

Hybrid Academy Q & A with Martha Herndon, Director of CHLG

Q: What is your educational/professional background?

A: I hold a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Oklahoma Baptist University and a Master of Arts in Educational Foundations from Boston College. I have worked as a teacher and/or child development specialist (in Children's Hospital settings) for fourteen years. I also have experience with homeschooling, as I taught one of my daughters from home from Kindergarten through 4th grade. In July of 2010 I took over the directorship of Capitol Hill Learning Group after three years of teaching at CHLG. I'm married to Christopher and we live on the Hill with our five children.

Q: When will the Hybrid Academy classes meet?

A: The Hybrid Academy will meet on the same days, at the same times, and in the same location as our preschool classes (T,Th and F from 9:00-12:45 at 433 9th St, NE WDC 20002). If you so choose, your younger children (2.5 and up) could potentially attend CHLG with the same schedule as your Kindergarten or First Grade student (as long as space was available).

Q: How many students do you anticipate for the class?

A: No less than 6 and no more than 10. We cap the classes at 10 children because a smaller class size means more individualized attention and also allows the teacher greater ease in adapting to the learning styles of the individual students.

Q: Will parent volunteer hours be required?

A: The class will have a dedicated teacher but will also contain a cooperative element (as do our other CHLG classes), though the duty days served for the Hybrid Academy will be fewer than those for our preschool classes. Hybrid Academy families will serve an average of five duty days for the school year.

Q: How is the Christian aspect of the school implemented?

A: First and foremost our teachers work from the basis of a Christian worldview, both in their example as Christian character models and in training, discipline and correction of the students. Personally I'm more concerned about the state of my child's heart toward God and his/her character than I am in where he/she is functioning academically, and I want to see the Hybrid Academy reflect that. While Bible classes are not a part of the regular school day, each week the children study a different character trait and memorize a Bible verse to go along with that trait. Parents are also be provided with Biblical texts and related lesson plans which connect to the weekly character trait. Additionally, prayer is a typical part of the student's time in the classroom and whenever the Christian worldview is implicit in what is being

taught connections will be made. I also encourage families involved in the program to share resources as a group and discuss things that have been helpful in the spiritual training of their children.

Q: What educational philosophy is followed?

A: I'm eclectic in my approach, but lean most heavily toward the Classical and Charlotte Mason methods. Below are summaries of each method (taken from the book *100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum*) to give you an idea of each methodology.

Charlotte Mason Method

Through her many years of teaching, Mason determined that there were better ways to teach children that stimulated a love for learning and helped children retain knowledge more effectively than traditional methods, all while respecting the nature of the child. She believed in a child's innate ability and desire to learn and the need for teachers to restrain themselves from controlling all learning. Mason said: *"The children might echo Wordsworth's complaint of 'the world,' and say the teacher is too much with us, late and soon. Everything is directed, expected, suggested. No other personality out of the book, picture, or song, no not even that of Nature herself, can get at the children without the mediation of the teacher. No room is left for spontaneity or personal initiation on their part."*

Even so, Mason was not an advocate of unschooling. She believed in directed learning as well as teaching a child self-discipline and good habits. She says, *"Even the child who has gained the habit of attention to things, finds words a weariness. This is a turning-point in a child's life, and the moment for the mother's tact and vigilance. . . Never let the child dawdle over copybook or sum, sit dreaming with his book before him. When a child grows stupid over a lesson, it is time to put it away. Let him do another lesson as unlike the last as possible, and then go back with freshened wits to his unfinished task."*

To read more about the Charlotte Mason method I suggest ***A Charlotte Mason Education*** and ***More Charlotte Mason Education*** by Catherine Levinson.

Classical Method

Classical education is based on models of learning that go back to the Middle Ages, although its earliest roots lay in the Greek and Roman civilizations. Dorothy Sayers was one of a number of scholars who repopularized this method of learning in the twentieth century. Two current proponents of classical education, Gene Veith Jr. and Andrew Kern, tell us in the introduction to their book on the subject: *"Classical education provides a conceptual framework for mastering the entire range of objective knowledge. It also offers a theory of human character development, and contains a teaching methodology that is demonstrably effective and eminently practical. Classical education cultivates wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness and beauty."*

Personally, I think the greatest value of classical education is that it engages learners with the most important ideas- ideas about God, about life, about purpose. Classical education challenges the vocational orientation of most modern education by concentrating on learning that forms the inner person. At the same time, classical students learn how to think, how to learn independently, and how to present their own ideas- all of which ultimately prepares them for a wide range of vocations.

To read more on the Classical model I recommend *The Well Trained Mind*, by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise-Bauer.

Q: Do you anticipate continuing with this model into later grades in the coming years?

A: My hope and prayer is that we would be able to open up to higher grades (following our oldest class into the next grade each year). If there's interest from families and an option for housing the program we will certainly pursue expanding into upper grades. A hybrid modeled school is something I've dreamed of as far as educating my two youngest children, so I have a vested interest in seeing it happen.

Q: Assuming that additional grade levels became possible, what might those upper grades look like?

A: As far as what the ongoing grades might look like, I envision the educational philosophy to continue to be an eclectic approach that includes the Classical and Charlotte Mason methods. As far as time in the classroom, it would probably be the same three mornings a week, although the amount of work at home would increase with increasing grade levels. As far as what would be taught/what curriculum might be used in the upper grades, that will be work for another day :-).

Q: What will the Kindergarten class time look like?

A: Class time will be used to build on what the children already know as well as encourage a love for learning. The focus will be on early reading, math and writing skills, and art and music will also be important elements of the program. There will be lots of hands on activities that are geared towards peaking the interest of every child and encouraging involvement in the learning process. An important component of class time will be the furthering of each child's level of confidence as he/she acquires new material.

Q: What would my time working with my Kindergartner on schoolwork look like?

A: You would be committing to work with your Kindergartner at home for approximately four to five hours a week as directed by the teacher. This work will be geared to your child (as opposed to traditional homework where every student is doing the same work), and much of this work will be game based (read: fun). I tend to agree with the authors of *The Well Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education*

at Home that formal academic instruction is often lost on children of this age. Therefore, the work you do with your child at home will be geared toward teaching "as you go" with your child's unique abilities and learning style in mind.

When it comes to the work you're doing at home with your child, the teacher's job will be to help guide you with ideas and provide you with resources to expand your child's skills (such as providing math games for you to take home, making suggestions for getting your child interested in writing, and providing ideas in how to use your child's interest in drawing to expand his/her interest in literature, etc.).

To give you an idea of what your work at home might look like let's consider reading. Independent reading will be an important tool for your child to master by first grade (if possible) but it doesn't need to be pushed. If you spend fifteen minutes a day with your child in a good reading primer you'll be amazed at how he/she will pick up on reading over the course of the school year.

Q: Are there events on the two days that the children are not in class (Mondays and Wednesdays)?

A: As the director I make field trip suggestions and then the participating families work together to schedule field trips for some Mondays and Wednesdays. These trips are optional (the idea being that whoever is able to come attends with their family-siblings are welcome). This gives our children the chance to be together on some of the days that we don't have class and also allows us to build a closer knit community among the families involved. I also organize an optional gymnastics class for those who are interested which meets after school on Thursdays at PG Sports and Learning Complex, and siblings are also welcome to participate in this class.

Q: Tuition costs?

A: 2012-2013 tuition for Kindergarten will be \$350/month (\$3500 for the year), and for First Grade will be \$400/month (\$4000 for the year). What you are receiving for your tuition dollars is what I like to call "efficient learning". A typical school setting requires six plus hours of time to accomplish a day's learning due to large student/teacher ratios. A small class size combined with individual work that you complete with your child at home means more is accomplished in less time. Another plus is that, in your work with your child at home, you will have direct access to the help of a teacher who already knows your child and his/her learning style and strengths/weaknesses. Lastly, the model provides you with more time to interact with your child, giving you the opportunity to teach your child "as you go" (and not just in academic areas, but in the more important areas of knowing and loving God and character training).

Q: What is required as far as enrollment paperwork?

A: The requirements for enrollment paperwork will be in keeping with our other licensed

CHLG classes. This means that you would be required to fill out all required registration and enrollment documents and would need to have your pediatrician and dentist fill out the health forms for your child as required by the licensing division of the District of Columbia. Additionally, you would be required to have your doctor complete paperwork for you (including a tuberculin skin test- PPD) due to the fact that you would be volunteering in the classroom. Click on the "forms" tab to find more information about what is required in the way of enrollment forms.

Q: Does CHLG require parent involvement other than the required volunteer hours in the classroom?

A: CHLG parents are also asked to volunteer in small ways to help keep the school running smoothly (like committing to one Saturday work day during the course of the school year and signing up for a volunteer duty such as helping out with our annual Open House in February or cleaning carpets two times during the school year).

Q: Will a deposit be required to hold a spot for my child in the Hybrid Academy?

A: As is the case with our preschool classes, a deposit equal to two months of tuition will be required to hold your child's spot. This deposit will be used for tuition for May 2013 and June 2013 (the last two months of school). As is our current policy, the deposit would be forfeited if you were to withdraw your child from the program for any reason, no exceptions.