

Chicago Classical Academy

 southloop-living.com/2017/02/chicago-classical-academy/

Guest
Contributor

2/6/2017

High-quality education: The parents' dilemma

Parents begin to worry and strategize about the best school options for their children almost as soon as their little ones are born. Private schools, public schools, religious education, public charter schools, homeschooling... it's overwhelming and stressful, and for many in Chicago there isn't a satisfactory solution.

As a parent of four myself, I share these concerns and struggled to find a suitable option for my oldest. So I joined forces with some other like-minded folks and for the past three years we have been dedicated to bringing the classical model to Chicago. When the time comes for my three younger children to attend school, I look forward to walking them through the doors of [Chicago Classical Academy](#) (ChiClassical).

Our school model

Chicago Classical Academy is a prospective K-12 classical charter school built on the notion that all students benefit from a rich, time-tested curriculum. It will be Chicago's first such school. The classical approach leverages a student's developmental stages and appropriately teaches the mastery of basic content (grammar), development of abstract thought (logic), and the art of expression (rhetoric).

ChiClassical will adopt the Core Knowledge (CK) curriculum in grades K-8. The CK sequence is used across the country in over 1,200 schools of all types, and many more schools supplement their existing programs with CK resources. This sequence integrates content across all subjects, reinforcing the material taught through the lens of each particular discipline. Classical education relies on the mastery of language – written and spoken. Reading will be taught using phonics, students will learn cursive (and be expected to use it), and they will be assigned extensive reading material in all subject areas. In addition, Greek and Latin roots will be studied in third grade and formal instruction in Latin will begin in sixth grade. We will also implement the Singapore math curriculum, the highly successful conceptual approach used by Singapore's school system.



The classical approach has exploded in popularity in the past decade – there are classical charter schools all over the country, serving students from every type of background and preparing these students for a bright and engaged future. ChiClassical is closely modeled after the existing and highly successful classical program shared by 16 classical charter schools across the country, including urban classical schools in New York, Savannah, Phoenix, and Nashville (among others). The existing 16 sister schools demonstrate the incredible progress that can be made by students of all backgrounds and abilities with this model, and their success has resulted in high demand. With over 7,500 students enrolled, there's an average waiting list of almost 400 students (and three of these schools are in their first year of operation!).

Selecting the South Loop as the home for ChiClassical

The South Loop is a diverse, vibrant, family-oriented neighborhood that has experienced consistent growth over the past decade. There are many young families that are underserved by current school options, and our research indicates that over half of the families choose to leave the neighborhood once their children are ready for school. Despite the large number of families leaving, over the past three years the number of children living in the South Loop has increased by 24% – and the trend does not seem to be ebbing.



ChiClassical would provide both the families considering leaving and new families moving in with the option for a highly sought after curriculum model right in the neighborhood. There are currently five selective enrollment public schools in Chicago that offer a classical curriculum. These schools are high-performing and in high demand, but the selective enrollment process determines which students attend. Many of the prestigious private schools in the Chicago area also follow a classical approach, but the tuition can be unaffordable for many families. As a public, tuition-free, open-enrollment school, ChiClassical will offer the benefits of a classical education to all families who choose this option.

Laying ChiClassical's foundation

Our team has been laying the groundwork for ChiClassical over the past few years – writing the curriculum plan, studying best practices across the charter school network here in the city, and visiting classical schools across the country. We have been meeting with local churches, daycares, and afterschool centers. We are developing relationships with aldermen and other representatives. We have been meeting with supporters and donors, as fundraising at the initial stages is critical for a charter school to succeed. We are working with IFF, a non-profit real-estate advisor and lender, to determine our ideal facility needs and are exploring the options available for our school.



In the next few months we will be submitting our official proposal to Chicago Public Schools. The application review process lasts until November. Upon approval, we will have a year to execute on our plans to open our doors in the fall of 2018. We will initially enroll students into grades K-5, adding one grade per year until we grow to a full K-12 unified campus. We will maintain an intimate setting by keeping grade sizes at around 50 students, with two classes per grade.

Learn more and get involved!

Visit [our website](#) to learn more about who we are and how our efforts are progressing. You can also [read more about the school and its origins here](#). Please [contact us](#) to find out how you can get involved and/or share any concerns you may have about Chicago Classical Academy.

In fact, we'd love your feedback right now! We believe it's critical to engage prospective parents and the community from the beginning. As a new school, we have the amazing opportunity to reflect the needs and desires of local families and incorporate individual preferences, while providing a unifying and engaging academic atmosphere. This is a unique opportunity for both the founding school board and any prospective parents. We have developed a *Parent Survey* to learn more about local families and involve parents from the onset. Your input is critical! Here are links to the survey:

- [Parent Survey in English](#)
- [Parent Survey in Spanish](#)

To be the first to learn when enrollment officially begins, please fill out an [intent to enroll form](#).