



Westminster Academy

2022-2023 Student & Family Handbook

Introduction

Welcome

Westminster Academy was founded in 2021 by Angelyn E. Dodson with the intent of merging all the best aspects of conventional educational methods, culminating in the most efficient and excellent model of education. Join us as we **redefine education** at Westminster Academy.

Mission

Westminster Academy's primary goal is to make accessible to every student in Berks and Montgomery County, PA a rigorous and faith-based education together with all of the benefits, resources, and privileges of a private school regardless of financial background or status. Our secondary objective is to educate the whole student by promoting spiritual and personal growth, encouraging ample opportunity for charitable & philanthropic work, and creating an individual learning and post-grad plan for each student with the intent of developing the most well-rounded alumni who are prepared to serve others in every aspect of their lives.

Vision

We strive to combine the rigor and academia of a private school with the individuality, flexibility, and creativity of homeschooling and to merge the two with the financial accessibility offered at a public or charter school. The foundation of our school is a classical Christian curriculum which emphasizes reading, writing, languages, critical thought, and problem solving. From there, we work to develop an individualized learning plan for *every single student* to meet the needs, interests, and learning styles of each student. Additionally, we are committed to crafting an individual financial plan for every single family with the goal of making an exceptional education accessible to any student, regardless of financial status or background.

As our students mature, we want to provide them with additional experiences and resources (philanthropic, career oriented, personal development, etc.) to become the most well-rounded versions of themselves, equipped to serve those around them and to contribute meaningfully to the world at large. Our philosophy is that education is less a system of memorizing information and more a lifelong process of becoming a thoughtful and compassionate individual, equipped with the ability to face unfamiliar circumstances, tackle obstacles, and to learn and work with confidence, light, and love. We prepare our students not simply for the workforce, but for the world.

Statement of Faith

1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Bible to be the only inerrant and inspired Word of God. Therefore, it is the supreme and final authority for all matters of faith and conduct. In all of our classes and coursework, we use & reference the Authorized King James version. (Ps. 12:6-7, 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

2. The Trinity

We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. (Gen. 1:26, John 10:30, 14:10, 26)

3. God the Son

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, and in His miracles. We believe that He died the cursed death of the cross in order to save His people from their sins; we believe in His bodily resurrection, and in His ascension to the right hand of His Father where He rules as King. (Is. 7:14, 9:6, John 1:1-3, Matthew 1:21)

4. The Creation of the World and Man

We believe that it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to create the world and all things in it, visible or invisible. We believe that man was created by the direct spoken word of God and in the image of God; we believe that God creates each person as male or female, and that these two distinct, complementary genders reflect the image and nature of man. (Gen. 1:1-2:7, Ps. 139:13-16, Col. 1:16-17)

5. The Fall of Man

We believe that Adam and Eve were created sinless but fell into sin by eating the forbidden fruit, thereby incurring physical and spiritual death (separation from God) for themselves and all of their posterity. As a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature, are totally depraved, and all fall short of the glory of God. (Gen. 3:1-24, Rom. 3:10-12, 23, 5:12)

6. Sanctification

We believe that the Holy Spirit sanctifies the hearts of believers by removing the corruption of their sin and working to make us more like Christ, enabling us to do good works and to live lives exemplified by the fruit of the Spirit. (Eph. 4:24, 2 Cor. 5:17, 7:1, Gal. 5:22-25)

7. Family Relationships

We believe that God has established the family as the foundation of all human society. The husband is to love his wife, as Christ loves the church, and he is to submit to the headship of Christ. The wife is to reverence her husband, as the church reveres and submits to Christ. We believe that children are a blessing from God and are commanded to obey and honor their parents in all things lawful. We also believe that parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them through consistent lifestyle, example, and appropriate admonition, correction and discipline. (Ex. 20:12, Ps. 127: 3-5, Mark 10:6-9, Eph. 5:21-33, 6:1-4)

8. Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God and in His image. We believe that all human life is to be valued including unborn babies, the aged, the physically or mentally disabled, and every other stage or condition from natural conception until natural death. We believe, therefore, that we are called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Job 3:16, Ps. 51:5, Ps. 139:14-16, Is. 49: 1, 5, Jer. 1:5)

9. Human Sexuality

We believe that God created marriage to be exclusively the union of one man and one woman and that intimate acts of sexual activity are to occur exclusively within that union. We believe that any acts of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transgenderism, adultery, or pornography are perversions of God's gift of human sexuality. We also believe that God created two genders and abhors the practice of either portraying oneself as something other than the gender of birth or formally changing gender by reassignment. (Gen. 1:27, 2:24, Lev. 18:1-30, Matt. 19:4-6, Rom. 1:26-29, Heb. 13:4)

10. Keeping of Holy Days

We believe that the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath (commonly called Sunday), is the only day to be set apart for holy use. Therefore, we do not acknowledge or celebrate any other commonly celebrated holidays (such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc.), as they are founded in paganism, not true Christianity. (Ex. 20:8-11, Deut. 12:32, Matt. 15:9, Col. 2:23)

11. Final Authority for Belief and Conduct

This statement of faith does not exhaust our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the alone infallible and inspired Word of God which speaks with final authority concerning all matters of truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all we believe.

Educational Philosophy

Methodology

We make use of a classically minded program, and our intention is to teach students the fundamentals and rules of each subject (grammar stage), the ordered relationships between each subject (logic stage), and how the grammar and logic of each subject can be effectively communicated (rhetoric stage). We strive to teach our students how to think and how to think about thinking; this type of learning fully engages the student in the learning process.

Worldview

We strive to provide an education that is full of truth, beauty, and goodness. Our hope is for our students to grow in grace, love, humility, kindness, faithfulness, patience, and self-control. We believe that throughout a student's education, teachers help to build a lens through which each student learns to view the world. We would like to partner with parents to build a biblical worldview for our students. As we interact with our students on a daily basis, we are not only imparting knowledge of specific subjects, but knowledge of God as well.

The Classical Model

In the classical model of education, learning is separated into three stages: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. These stages are referred to as the "trivium." During the grammar stage (1st-4th grades), students are taught the foundational knowledge of each subject. The focus is on gathering and memorizing information. As students enter the logic stage (5th-8th grades), they go beyond basic comprehension skills to make comparisons, examine cause and effect, and answer the question of "why?" They learn how different fields of study relate to each other and they practice making logical connections. In the final stage of rhetoric (9th-12th grades), students learn how to express themselves purposefully and meaningfully. They are taught how to speak and write with clarity, focus, and intention.

1. Grammar Stage: The grammar stage encompasses the concrete phase of learning. The focus is on mastering the foundations of language, mathematics, science, history, and Latin. We utilize a phonics-based system to teach reading and encourage memorization of the core concepts of these disciplines.
2. Logic Stage: The goal of the logic school is to transition students from a concrete mode of thinking to a more critical mode of thinking. Rather than mere memorization of new information, the logic school emphasizes analytical reasoning and how knowledge relates to other knowledge. The formal study of logic is introduced during this phase in order to help students understand the process of asking questions in order to arrive at valid conclusions.
3. Rhetoric Stage: The final phase of classical schooling focuses on abstract learning. During these years, the foundational knowledge of the grammar school is combined with the critical thinking of the logic school in order to articulate clearly to others reasonable opinions and conclusions through debates and persuasive writing. Communication is the central feature of the rhetoric school.

Policies & Procedures

Registration in District

Westminster Academy is an umbrella academy. This means that each of our students is registered as a homeschooled student in his/her district. This requires submitting a notarized affidavit and statement of educational objectives to the superintendent of your district at the beginning of the school year. This is the responsibility of the parent, but we are here to assist you in this process. It also requires that an evaluation must be completed at the end of the school year: the academy will provide an evaluation. However, submitting the results of the evaluation to the school district is the responsibility of the parent. Additionally, students in 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades are required to complete standardized testing. We will set aside two days in the spring to complete this testing.

Student Rules of Conduct

- No talking back or arguing with a parent, teacher, administrator, or staff member is ever permitted.
- Morning devotional time and prayer are to be treated with respect. Joking around or foolish behavior are absolutely unacceptable during this time.
- Speaking out of turn during class is not permitted; a student is expected to raise his or her hand before speaking.
- Students are expected to treat their fellow students with respect and kindness; teasing, mocking, criticizing, name calling, and any other speech or behavior that could be harmful is absolutely unacceptable.
- Vulgarities, obscenities, or any other bad language is unacceptable.
- Working diligently and concentrating on the task at hand is expected of each student during class time.
- Snacks/lunches/any food is only to be eaten during designated snack times or lunch. Students are expected to be neat and to clean up after themselves.
- Walking, not running/skipping/jumping/etc., is expected inside the school building.
- Recess is part of the school day: all of these rules still apply, and a student is expected to remain within the yard at all times when outside.
- All class materials, supplies, furniture, and the property at large should be treated with respect and decency.
- Vapes, e-cigarettes, any sort of drugs/alcohol/cigarettes are absolutely prohibited as well as any sort of weaponry.
- Physical fighting, wrestling, hitting, etc. is completely prohibited.

- Cell phones are permissible, but the ringer must be off, and if taken out during class time, the phone will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.
- Breaking any of these rules will result in a strict warning after the first offense, a meeting with the parents after the second offense, and serious consideration of expulsion from the school after the third offense.

Student Dress Code

- Underwear/undergarments must be covered at all times.
- The midriff must be covered at all times.
- No vulgarity or obscenity is permitted on shirts/sweatshirts/etc.
- Attire should be weather appropriate - coats, gloves, hats, long pants, etc. during the winter.
- Hats and sunglasses may be worn to school, but not during class; they should be in your bag.
- No headphones/earbuds allowed, especially during class.
- No jewelry.
- Dress should be overall neat and appropriate.

If a student's attire is found to be unacceptable, the parent will be notified and asked to come to school immediately with a change of clothes.

Absence/Sick Day

If a student will be absent, please notify a teacher/administrator at least 24 hours in advance. If a student needs a sick day, please notify the school the morning of. Please keep students home if they have had a fever or vomiting in the last 24 hours.

Snow Day/Inclement Weather

Snow days or other school cancellations will be announced the morning of, and parents will be notified by 7:30 a.m. via text and email.