

Academy Traits

Characteristics of our Academy

Liberal Education

The Latin term “liber” means “free,” and a liberal education is one that embraces free thought. Though there are many ways in which one might characterize the school, our foremost goal is the provision of a liberal education. Our students work hard and might sometimes feel constrained by the obligations that such work entails, but the end result of such work is truly liberating, and a liberal education is the most noble pursuit available to a citizen of a free society that has institutionalized the values of individual freedom, free speech, and free elections. In such a society, a liberal education is indispensable.

Great Books

Dr. Mortimer Adler, a chief architect of the curriculum and canon behind our approach, spoke of three key criteria for including a book on the “great books” list: the book has contemporary significance; that is, it has relevance to the problems and issues of our times; the book is inexhaustible — it can be read again and again with benefit; the book is relevant to a large number of the great ideas and great issues that have occupied the minds of thinking individuals for the last 25 centuries. In his book *The Six Great Ideas*, Dr. Adler identified truth, goodness, beauty, justice, liberty, and equality as key among the ideas that have characterized the great works of the Western tradition. Throughout our course of study, students return to those great ideas and works that have shaped the culture in which we live and have the power to shape our understanding of ourselves and the human condition.

Core Curriculum

As you know, there are virtually no electives at Archway Classical Academy. All students have the opportunity to explore a full range of subjects, some of which will surprise them. Students often find that they enjoy a subject much more than they’d expected to, sometimes find that they are better at a subject than they had expected to be, and

occasionally find a subject more challenging than they had expected. In any event, every student is sure to find his horizons broadening as he delves into areas that he would have left unexplored, given the opportunity only to indulge the whims of inexperience.

Socratic Method

Those who have read the dialogues of Plato and who have attended a Humane Letters seminar will have noticed that the two differ in some ways. Their common feature, though, is their emphasis on inquiry as the device through which ideas are explored. A key idea or assignment might require that the teacher present material to the class, but the forward progress of the class through the ideas it explores is driven by the questions that the teacher asks of the students, the answers that they give, and the further questions that those answers inspire. In that sense, then, the school certainly follows a Socratic model. Liberal education, which consists in the constant intercourse with the greatest minds, is a training in the highest form of modesty, not to say of humility. It is at the same time a training in boldness: it demands from us the complete break with the noise, the rush, the thoughtlessness, the cheapness of the Vanity Fair of the intellectuals as well as of their enemies. It demands from us the boldness implied in the resolve to regard the accepted views as mere opinions, or to regard the average opinions as extreme opinions which are at least as likely to be wrong as the most strange or the least popular opinions. Liberal education is liberation from vulgarity. The Greeks had a beautiful word for “vulgarity”; they called it *apeirokalia*, lack of experience in things beautiful. Liberal education supplies us with experience in things beautiful.

–Leo Strauss 1899-1973

Uniforms

The uniforms that students wear at Archway Classical Academy are intended as constant reminders to the students that we do not derive our identity from what we wear; rather, we derive it from what we believe, say, and do. In a similar sense, then, the school itself derives its identity from the beliefs and actions that form its mission and identity, rather than from its buildings and façade, which speaks only in a very limited way about who we really are, what we really are, as a school.

Non-discrimination policy:

Archway Classical Academy | North Phoenix is a not-for-profit, publicly-funded charter school and does not discriminate in its enrollment or hiring practices on the basis of gender, race, religion, national origin or disability.