

Mars Hill Academy Foundational Documents

History and Philosophy of the Foundational Documents

In June of 2001, the School Board formed an *ad hoc* committee called “Foundational Documents Committee” with the express purpose of doing the following:

“To identify, establish, refine and coordinate the defining vision, philosophy, assumptions (both theological and cultural) of MHA. A subordinate purpose of the committee is to ensure the effective communication of the above values and priorities to the MHA parent community.”

Families that are considering Mars Hill Academy for their children should carefully read this document in order to understand the basis for the covenantal education we offer. When reading, please begin with the *Mission Statement* and end with the *World & Life Assumptions*, the latter being *most* important in defining MHA as a Christian school. Also, it would be helpful to remember that these four “statements” should be read in light of one another, which allows for each document to help interpret and illuminate the others.

- The ***MHA Mission Statement*** is a brief statement of what our most central purpose is as a school. It is intentionally brief, suitable for parents to easily pass on to others and for use in situations where a lengthier statement (or discussion) would not be appropriate.
- The ***MHA Vision Statement*** is intended to provide a “snapshot,” if you will, of the most important parties in the school – students, staff, and parents – and what our vision is for them. It is more manageable in scope, but still remains sufficiently broad.
- The ***MHA Educational Foundations*** are the convictions, ideas, and beliefs that we have about education in general, and MHA in particular, which are rooted in our *World & Life Assumptions* and provide the foundation for many of the specific ideas, values, and emphases that will make MHA a unique place to go to school. Again, these are not intended to be exhaustive, but sufficient and representative.
- The ***MHA World & Life Assumptions*** are just what they say they are: ideas, opinions, and judgments that we *assume* to be true about the most basic and fundamental issues. They are necessarily non-MHA-specific and non-exhaustive. Everyone, including the unbeliever, makes assumptions; Christians should be conscious and intentional to ensure that we know what our assumptions are and how they affect how we look at the world.

MHA Mission Statement

Mars Hill Academy exists to assist parents in the duty of covenantal training of their children by offering academic instruction from a consistent, integrated Christian perspective, by equipping our students to learn for themselves using the proven classical method, and by providing them with an orderly and engaging atmosphere conducive to the attainment of the above goals.

MHA Vision Statement

We aim to graduate young men and women who think clearly and listen carefully with discernment and understanding, who reason persuasively and speak precisely, who are capable of evaluating all human

knowledge and experience in the light of the Scriptures, and who do so with eagerness in joyful submission to God. We desire them to recognize cultural influences as distinct from biblical, and to be unswayed toward evil by the former. We aim to find them well prepared in all situations, possessing both knowledge and the wisdom to know how to use it. We desire they be socially graceful and spiritually gracious; equipped with and understanding the tools of learning; desiring to grow in understanding, yet fully realizing the limitations and foolishness of the wisdom of this world. We desire they have a heart for the lost and the courage to seek to dissuade those who are stumbling towards destruction, that they distinguish real religion from religion in form only, and that they possess the former, knowing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And all these we desire them to possess with humility and gratitude to God.

We likewise aim to cultivate these same qualities in our staff and to see them well paid so that they may make a career at Mars Hill. We desire them to be professional and diligent in their work, gifted in teaching, loving their students and their subjects. We desire they clearly understand classical education, how it works in their classroom and how their work fits into the whole; that they possess a lifelong hunger to learn and grow and that they have opportunity to be refreshed and renewed. We desire to see them coach and nurture new staff and to serve as academic mentors to students. We look to see them mature in Christ, growing in the knowledge of God, their own children walking with the Lord.

We aim to cultivate in our parents a sense of responsibility for the school; to see them well informed about the goals of our classical and Christ-centered approach. We desire them to grow with the school, involved in and excited about the journey. We aim to help them to follow biblical principles in addressing concerns, to be inclined to hearing both sides of a story before rendering a verdict, and to embrace the Scripture's injunctions to encourage and stir one another up to love and good works.

Finally, in our relationship with our community, we aim to be above reproach in our business dealings and supportive of the local business community. We further seek to exemplify the unity of the body of Christ, to develop greater fellowship and understanding with churches, and to bring honor to our Lord in all our endeavors.

MHA Educational Foundations

Education Defined

Learning takes place each time a person experiences something new. Education, however, is more than the sum total of facts, people, processes, skills, and experiences imparted in the classroom. Fundamentally, education involves the transmission of a manner of thinking about the most important and inescapable ideas that would result in changed behavior. Historically speaking, one distinguished the *education* that took place through the study of the Liberal Arts (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Astronomy, Arithmetic, Music, and Geometry) from the varied *vocational training* programs that taught a student a skill or task in order to be a productive member of society. The ancient Greeks would have reasoned that the former was the only suitable form of education for a free man (hence, the derivation of "liberal" education), while the latter was appropriate for the slave, who didn't have to think, but merely obey and execute. We wish to maintain this important distinction between *education* and *vocational training* at MHA, believing that we are called, as a classical and Christian school, to do the former. It is important to note that while a well-educated man could easily learn the skills of the slave, it is unreasonable to believe that the slave could do the reverse. Historically, a school like MHA (and most certainly the universities and colleges) dealt in education, not in vocational training, which was best suited for apprenticeships and trade schools. The fact that many (if not most) have abandoned a *liberal* education for a *vocational* one provides an even greater impetus and rationale for the existence of genuinely classical and Christian secondary schools and colleges.

Classical and Christian Methods

While no pedagogy is inspired, the method of educating children initiated in classical Greece, developed in Rome, and brought to its fullest and brightest expression in the Middle Ages – the Trivium - is the best human system for developing the intellectual capabilities of children and young adults. Our Grammar School will teach students to memorize and observe, in addition to providing each student with basic proficiency in

writing, reading, and arithmetic. Our younger Rhetoric School students will be taught dialectic – or logic – and how to reason from a logical and explicitly Christian perspective. The ordered relationships between ideas, events, and data will form the backbone of their study. Finally, our older Rhetoric School students will be given ample opportunity for self-expression, creativity, and the evaluation of seminal ideas in man’s dealings with God and His creation. A multi-year study of classical rhetoric will provide the students with the necessary tools to do this well. The MHA Board, Administration, and Faculty are whole-heartedly committed to this model of education, which aims to teach students to think and learn for themselves. We will strive to grow in our understanding and implementation of what a classical education involved in the past and what it will look like at MHA for future generations seeking to “recover the lost tools of learning.” Dorothy Sayers’ lecture, “The Lost Tools of Learning” and John Milton Gregory’s book, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* will be the primary instruments we use to judge whether we are successful in doing this.

Classical and Christian Content

The philosophical, literary, scientific, and theological heritage of the Christian West is a rich one. It is our intention to make the students very familiar with it. We do this for two reasons: First, in order to know where one should go in the future, it is imperative that one understands where he has been. We must have context. The content of our students’ study at MHA is designed to equip them to know, understand and critically evaluate their heritage that forms the foundation for nearly everything they see around them. Second, we believe that because Christianity has seen its deepest roots in the West, its cultural “artifacts” are the most deeply Christian (with important counter-examples noted) and, therefore, most lovely. Since the Scripture commands us to meditate on these things, we do so without apology.

Classical and Christian Results

Mars Hill Academy students will gain the ability to learn independently from teachers. They will be well equipped to learn a new language, read and understand primary source documents, reason inductively and deductively as the situation demands, and they will, by God’s grace, find biblical principles at their disposal as they consider the important issues of the day. They will also be avid readers and interdisciplinary thinkers. They will be poised and persuasive when speaking publicly. Their writing will be elegant and forceful; creative and purposeful. In short, they will have been prepared with the tools of learning. College professors, employers, and friends will find MHA graduates to think from principle, write and speak in measured and well-reasoned thoughts, and be diligent in seeing a job or task through to its completion. They will also find them unapologetically *Christian* in their convictions and desires.

Students

Students come to Mars Hill Academy ready to work for a time and at a level commensurate with their physical and mental abilities. MHA is a student’s workplace. The social interaction and spiritual training that takes place during school hours are subordinate goals for a school. They are better taught in the context of church and home. Work is a gift from God, given before the Fall, which should be relished and enjoyed, not despised. Thus, a sense of responsibility and diligence, not to mention joy, should characterize MHA classrooms. Students in the School of Rhetoric will evidence an increasing social maturity, intellectual curiosity and independence, and Spirit-given fruit that will cause them to love the true things, the good things, and the beautiful things. In general, MHA students will perform at a level equal to or higher than most of their peers. Finally, we also desire to see appropriate expressions of God-given masculinity and femininity throughout the life of the school. Our social interaction, dress, speech, and programming will all attempt to adorn, rather than destroy, the fact that God created two beautiful and complementary persons when he made man “male and female.”

Teachers

MHA teachers will be bright, highly motivated, industrious, and humble. They will love each student in their classroom, viewing each child as a gift from God and teaching as an opportunity to sow seeds of grace and truth deep within the students’ hearts. They will also evidence a strong desire to grow intellectually and spiritually throughout their lives and be eager to discover and implement classical teaching methods, knowing that recovering the lost tools of learning begins with them. Most importantly, they will possess a radically God-centered worldview that informs all they set their hands to do. They will not be perfect, but competent

and teachable. They will not assume to know their students better than the children's parents, but offer encouragement and helpful criticism as appropriate.

School Board

Our School Board consists of Christians who have demonstrated themselves to be spiritually mature and gifted for school leadership. Board members possess a love for and a commitment to classical education, never believing they fully understand all that it encompasses but always seeking to grow and learn. They will provide institutional vision, leadership, and serve as spiritual examples to the school community, resisting the influences and biases of the prevailing culture, where appropriate, to boldly direct the school in pursuit of its mission, vision, and goals.

School

MHA aims to assist parents in fulfilling their God-ordained duties to “bring up a child in the fear and nurture of the LORD.” As such, MHA operates as a servant to its parent constituency. We have obviously chosen a particular *means* of doing this: classical and Christian education. Parents may, or may not, agree with MHA's approach to the training and education of children and yet, choosing to join the MHA community, signal their intention to joyfully submit to the school's stated philosophies, policies, programs, etc. While believing very strongly in the uniqueness and efficacy of the classical method, we wish to affirm the legitimacy of other approaches to education, provided they are intentionally Christian.

Life Together

We desire that MHA would support both the family and the church in their respective missions under God's providential hand, neither assuming too much nor doing too little for either. Parents will be encouraged to remain vitally engaged in their child's education. In addition, we pray that God would grant us an atmosphere of love, forbearance, hard work, joy, and intellectual curiosity that would inspire and edify us while honoring Him. We will resist the temptation to gossip, think ill of one another, or to presume the worst, making sure to obey God's word with regards to our personal relationships. Parents, not teachers, will bear the primary responsibility for remaining informed about their child's progress at MHA. The staff will attempt to help parents in this endeavor through regular and helpful communication. Our school culture, academic and co-curricular programs, and personal relationships should imitate, as God gives us grace, the examples and teaching laid down in Holy Scripture and in the most truthful, good, and beautiful traditions of the Christian West.

MHA World and Life Assumptions

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism and Shorter Catechism define the scope and elements of Christian truth that Board Members, Administrators, and Teachers must affirm and adopt to be considered for positions at Mars Hill Academy. While we see no need to add a second doctrinal definition, as we believe the Confession to be sufficient, we do want to emphasize certain theological truths as they relate to education. The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism and Shorter Catechism should be considered part of the *World & Life Assumptions* that support and animate the *MHA Educational Foundations, Vision Statement, and Mission Statement*.

Sovereignty

God alone is sovereign and non-contingent. He possesses absolute authority over all things. He has created all things, sustains all things, and governs all things. He is the fountain of all being and truth. He works all things together for His own glory, which is the ground and the goal of all creation, providence, and redemption.

Holy Scripture

The LORD has revealed Himself to us authoritatively, perfectly, and therefore *sufficiently*, although not exhaustively, in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in His written expression of His wisdom, the Bible. It is the only infallible rule of faith and life for the Church and as such, should be treasured, studied, believed, and humbly acted upon by all who call themselves Christian. As one theologian put it, “The Scriptures speak authoritatively in all that they address and they address everything.” We would agree, with the caveat that they do not address everything in the same manner, or with the same degree of specificity. We reject any attempt to pit a thoughtful, contextually sensitive, and theologically astute reading of Scripture against a warm, heartfelt, devotional reading. We must not leave “interpretation” to the scholars and “application” to the pastors. Every Christian should do both. As Christians, we confess our need to study, meditate, pray, and obey more than we commonly do, believing that in the Scriptures we will find real life.

Creation

The Scriptures tell us unequivocally that God created everything and it was *good*. The author of Hebrews tells us that we understand this truth “by faith.” We repudiate, therefore, the modern tendency to accommodate the Creation account (Genesis 1 and 2) to modern scientific discoveries and theories, believing that the goal of Christian scientists is to teach a *humble* science – one that is ultimately governed by the truths of the Scriptures. Because the origin of all created matter has intrinsic unity, the Christian scientist finds meaning and purpose in scientific inquiry, seeing it as an essential component of the command to have dominion over the physical creation. The fruit of man’s labors, provided it proceeds from a heart of faith and not sin or selfish ambition, is good, as well. We rejoice that God was pleased to create flesh, not merely spirits, and assume that God desires us to use our bodies and the entire earthly and heavenly creation around us for His glory. Man was created male and female, that is, he created man *differently*. We reject the modern notion that we should, for all practical purposes, ignore this distinction and treat men and women (and boys and girls) the same.

Antithesis

Because of man’s fall in Adam, Christians find themselves surrounded by ideas and actions that are squarely opposed to the way of thinking and living revealed in Holy Scripture. This notion is perhaps best captured by the word *antithesis*. Some of these ideas and actions are easily recognizable as pagan in origin, while others are extremely subtle, and as a consequence, require tremendous discernment. It is very likely that in order to provide a truly God-centered and Christian education (not to mention *classical*), it will be necessary to break completely free from the educational philosophy and policy around us. As Christians living in a fallen culture, we must be careful not to make unbiblical assumptions about any area of life, but commit ourselves to a diligent study of Holy Scripture and pray that God would give true discernment as we live in the midst of an unbelieving world seeking to take “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Worldview

Christianity is more than a set of propositions supported by proof texts. It is rather an entire system of thought. A worldview shapes our perspective and interpretation of everything else in the world. Christianity must be viewed as a whole and not just as a collection of discrete elements. As the Dutch theologian, journalist, and statesman Abraham Kuyper said, “There is not a single square inch of creation over which Jesus Christ does not shout, ‘Mine!’” The Christian’s worldview is the “lens” through which we see, understand, and teach all things. It is antithetical to all other worldviews and thus, requires that we present all ideas and concepts as part of a larger whole defined by Christian truth.

Christian Aesthetic

Perhaps nowhere is the absence of genuinely Christian thinking more evident than in the realm of aesthetics. Ethics and epistemology (the science of knowledge) have received ample evangelical attention, but not aesthetics. We are the worse for it. We believe that the infallible rule of Scripture and the historic witness of the Church call Christians to make judgments of “good-better-best” and “bad-worse-worst” in every area of life. Paul’s aesthetic manifesto is quickly summarized in Philippians 4:8, “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy --*

meditate on these things.” God has called us to embrace a life of moral and aesthetic virtue, preferring cultural icons and artifacts that have enduring, *classical* power and grace.

History

Paul tells the Corinthians that the Israelites’ experience in the Wilderness was recorded “for their instruction.” MHA affirms the legitimacy and necessity of cultivating a historically informed mind, so that we might follow our ancestors in their faithfulness and repudiate their sin. Every generation, every culture, and every age demonstrates the fallen character of man’s heart in unique and often subtle ways. To think that our own contemporary age is exempt from sin would be naïve. C.S. Lewis labeled this perspective “chronological snobbery.” We need our brothers and sisters from past decades, centuries, and millennia - a council affectionately known as the “democracy of the dead” – as well as contemporary voices to help us see the emptiness of our current perspective and situation. Even pagans know that those ignorant of the past are doomed to repeat it. Therefore, Christians individually and collectively should acknowledge our dependence on and need for an historical perspective. The LORD exhorts the people of God living in physical, moral, and spiritual exile to “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls...” Christians should relinquish the modern evolutionary assumption that only what is “new” is worthwhile, preferring instead to walk on the ancient path of Christian faithfulness and mercy that stretches back to the garden of Eden.

Children

Children, like all men and women, have been uniquely “knit together” by God in their mother’s womb and bear the image of God in their entire person, which means their lives have a dignity and significance that is unparalleled in the created world. At the same time, because of the Fall, children are now, by nature and experience, sinful, self-centered, and stand under God’s holy wrath, apart from the saving work of Christ. Even assuming God’s supernatural work in a child’s life, they remain, by definition, immature and need the loving training of parents, grandparents, pastors, teachers, and other adults to bring them to a mature status in Christ. Parents are fully responsible for this training, even when they have delegated a portion of it to another.

Family

The family is the most central of divinely appointed, human societies, as it is the “training ground” for godly living in all others. Our homes are “little churches” and “little states.” Without biblically virtuous homes, the Church and the State are hopelessly lost. We believe God has called Christian parents into a personal and corporate covenant with Himself – through His body, the Church – and that when God blesses a man and woman with children, those children are *holy* because they are children of the covenant. These “covenant households” are led by covenant heads (fathers), to study, pray, worship, and live together in a spirit of love, respect, and peace that comes from the LORD. Fathers should set biblical priorities for themselves and their children and reject the unbiblical priorities of the culture around them. Mothers should assist the father in the training of covenant children, as the Scriptures indicate the inestimable role that mothers have in shaping the character and piety (and worldview) of their children. Family life should be shaped by a joyful, Word-centered intentionality. Families led by godly fathers should be deeply committed to Christian education as a duty and privilege, and desirous of growing in their understanding of what constitutes a classical and Christian education, taking advantage of all available opportunities (books, tapes, conferences, spending time at the school) to do so.

Personal Holiness

The Scriptures command and empower the Christian to be holy because God is holy. For this reason, we must strive to live lives that are above reproach, refusing to allow temptation and sin to rule our bodies, hearts, and minds. Stated positively, we are to “love the LORD our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.” In doing this, we fulfill the Law of Christ and give evidence of the Spirit’s fruitful work within us. Christians must resist the inclinations of their own hearts and the deceptive activity of Satan. When Christians do sin, we should be quick to repent, ask forgiveness from God and any offended party, and offer restitution. Adult Christians should model these ideals to their children, in addition to teaching them “as they go along the way.”

What Is Classical Education?

In 1947, Dorothy Sayers addressed Oxford University in a lecture entitled “The Lost Tools of Learning.” She asked a rather simple, yet profoundly important question: “Has it ever struck you as odd, or unfortunate, that today, when the proportion of literacy throughout Western Europe is higher than it has ever been, people should have become susceptible to the influence of advertisement and mass propaganda to an extent hitherto unheard-of and unimagined.” If this were true in mid-20th century England, how much more is it true for us today, Christian and non-Christian alike? As Christians we cannot allow this to continue. We are commanded to love God with “heart, soul, *mind*, and strength...” Our educational goals and expectations, in both public and private, secular and Christian sectors, are astonishingly low. In the worst cases, children pass through a dozen years of mandated government education and remain functionally illiterate. In the best schools, our children have digested huge amounts of indiscriminately-related data, yet remain unable to distinguish truth from falsehood in nearly every sphere of life. And most importantly, our children are taught that God, if He exists at all, is positively irrelevant to everything they study. Finally, many parents are asking, “What can be done?”

First, let it be said at the outset that classical education is no panacea to cure the myriad of infirmities that assail Western intellectual life. It has, however, helped to train and nurture a glorious Christian heritage for nearly two millennia and for that reason alone deserves Christians’ attention. More importantly, however, God demands that His children be clear thinkers. A quick survey of the book of Romans or Hebrews will tell us as much. To understand God’s Word and His world, we simply must love to learn.

What follows is a brief description of the Trivium (Latin for “three ways”) that formed the backbone of classical instruction for generations, including the Founding Fathers of our nation. Think of each stage – Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric – as emphases. In the Grammar Stage (Kindergarten through 6th grade), there is an emphasis on learning facts and concrete thinking. In the Logic Stage (7th and 8th grades), the emphasis is on analytical thinking, and in the Rhetoric Stage (9th through 12th grades) students emphasize abstract thinking. Here they utilize the grammatical and reasoning skills learned previously and refine oral and written communication skills.

The Grammar Stage

Historically, this first step in a child’s education was structured around the study of Latin grammar and, as a result, came to be known as the Grammar stage. The memorization of Latin vocabulary and grammatical forms trained the young student’s mind to encounter, assimilate, and retain large quantities of material in an organized and efficient manner. Schoolmasters and teachers were concerned that the students not only memorize Latin, but gain proficiency in memorization more generally - a skill that has fallen on hard times in our own century. History, Science, Math, and the study of God’s Word, were all beneficiaries of this rigorous intellectual training, for the *tools of learning* were easily applied in different academic disciplines. The memorization was never an end in itself, but a *tool* to be placed in the student’s intellectual

arsenal for later use. Scripturally, we might say that this stage seeks to equip the students with *knowledge* (Prov. 2:6).

The Logic Stage

Formal logic is the cornerstone of what is known as the Logic stage. Logic is the study of *correct* reasoning and everyone, to greater or lesser degrees, is a logician. We all make inferences, deductions, and aspire to be consistent in the way we think about the world. Logic helps us make sense of everything. The Greek word meaning “therefore” - a sure indication of inductive reasoning - occurs nearly one thousand times in the New Testament! Using Formal Logic as a *tool*, the students attempt to study the *ordered relationships* of the persons, ideas, and institutions that were committed to memory in the Grammar stage. Again, the skill is more important than the subject. When students think logically, they are demonstrating *understanding* (Prov. 1:5).

The Rhetoric Stage

Once a student has become a proficient and logical learner and thinker, they must learn to give eloquent and persuasive expression, in both oral and written mediums, to their learning. This is the goal of the Rhetorical Stage, the culmination of a child’s education. God’s truth needs to be brought to bear on new situations and experiences; therefore, the classically educated student will possess the ability to apply the knowledge they’ve gained in a logical manner. Biblically, we might say this is exercising *wisdom* (Prov. 2:2).

Summary

Perhaps the three “stages” of the Trivium may be more appropriately thought of as overlapping spheres of instruction. We would miss the point of classical education if we failed to realize that the study of Grammar necessarily involves small amounts of Dialectic and Rhetoric. A child standing to present information gained from a purely rote method of instruction is still expressing his knowledge publicly and this can be done poorly or it may be done well. Likewise, a student of Rhetoric will, on occasion, have need to memorize and make inferences between pieces of information, as they will for the remainder of his life.

Our desire in teaching and learning classically (and Christian-ly!) is to integrate learning, to think systemically about critical issues, and to submit all knowledge to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who gives wisdom abundantly to all who ask for it.

Growth and New Location

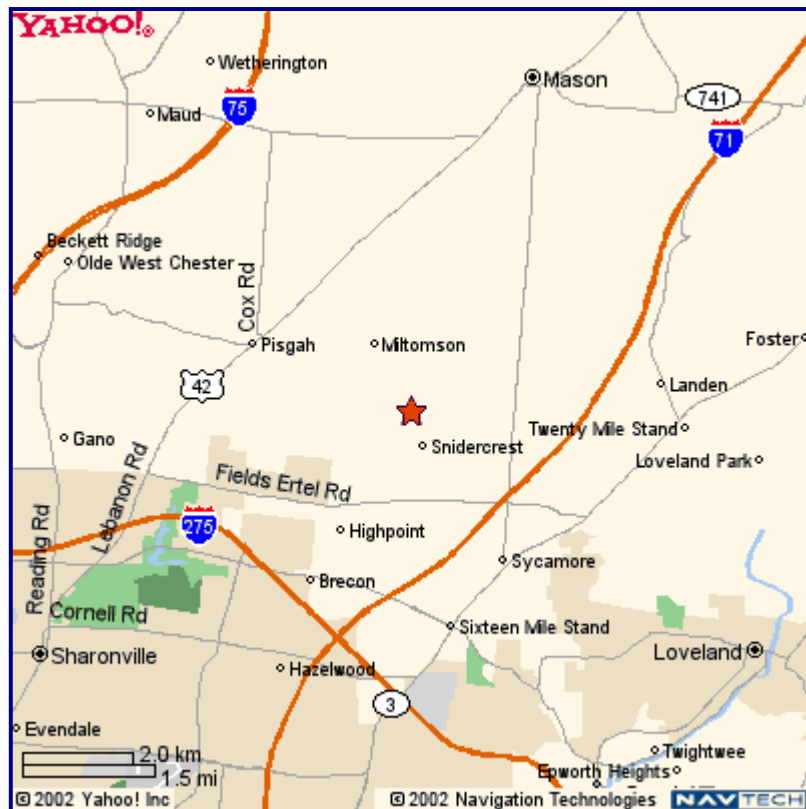
By the grace of God, Mars Hill Academy has grown to 120 students, in grades K through 12 over its seven years of operation. We've called three different church buildings "home" during that same period of time and, as our parents can attest, moving a school even the size of MHA that many times in such a short period, is nothing less than exhausting. For those who have been present from the beginning, it hardly seems possible. Perhaps that is good. This way, God receives all the glory for our "success" and we receive the blessing of watching Him raise up a work unto Himself that attempts, to the best of its ability, to bring Him all the glory he is due, in every way we are able.

We will strive to become more thoroughly classical and Christian in everything we do. Our understanding of how education works is at once both traditional and novel. Most modern educational environments proceed from an entirely different set of assumptions regarding the nature and end of education. We are committed to seeing the short-term success we've experienced in the classroom continue to expand as we grow in our ability to apply a very old, proven way of educating covenant children in a very different cultural climate. Writing new and fine-tuning existing curriculum, adding co-curricular programs to complement our academic program, hiring godly staff, nurturing students through hard work and discipline, and creating a place where beauty, goodness, and truth pervade our school culture – these are the *means* by which we seek to glorify God. All this, should God grant us His strength and blessing, we are resolved to do.

We pray that Mars Hill Academy will continue in its most foundational reason for existence: To glorify and honor Almighty God. We hope to serve families by helping fathers and mothers train up their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." We have a deep love and respect for both the family and the Church; we pray we can serve both. To create a school where the students' minds are strengthened and trained to think biblically about themselves, God, and the world around them, is our chief desire.

Since this past August, we have been located at North Cincinnati Community Church, 6170 Irwin-Simpson Road. This church is conveniently located north of Fields Ertel Road and west of I-71.

Location of Mars Hill Academy Beginning August, 2003



Why Latin?

Considering the sheer number of years and number of quality schools wherein the teaching of Latin was an integral part of any good academic training, instruction in Latin at Mars Hill Academy should need no explanation or defense. However, like many traditional elements of good education lost in the name of "modern" or "progressive" education, the advantages of Latin have been neglected and forgotten over the past few generations.

Latin was regularly taught even in American high schools as late as the 1940s. It was considered necessary to a fundamental understanding of English, the history and writings of Western Civilization, and the understanding of Romance (Spanish, French, Italian, etc.) languages. Therefore, Mars Hill Academy teaches Latin for three reasons:

1. Latin is historical. Latin is not a "dead language", but rather a language that lives on in almost all major western languages, including English. Training in Latin not only gives the student a better understanding of the roots of English vocabulary; it also lays the foundation for learning other Latin-based languages (e.g. Spanish, French, and Italian).
2. Latin is helpful. Learning the grammar of Latin reinforces student understanding of the reasons for, and the use of, the parts of speech being taught in our traditional English coursework, e.g. plurals, nouns, verbs, prepositions, direct objects, tenses, etc.
3. Latin is hard work. The study of Latin grammar trains young minds to think logically like no other subject. The discipline and precision, in age-appropriate amounts, required for a successful study of Latin is high, but the rewards are high as well. The students will see the benefits of their Latin study in every other area of the curriculum.

The Grammar School Latin Program begins in the third grade and consists of the following basic objectives:

- Third Grade (1st Year): Vocabulary acquisition, declensions, chants of endings. Very elementary translation of words, phrases, and simple sentences.
- Fourth Grade (2nd Year): More vocabulary, beginning grammar work, basic verbs, and simple to moderately difficult sentences, appropriate to fourth grade.
- Fifth Grade (3rd Year): More sentences, vocabulary, basic translation work from secular and sacred sources, and elementary syntactical concepts.
- Sixth Grade (4th Year): Heavy emphasis on translation, grammar, writing of sentences, stories, Latin's classical context.

In the intermediate (7th through 9th) and high school (10th through 12th) grades, we will place a student in a Latin class commensurate with his abilities. It is a MHA requirement that each graduating student must have second-year competence in Latin. Our focus in the upper grades; however, is the study of a modern language.

In an effort to help all new students gain a level of comfort and facility with Latin before beginning "official" coursework in the fall, we offer with summer school classes, tutorial opportunities, and, for the very motivated, mature student, an opportunity for independent study.

Reading, Writing and Spelling

There is no more important component of a child's education than that which teaches them to write, spell and read competently. At Mars Hill Academy we use a program to teach reading and writing that uses a multi-sensory approach in a very classical manner. The Spalding Method, which is also known as the Writing and Spelling Road to Reading and Thinking (WSRRT), is a building block approach to reading that begins with minimal speech units and progresses from there. There are a total of 71 phonograms, which represent the 45 sounds spoken in the English language. This approach also integrates the teaching of reading, writing and spelling.

This method begins with the teacher showing the class a phonogram card. A phonogram is simply a letter or combination of letters that represent one sound. For instance, *ea* is a phonogram that makes three different sounds as in *eat*, *bread*, and *steak*.

In initial instruction, the teacher tells the class the particular sound(s), the students repeat the sound(s), and the students then write the phonogram. Notice that all avenues to the brain are being engaged. The students SEE the card, HEAR the teacher give the correct sound(s), SAY the sound(s), then WRITE the phonogram. Phonogram recitation and assessment may be executed with verbal or visual cues to aid the memorization process. After children learn the first 54 phonograms and can write them from dictation (without the cards), they begin spelling and writing words that are dictated to the class by the teacher.

A spelling lesson proceeds as follows: the teacher dictates a word and calls on the children to say the first syllable and first sound of a word. The students progress systematically through the word, writing one phonogram at a time. The students then dictate the word back to the teacher in the same manner. She transcribes the word on the board and then "marks" it using mnemonic markings. Mnemonic markings are a memory tool, which identify the phonograms with their specific sounds in a word. Additionally, words are divided by syllables, thus emphasizing syllabication. They now can read the word that they just wrote correctly on paper; therefore, their first reading lessons come from their own writing.

Over the course of spelling instruction, students learn nearly 50 spelling rules. After learning all the phonograms and rules, children can spell about 80 percent of English words and a higher percentage of the ones most frequently used. Good spellers are invariably good readers; however, the reverse is not always true. With the Spalding Method, children are trained to be both.

This is an exciting, systematic and comprehensive approach to reading, writing and spelling. Arming children with the proper tools for reading at an early age equips them with the skills for reading fluently and comprehending thoroughly. The importance of reading for the Christian is desiring to know, understand, and apply God's Word. It is a rigorous program, but one that trains young minds to read accurately and efficiently in a very grammatical manner.

Bible

Bible is in some ways both the easiest and most difficult class to teach from a Christian worldview. It is easiest for the simple fact that the lessons throughout the year are centered on the Christian Scriptures: what they say (Old and New Testament Survey), how to interpret and understand them, (Bible Interpretation), what is to be believed from them (Basic Christian Doctrine), and how they affect our worldview and our approach to evangelism (Apologetics). The students are given time to read the Bible in class, more or less time depending on the subject being taught; and they use it as a foundation for all that they study in class. In short, the Bible is the textbook for Bible class; all that is discussed, taught, and tested has a biblical, Christian focus.

But with this apparent ease comes a variety of associated dangers. The class may fall into the trap of assuming that because the Bible is being taught by a Christian teacher to (usually) Christian students, it is automatically being taught from a Christian worldview. This is not the case. It is easy to teach the Bible as simply another textbook, or to approach it, as many state universities do, as simply "literature."

On the other side, there can be a temptation for Bible class to become a worship service, with undue time being spent in fellowship, prayer, and singing. These are not bad in themselves, of course, but they can be used to distract the class from the material the course is designed to cover. The students may even assume that the lessons, prayer, and fellowship that they enjoy in Bible class are an adequate substitute for worship in a Bible-believing church. They are not. The students should be warned of this danger.

Another danger is the tendency for the class to focus on secondary doctrine, beliefs which divide real Christians. This can occur when the teacher is not careful to distinguish in his own mind and for the class whether or not what he is teaching is primary or secondary. The students often ask questions which are secondary or divisive by nature; in fact, these are usually the questions that the students are most interested in pursuing. The teacher must deliberately guide the students back to the Bible and to their designated spiritual leaders, parents and pastors, for their answers.

The approach to take in teaching the Bible is this. First, begin with the foundation that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant and authoritative. "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). As God's Word, truths which are clearly taught in the Bible are not to be debated, but rather believed and submitted to. Keep in mind that God gave the Bible, not primarily as a textbook, but to reveal the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to lost and sinful men, and to bring them into a right relationship with God the Father.

Second, when teaching doctrine, stick close to the school's statement of faith. These are truths that the parents and the students have understood will be taught without warning or apology as primary doctrine. When treatment of the statement of faith leads to secondary doctrinal issues, the instructor should teach the various views of orthodox Christianity from an objective,

unbiased point of view. With these foundations in mind, the Bible should be taught as a light to illuminate all the other fields of study. Every teacher should help the students to see how the Bible relates to math, history, philosophy, language, and science.

Teaching the Bible is a dangerous privilege. We who teach must approach this responsibility with prayer and caution, asking God to reveal His truth in the minds of the students.

In the elementary grades, our Bible curriculum has four components:

1) Bible reading – Students read the text for themselves. They are led in a discussion of the central characters, ideas, and themes by the teacher.

2) Hymn/Psalm Singing & Memorization – We sing joyfully to the LORD in each class, memorizing many of the great hymns and psalms that spiritually nourished our fathers and mothers in their walk with God.

3) Bible Memory – We memorize large portions of Scripture in order that we might teach the children to make the Word a large part of their lives.

4) Bible Questions and Answers – We believe that having children memorize the “Children’s Catechism” is a wonderful way to instruct them in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

In the Secondary Program, we continue to memorize Scripture but the focus is a more intensive look at the Bible itself, moving toward a godly application of basic biblical knowledge in grades 11 and 12. It looks like this.

Bible Survey I (7th)
Bible Survey II (8th)
Biblical Interpretation (9th)
Church History (10th)
Bible Doctrine (11th)
Apologetics (12th)

All of our Secondary Bible courses use the Bible as the primary text. We want our theology to be a *biblical* theology. The emphasis, in keeping with our larger educational goals, is on questions of “why” and “how,” rather than who, what, when, etc. In grades 10 through 12, formal research papers will be required, along with oral presentations, debates, and other special projects.

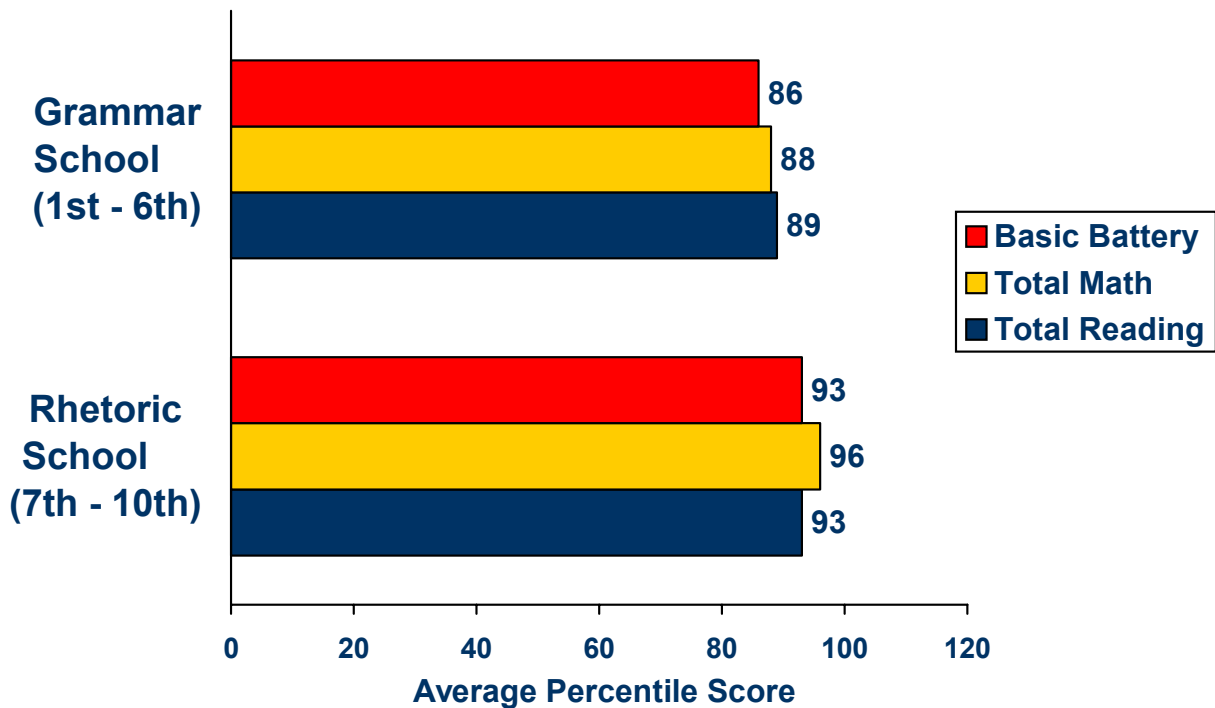
Academic Performance on Standardized Tests

Every spring our students take Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT's) to provide an outside assessment of student performance. While Mars Hill Academy by no means designs its curriculum for the purpose of taking standardized tests, we do value an outside assessment of our performance on basics such as language and math skills.

The chart below illustrates that our school, as a whole, is performing exceptionally well.

- In the Grammar School, we rank in the 88th percentile for math and the 89th percentile for reading. The national average on these measures is the 50th percentile.
- In the Rhetoric School we rank at the 96th percentile for math and the 93rd percentile for reading.
- Overall, on the basic battery of tests which includes all academic subjects, the Grammar School attains an 86th percentile ranking and the Rhetoric School, a 93rd percentile ranking.

**Stanford Achievement Tests
Average Scores - Spring 2003**



Significant Recent Academic Accomplishments

Mars Hill is consistently over-represented in academic competitions relative to the size of our student body. Below are the major highlights of the past two years' competitions.

2003 ACSI National High School Essay Contest First Place Winner for the essay, "How My Christian School Experience Has Made Me a Better Student and Stronger Christian"

2003 National Latin Exam:

Introductory Latin - one perfect score, five *Outstanding Achievements* and two *Achievements*

Latin I - Two *Summa Cum Laude* winners, one *Maxima Cum Laude* winner, one *Magna Cum Laude* winner, and one *Cum Laude* winner

Latin II - One *Magna Cum Laude* winner and two *Cum Laude* winners

Latin III - One *Summa Cum Laude* winner

National 5th place finish in 2002 for Pre-Algebra ACSI Math League competition

First place in the 2002 ACSI Senior High Speech Meet

Three first-place medal winners in the 2003 ACSI Math Olympics, plus eight additional place winners

Overall winner at ACSI Regional Spelling Bee in both 2002 and 2003

2003 ACSI District Spelling Bee winner (competed in the national competition in May, 2003)

Two first-place medal winners, two second-place and one third place finish in grade level competition in the 2003 ACSI Regional Spelling Bee

Transferring Older Students into Mars Hill Academy

Students often transfer into Mars Hill Academy having missed Latin courses at the Grammar level and/or Logic courses at the Rhetoric level. In such circumstances our goals are to:

- avoid overwhelming transfer students with the requirements of a course that is well beyond beginners;
- avoid slowing down the pace of a course for an entire class in an attempt to accommodate a transfer student;
- provide every transfer student a standardized, substantive course of study in Latin, including two years of Latin beyond the Grammar Stage; and
- equip every upper-level transfer student with the basic dialectical tools via a standardized, substantive course of study in Logic.

Latin

Mars Hill Academy begins teaching Latin in the third grade and continues Latin training through eighth grade. The plan for transfers who have not had Latin is as follows:

4th Grade - Students entering 4th grade can meet requirements through summer school or tutoring. Upon completion, they will be ready for 4th grade Latin along with the rest of the class.

5th Grade - There are two options for students entering 5th grade. First, students can take summer school or tutoring in an effort to meet requirements for 5th grade Latin. The other option is to take an "alternate track" in Latin. In this case students will take the same Latin class as his or her 5th grade classmates; however, they will not be responsible for translation work. This option is also available to transfer students who took summer school/tutoring but are unable to keep up with the class during the school year. An alternate track student will remain in an alternate track in 6th grade unless he or she can pass a proficiency test prior to the beginning of 6th grade.

6th Grade - Like 5th graders, 6th grade transfers can take an "alternate track" in Latin (see above). They are part of the 6th grade Latin class but are not responsible for translation work. Such students remain alternate track students for the remaining two years of their Latin training (see below).

7th Grade - Students entering 7th grade will be placed in a separate Latin Guided Study (LGS), and will continue in LGS through 8th grade. They will work through the Wilson and Jenny Latin textbooks under the direction of a Latin teacher.

8th Grade - 8th grade transfers follow the same Latin Guided Study plan as do 7th grader transfers. However, a second year of Latin Guided Study will be required sometime during the next four years.

9th - 12th Grades - In order to meet graduation requirements, these transfers are required to take two years of Latin Guided Study.

Other

It should be noted that students who take the Latin Guided Study will not have Latin included on their high school transcripts.

None of the transfer plans described above precludes able and willing students from catching up to their classes in Latin. Students who have the desire and will to join their respective classmates are encouraged to do so. We will provide the necessary materials, consultation or tutoring, and testing.

Students who have taken Latin in the past will be tested for their ability to keep pace with their classmates in the regular track.

Logic

Mars Hill Academy teaches Logic in 7th and 8th grades. Students entering in 8th grade and above will take Logic during summer school or through tutoring.

Transfer students who have taken Logic are required to pass a proficiency test based on *Introductory Logic* and *Intermediate Logic* by Douglas Wilson and James Nance.

Admission

Admissions Procedures

- Prior to completing the application, please call the office for a copy of the Grammar School Handbook (grades K-6) and/or Rhetoric School Handbook (grades 7-12). A few questions in the application refer to information in these handbooks.
- Upon return of a completed application, if a family interview has not already been scheduled, one will be arranged with the Headmaster.
- After the interview the Headmaster will review the family's application together with any relevant entrance test results and make a decision whether or not to admit the family to the Mars Hill Academy community.
- The Headmaster will then notify the parents in writing with the decision regarding acceptance. If accepted, the parents will receive a letter of acceptance and a transfer of records form if the student attended another school previously.
- All financial arrangements between the family and Mars Hill Academy must be understood before an admission is considered final. It is the responsibility of the applicant's parents to obtain and submit all forms necessary to receive financial assistance.
- The family is strongly encouraged to attend the annual summer picnic in July and other parent meetings throughout the year.

Admissions Requirements for Students

- A child entering Kindergarten must have reached the age of five years by July 31 in the same year he would be entering Mars Hill Academy.
- A child entering first grade must have reached the age of six years by July 31 in the same year he would be entering Mars Hill Academy.
- If a child has successfully completed the previous school year, and his schoolwork and behavior compare favorably to the comparable grade at Mars Hill Academy, the child will likely be placed in the grade for which he is applying. *However, if through the administration of Mars Hill Academy's entrance tests or other evidence it is determined that the child may not be adequately prepared for the next sequential grade level, it may be necessary that he repeat the previous grade.*
- The child should understand that his parents have delegated their authority to the school. Therefore, he is subject to the instruction and discipline of the teachers and Headmaster in their prescribed roles at Mars Hill Academy.
- In general practice, if the student and parents comply with the requirements outlined here Mars Hill Academy will admit students of any race, to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to all students, Mars Hill Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color or national origin on the administration of its policies, admissions, scholarships, athletic and other school-directed programs.

Admission Requirements for Parents

- Though not required to be professing Christians, the parents of Mars Hill Academy students should have a clear understanding of the biblical philosophy and purpose of Mars Hill Academy. This understanding includes a willingness to have their child exposed to the clear teaching of the school's Statement of Faith and Vision Statement in frequent and various ways within the school's program.
- The parents should be willing to cooperate with all the written policies of Mars Hill Academy. This is most important in the area of discipline (see Conduct and Discipline in the handbook), and schoolwork standards, as well as active communication with the respective teachers and administration.

Mars Hill Academy Tuition and Fees 2003-2004

I. Registration Fee

Non-refundable fee due at time of registration:

Before May 1 st	\$175 per child
May 1 st through July 1 st	\$250 per child
After July 1 st	\$400 per child

II. Tuition Fee

Kindergarten	\$2,970
Grammar School (1-6)	\$4,950
Rhetoric Schools (7-12)	\$5,570

Financial Aid is available to qualifying families.

III. Tuition Payment Schedule

There are three (3) options for tuition payment:

1. One payment for full tuition, due by July 1, 2003.
2. Ten equal installments with the first due by July 1, 2003.
The remaining payments are due by the first of each month ending on April 1, 2004.
3. Twelve equal installments with the first due by July 1, 2003.
The remaining eleven payments are due on the first of each month ending on June 1, 2004.

Each family is responsible to select a payment plan upon admission. Late fees are assessed to each family in the amount of \$25 per month if tuition is not paid within five working days of the due date. The MHA Policy Manual contains information applicable to all accounts delinquent for 30 or more days.