



What does it mean to be a Catholic School in the Classical Tradition?

When a student enrolls at Saint Rita School, we seek to instill in him or her not merely knowledge and skills, but wonder and appreciation for God’s creation, a desire for goodness, truth, and beauty, and a sense of how to live a virtuous life. This philosophy, based on our understanding of the unique dignity of the human person and his relationship to his Creator and all creation, underscores our motto that “the soul of education is the education of a soul.”

At Saint Rita, we intentionally select the content from millennia of Christian and Western tradition as the source material for our humanities and arts classes. We arrange our students’ educational journey along one big timeline, broken into four periods. Organizing our content into historical timelines helps emphasize the divine purpose to History; learning about long-dead civilizations also helps us understand our own era and our future direction. We tell history as an unfolding and compelling *story*, a story that helps tie together historical developments in the Church, in science and technology, and in literature and the arts. We aim to integrate all of these subjects in a holistic and comprehensible way. The time periods and accompanying grade levels are as follows:

Ancient World (1st & 5th Grades): These grades encounter the worlds of Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, including the great myths and epics like *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*.

Medieval (2nd and 6th Grades): During these years, students immerse themselves in the world of Robin Hood, monasteries, medieval warfare, and Arthurian legends.

Early Modern (3rd and 7th Grades): The age of exploration and the colonization of the new world take center stage in these grades. Students explore the birth of the modern world, all the way through the American Revolution and legacy of the Founding Fathers.

Modern (4th and 8th Grades): These years of study cover the period from the American Civil War to the present, bringing students’ years-long survey of history to our world today.

Because our students cycle through these time periods twice, it creates built-in partner grades where the older and younger students studying the same time period can work together on projects, help each other memorize historical pieces, or even take field trips together to museums and other historical sites.

In our curriculum, we structure our time to facilitate the integration of history with art, music, and language arts - including reading, literature, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. We call this integrated time *Humanities*, and it is typically taught by the same teacher. Students' reading skills improve as they enjoy, dissect, and discuss the great literature of the time period they are studying. They hone their writing skills in narratives, poems, and essays inspired by the historical people and events they are studying, the questions that they wrestled with, and how those events or debates impact life today. Our historical perspective also infuses our fine arts curriculum, as students study the music and art of their historical time period, with an emphasis on the artistic masterpieces of the Christian tradition. Alongside Humanities, students discover more about the Creator by observing and investigating His creation. Studying science and mathematics helps our students think clearly, work sequentially, and solve problems effectively. Perhaps even more importantly, the logic, order, and beauty of these disciplines reflect something profound in the Divine Nature.

While technology is a useful tool under the right circumstances, we introduce our students, wherever possible, to primary sources and work from the text to build comprehension and analytical skills. This could look like a class of middle schoolers sitting down to dissect the *Declaration of Independence* in a Socratic seminar, but it also could be a group of primary students looking at a Rembrandt painting, explaining a point from the Catechism, acting out a scene from *As You Like It*, or listening to and singing the music of our national anthem.

We do have a recently upgraded computer lab and two class sets of chromebooks available for students to hone their typing, editing, and researching skills, as age appropriate, but we have made an intentional choice to minimize screen time at school, especially for our youngest students. Our classrooms are full of questioning and discussing, reading and writing, reciting and presenting, play acting and experimenting. They are not full of computers. We want our students, immersed in screens since infancy, to be surrounded with human interaction, in a way that fosters relationships, virtue, and empathy as well as clear communication and effective collaboration skills.

Most importantly, our Faith infuses all that we do. Our day is punctuated with prayer and hymns. In decorating, we prioritize sacred art and images of the saints. Our week revolves around the celebration of the Mass and time spent in Eucharistic Adoration and Confession. Our year highlights the liturgical seasons and traditions through which we live out our Faith. We believe learning should be integrated, holistic, personal, and aimed at knowing, understanding, and expressing Truth. Ultimately, we want our students to clearly and effectively read, write, listen, think, speak, problem-solve, and create. Armed with these skills, our graduates will be better able to deflect the attacks and confusion of the culture and hold fast to the Truth, not just for themselves but to build up the Kingdom of God.