



Covenant Classical School Fine Arts Philosophy and Program

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”

- Psalm 34:8

“The entire object of true education is to make people not merely do the right things, but enjoy the right things—not merely industrious, but to love industry—not merely learned, but to love knowledge—not merely pure, but to love purity—not merely just, but to hunger and thirst after justice.”

- John Ruskin

“To be fully human involves a certain stance toward the things of creation: delighting in things without seeking security in them.”

- Gilbert Meilander

“The conscious celebration of the beauty of God is the end toward which the whole creation is drawn.”

- Belden C. Lane

Philosophy of the Arts

Summary

The Covenant Classical School arts program is focused on teaching our students to love what is beautiful. We want to develop students' aesthetic sensibilities so that they may delight in the beauty and glory of God. We believe the Scriptures teach us to contemplate and to imitate what is good and beautiful. Psalm 27:4 says,

One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in his temple.

And, the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:8-9,

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and

received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul teaches us that when we behold what is truly beautiful, namely God's glory, it transforms us. He says, "and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus, seeing and thinking about beauty is not a passive cognitive exercise, it is a transformational, soul-changing experience. When we see God's glory, we are changed.

The arts provide us a unique privilege to see what is beautiful, God's glory, in extraordinary ways. Through God's creative work, we see His glory magnificently manifested. As the Psalmist says, "the heavens declare the glory of God" (19:1). Creation is an expression of God's immense power, saving grace, and inexhaustible beauty. The universe is His "handiwork" and it is good (Ps. 19, Gen. 1). In the arts, God's creatures, made in His image, are able to participate in this creative act as sub-creators. We have the opportunity to embody an idea that further manifests God's glory and brings us joy. The arts, then, should be seen both as an act of worship and as a demonstration of God's love for us.

Despite the gracious privilege to see and participate in God's glory, the Fall has impaired our senses. Our desires are tainted by sin, and we are thus attracted to what is ugly, fragmented, temporal, and futile. We are inclined to selfish indulgence through the false belief that sensual pleasure is superior to God's beauty and glory. Thus, the world is saturated with destructive and sinful art. Purely subjective and relativistic artistic expressions trump a submissive, transcendent aesthetic. Therefore, the pursuit of the beautiful in the arts is necessarily redemptive for the Christian. It points to the reality of Christ's redemption, who gave His life to make us "partakers of the divine nature" and enjoy the beauty of God's glory. When we create something good or restore something broken, we are foreshadowing the restoration of all things (1 Cor. 15).

Because of sin, the command to think about what is praiseworthy is difficult, but not lost. The dichotomy of sin and beauty imposes upon us the necessity of aesthetic judgment. Christians are to discern between what is beautiful and what is not. Therefore, in order to fulfill our mission to teach students to "live and think according to a Christ-centered worldview," we must take this command seriously.

Therefore, CCS will teach students to think deeply and biblically about the nature of beauty. Our students will learn to engage the arts in both the context of Scripture and of Western civilization. Students will be taught to embrace the arts as a creation mandate (Gen. 1:28), an act of worship, and an act of service to others. Students will be challenged to think about beauty in light of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the harmony of the universe.

Throughout the CCS arts program, students will also be introduced to a variety of artistic media, primarily the fine arts. The fine arts are those arts created for the particular purpose of aesthetic enjoyment. This will primarily include visual art, music, and drama. Each respective art will be understood according to its own particular principles and skills. Students will follow

a progression in accordance with the stages of learning central to the CCS philosophy of education.

In addition to teaching students to think about and create what is beautiful, every component of the school should reflect the principles stated in the arts vision. Thus classrooms, hallways, school grounds, teacher/student dress, programs for events, the school website, decorum, etc. should all model and embody what is true, good, and beautiful. Integrating great examples of art throughout the school will provide models for our students of what we are endeavoring to teach. A group of teachers and administrators will be designated to provide assistance in fulfilling the aesthetic vision for the school.

Purpose Statement

The arts program of Covenant Classical School seeks to develop the aesthetic sensibilities of students so that they may delight in the beauty and glory of God.

- **Develop** – Develop means cultivate and refine. Students will be taught to enjoy, identify, imitate, discern, and create beautiful art.
- **Aesthetic** – The word '*aesthetic*' refers to the nature and expression of beauty. It is imperative that students learn to sense the true, good, and beautiful. This is found first and foremost in the being of God and secondarily in His creation. Our primary emphasis is to develop the students' discernment regarding what is beautiful and enable them to make informed aesthetic judgments.
- **Sensibilities** – By sensibilities we simply mean the senses. CCS desires that students learn to employ all their faculties in worshipping God and enjoying His creation. The Scriptures tell us that "whether we eat or drink, do all things to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). As students learn to hear, see, and perceive what is beautiful, their senses become conduits by which to enjoy and express their delight in God's glory.
- **Delight** – Delight is an expression of worship (Ps. 37:4). It means "the enjoyment of all the manifestations of God's glory in the natural world around us." It does not mean passive observation, but engaging the mind, heart, and body to rejoice in God's creation. Delighting in the glory of God means students have an eye for what is beautiful and demonstrate some measure of skill in creating what is beautiful. It should be noted that teachers cannot create this delight because only the Spirit of God can redeem the senses. This makes us completely dependent upon the Lord to accomplish our vision.
- **Glory of God** – The glory of God refers to the manifestation of God's character and attributes. It is through His natural and special revelation that He communicates who He is and what He is like. We are able to delight in those glorious realities when we begin to see Him in everything He has made. The CCS arts program aims to point students to perceive that glory as we strive to see it ourselves.

Goals

The goals of the arts program express what CCS intends for students to perceive, appreciate, know, create, produce, and critique upon completion of the program.

Perception

- Perceive and understand what is beautiful as manifested in creation and in the arts

Appreciation / Delight

- Develop aesthetic sensibilities that allow students to worship and delight in the glory of God

Knowledge / Interrelationships

- Develop a thorough knowledge of the history, nature, purpose, and philosophy of the arts as related to the Scriptures and other fields of knowledge

Creativity

- Demonstrate the unique gift God has given each student to glorify Him through their participation in the arts

Production / Skills

- Develop skills for producing art that glorifies God by reflecting what is true, good, and beautiful

Judgment / Critique

- Make aesthetic judgments about art that reflect a biblical worldview and a discernment of what is beautiful

Arts and the Trivium

At CCS, we believe that students learn best when taught according to their natural inclinations and abilities. Thus, the arts program is reflective of this conviction and aligns with the instructional methods of the school. There are three different emphases in the progression through the arts curriculum that indicate the specific focus for each stage of learning (see chart below). In the Grammar School, the focus will be on poetic experiences with the arts. In the Logic School, practice and skill development will be emphasized. And, in the Rhetoric School, the emphasis will be on performance. As students advance through the program, they will experience the arts, practice doing art, and create some pieces

of their own. The goal in all of these areas is to realize our vision to develop the aesthetic sensibilities of students so that they delight in the beauty and glory of God.

Stage	Emphasis	Goal
Grammar	Poetic experience, Cultivating Senses	Delight in the glory of God
Logic	Practice, Skill Development	Delight in the glory of God
Rhetoric	Performance	Delight in the glory of God

Grammar School (K-6): *Poetic*

In the Grammar School, the instructional emphasis will be primarily poetic. This means that students will be introduced to beautiful arts by experiencing them; that is, through the senses. Students will be trained to hear and see what is good, true, and beautiful. This will be done by providing models for students to observe and imitate. Grammar school will be the beginning of developing the senses to see and hear great works of art and music. Students will be trained to listen for harmony, look for symmetry, and simply to delight in what they experience. They will also be introduced to the basic biblical concepts that undergird musical and artistic expression. This includes worship through singing and other artistic media.

Students will be introduced to art and music history. Students will also begin developing the basic skills of each respective art as they progress through the grammar school. In music, this means learning simple notes and progressing to increasingly more complex harmonies. In art, it means beginning to observe more detailed aspects of great art and copying the masters of the Western tradition. Of experience, practice, and performance, the emphasis in the Grammar School is on experience.

Grammar School Arts Schedule

Kindergarten

- Meets 1 time per week; 30 minutes each class (art classes)
- Meets 2 times per week; 30 minutes each class (music classes)

First Grade

- Meets 1 time per week; 30 minutes each class
- Meets 2 times per week; 30 minutes each class (music classes)

Second Grade

- Meets 1 time per week; 35 minutes each class
- Meets 2 times per week; 35 minutes each class

Third Grade

- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (art classes)
- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (music classes)

Fourth Grade

- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (art classes)
- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (art classes)

Fifth Grade

- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (art classes)
- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (music classes)

Sixth Grade

- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (art classes)
- Meets 2 times per week; 45 minutes each class (music classes)

Logic School (7-8): *Practice*

In the Logic School, the instructional emphasis will be primarily on skill development or practice. Students will continue to be exposed to and to experience great works of art, music, and drama, but they will begin to learn more about the nature of each particular art. This means, for example, distinguishing between music, which is sound organized in time with a definite beginning and end, and art, which is fixed in time. Students will begin delving into the biblical passages that are relevant to the concepts they are studying. They will start thinking more abstractly about the arts and their impact upon culture, the Church, and human experience.

Students in the logic school will begin to learn more music theory, drawing, color schematics, and the fundamentals of dramatic expression. They will probe deeper into Western history to see, not only the great works of art, but to recognize the artists' worldview, as well. Of experience, practice, and performance, the emphasis in the Logic School is on practice.

Students in the Logic School will follow a four semester rotation of semester-long classes (below). This introduces students to a variety of artistic media in more depth than the grammar school. It also allows them to discover areas of interest and integrate ideas across disciplines. Students in eighth grade, by taking one semester of art and one semester of drama, will then have a good sense of which of the two arts they wish to pursue upon entering the Rhetoric School.

Logic School Arts Schedule

	Semester 1	Semester 2
<i>Seventh Grade</i>	Music Appreciation	Art Appreciation/History
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<i>Eighth Grade</i>	Drama	Art

Rhetoric School (9-12): *Performance*

In the Rhetoric School, the instructional emphasis will be on performance. Students will have opportunities to pursue their artistic interests in depth by choosing an art elective. Students will be taught to refine their skill, as well as to think deeply about the meaning and purpose of their work. Opportunities will be provided for students to showcase their work, both inside and outside the school community. High standards of performance will be maintained for all students, particularly school-wide performances, recitations, and special events. Of experience, practice, and performance, the emphasis in the Rhetoric School is on performance.

The capstone Aesthetics class is the culmination of arts instruction at CCS. It involves a rigorous investigation of a Christian philosophy and theology of the arts. The class will allow students to apply critical thinking and reflection through experiencing a variety of artistic media.

The first semester will primarily emphasize an academic inquiry of the arts through biblical, historical, and philosophical texts. Students will wrestle with the changing emphasis and understanding of the arts through myriad theological and philosophical movements in history. They will focus on key thinkers in Christian history and be challenged to engage the Scriptures as a lens to analyze Truth, beauty, and goodness. Students will also explore how theologians have contemplated the nature of beauty and have recognized such beauty in the person of Jesus Christ—particularly in the paradoxes of the incarnation and the cross. These ideas will allow students to contemplate redemption in unique and profound ways.

The second semester will focus on providing opportunities to experience a variety of artistic media through attending plays, going to museums, listening to music, and creating pieces of art (music, paintings, sculptures, etc.). The goal is to cultivate an eye for beauty and God-exalting expressions of art. Gene Edward Veith says that “the perception of beauty in all its forms is the essence of the arts.” If this is true, then simply contemplating the arts is not enough. Providing empirical ways for students to engage the arts will allow them to apply and express the understanding they have acquired during the previous semester (as well as through previous art classes at Covenant).

Rhetoric School Arts Schedule

Ninth-Eleventh Grades

- Students may choose Art or Drama; both classes meet 4 times per week; 45 minutes each class

Twelfth Grade Aesthetics

- Meets 4 times per week; 45 minutes each class

Arts Personnel

Maggie Philpot – Arts Chair, Aesthetics teacher

Kevin Lindholm – K-11 Art

Andrew Jensen – K-7 Music

Luke Longacre – 8th Grade Drama, 9th-11th Drama, School play

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*Ideas for the structure of the arts program came from Ronda Clark at Faith Christian School in Roanoke, VA.