorization fun. So during this period, education involves not self-expression and self-discovery, but rather the learning of facts. Rules of phonics and spelling, rules of grammar, poems, the vocabulary of foreign languages, the stories of history and literature, descriptions of plants and animals and the human body, the facts of mathematics – the list goes on. This information makes up the “grammar,” or the basic building blocks, for the second stage of education.

By fifth grade, a child’s mind begins to think more analytically. Middle-school students are less interested in finding out facts than in asking “Why?” The second phase of the classical education, the “Logic Stage,” is a time when the child begins to pay attention to cause and effect, to the relationships between different fields of knowledge relate, to the way facts fit together into a logical framework.

A student is ready for the Logic Stage when the capacity for abstract thought begins to mature. During these years, the student begins algebra and the study of logic, and begins to apply logic to all academic subjects. The logic of writing, for example, includes paragraph construction and learning to support a thesis; the logic of reading involves the criticism and analysis of texts, not simple absorption of information; the logic of history demands that the student find out why the War of 1812 was fought, rather than simply reading its story; the logic of science requires that the child learn the scientific method.

The final phase of a classical education, the “Rhetoric Stage,” builds on the first two. At this point, the high school student learns to write and speak with force and originality. The student of rhetoric applies the rules of logic learned in middle school to the foundational information learned in the early grades and expresses his conclusions in clear, forceful, elegant language. Students also begin to specialize in whatever branch of knowledge attracts them; these are the years for art camps, college courses, foreign travel, apprenticeships, and other forms of specialized training.

A classical education is more than simply a pattern of learning, though. Classical education is language-focused; learning is accomplished through words, written and spoken, rather than through images (pictures, videos, and television).

Why is this important? Language-learning and image-learning require very different habits of thought. Language requires the mind to work harder; in reading, the brain is forced to translate a symbol (words on the page) into a concept. Images, such as those on videos and television, allow the mind to be passive. In front of a video screen, the brain can “sit back” and relax; faced with the written page, the mind is required to roll its sleeves up and get back to work.

A classical education, then, has two important aspects. It is language-focused. And it follows a specific three-part pattern: the mind must be first supplied with facts and images, then given the logical tools for organization of facts, and finally equipped to express conclusions.

But that isn’t all. To the classical mind, all knowledge is interrelated. Astronomy (for example) isn’t studied in isolation; it’s learned along with the history of scientific discovery, which leads into the church’s relationship to science and from there to the intricacies of medieval church history. The reading of the *Odyssey* leads the student

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into the consideration of Greek history, the nature of heroism, the development of the epic, and man's understanding of the divine.

This is easier said than done. The world is full of knowledge, and finding the links between fields of study can be a mind-twisting task. A classical education meets this challenge by taking history as its organizing outline – beginning with the ancients and progressing forward to the moderns in history, science, literature, art and music.

We suggest that the twelve years of education consist of three repetitions of the same four-year pattern: Ancients, Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, and Modern Times. The child studies these four time periods at varying levels – simple for grades 1-4, more difficult in grades 5-8 (when the student begins to read original sources), and taking an even more complex approach in grades 9-12, when the student works through these time periods using original sources (from Homer to Hitler) and also has the opportunity to pursue a particular interest (music, dance, technology, medicine, biology, creative writing) in depth.

The other subject areas of the curriculum are linked to history studies. The student who is working on ancient history will read Greek and Roman mythology, the tales of the Iliad and Odyssey, early medieval writings, Chinese and Japanese fairy tales, and (for the older student) the classical texts of Plato, Herodotus, Virgil, Aristotle. She'll read Beowulf, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare the following year, when she's studying medieval and early Renaissance history. When the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are studied, she starts with Swift (Gulliver's Travels) and ends with Dickens; finally, she reads modern literature as she is studying modern history.

The sciences are studied in a four-year pattern that roughly corresponds to the periods of scientific discovery: biology, classification and the human body (subjects known to the ancients); earth science and basic astronomy (which flowered during the early Renaissance); chemistry (which came into its own during the early modern period); and then basic physics and computer science (very modern subjects).

This pattern lends coherence to the study of history, science, and literature – subjects that are too often fragmented and confusing. The pattern widens and deepens as the student progresses in maturity and learning. For example, a first grader listens to you read the story of the Iliad from one of the picture book versions available at any public library. Four years later, the fifth grader reads one of the popular middle-grade adaptations – Olivia Coolidge's The Trojan War, or Roger Lancelyn Greene's Tales of Troy. Four more years go by, and the ninth grader – faced with the Iliad itself – plunges right in, undaunted.

The classical education is, above all, systematic – in direct contrast to the scattered, unorganized nature of so much secondary education. This systematic, rigorous study has two purposes.

Rigorous study develops virtue in the student. Aristotle defined virtue as the ability to act in accordance to what one knows to be right. The virtuous man (or woman) can force himself to do what he knows to be right, even when it runs against his inclinations. The classical education continually asks a student to work against his baser inclinations (laziness, or the desire to watch another half hour of TV) in order to reach a goal – mastery of a subject.

Systematic study also allows the student to join what Mortimer Adler calls the "Great Conversation" – the ongoing conversation of great minds down through the ages. Much modern education is so eclectic that the student has little opportunity to make connections between past events and the flood of current information. "The beauty of the classical curriculum," writes classical schoolmaster David Hicks, "is that it dwells on one problem, one author, or one epoch long enough to allow even the youngest student a chance to exercise his mind in a scholarly way: to make connections and to trace developments, lines of reasoning, patterns of action, recurring symbolisms, plots, and motifs."

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