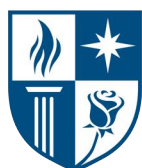


A PARENTS' GUIDE TO
**CHOOSING A
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN ROCHESTER**



Rochester
Classical Academy

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO
**CHOOSING A
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN ROCHESTER**

© 2024 All Rights Reserved

Published by

Rochester Classical Academy
1775 East Ave
Rochester, NY 14610
www.rochesterclassicalacademy.org

INTRODUCTION

There are few decisions in the life of a Christian more important than the decision regarding the education of one's children. Christian parents understand the need to provide a solid academic, social, and spiritual foundation so that their children can be successful as they grow and mature into adults.

In the past, parents would simply look to the neighborhood public school to take care of the needs of their children. Now there are far more choices—charter schools, online schools, private schools, and homeschooling, with many more decisions buried inside each of these categories. With the increased number of choices also comes the difficulty of evaluating all of the available options. Where should parents begin? What kinds of questions should they ask? How can they make the best decision for their families and feel confident about moving forward?

We have prepared this guide in an effort to serve parents as they evaluate their educational choices in the Rochester area. All families will order their priorities differently but we find that the criteria parents use to make their decisions generally fall into the nine categories below.



FAITH FOUNDATION

One of the primary reasons parents send their children to a Christian school is to preserve continuity between what the parents teach at home, what the children hear at church, and what the students learn at school. Christian schools of all types dedicate time each week to teach the Bible as a subject, hold chapel worship services, and engage in prayer. For parents who want their children to graduate with a solid biblical worldview, however, it is important to consider more than these three elements.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- Are Christian beliefs and practices expressed throughout all subjects and classes, or are they reserved for Bible class, chapel, and prayer?
- Are students receiving a comprehensive view of the Bible or is the school selecting only certain stories, passages, or teachings?
- How are difficult texts and interpretations handled? How are denominational differences considered within the classroom?
- How does the school compare Christianity to other worldviews? Are students being equipped to make decisions about what they believe?
- Are the teachers prepared to engage with students' deep theological questions? Are other students encouraged to engage in socratic discussion?
- Are students taught the need to share their faith? Can they articulate what they believe and do they understand the need to do so?
- Are students at the school being shown what a heart of service looks like?
- Do students at the school recognize cultural influences as being distinct from biblical imperatives?

ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS

No school can teach a child everything he or she needs to be successful in life. The key is to prepare each child for a lifetime of learning in a climate of constant change. This can only be accomplished with an educational philosophy that values curiosity, inquisitiveness, and ingenuity. Christian schools should prepare students to take on any challenge with joy and the knowledge and experience of how to learn any subject.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- Can the school provide you with a plan for the student's education? Is it clear that the school has a plan to cover all the subjects?
- Are there clear goals for what the graduates should know?
- What books are the students reading in school?
- How is the diversity of God's revelation to humanity studied and appreciated?
- Does the school place wholesome Christian cultural practices above academic excellence or are the two seen as complementary?
- Does the school view joyful academic rigor and Christian discipleship both as reflections of Jesus' *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25: 14-30)?
- Are new subjects and topics approached with wonder and excitement?
- Is the educational process viewed as more than just downloading information?



THINKING AND COMMUNICATING

More than ever, students must acquire and use critical thinking skills to be successful. Once students have a foundation of knowledge about the world and how it works, they should be taught to communicate their thoughts with others in a winsome and compelling manner. Christian schools should teach students to listen attentively, think clearly, reason critically, and respect and love those with whom they disagree.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- What methods does the school use to teach critical thinking?
- What methods does the school use to teach written and spoken communication?
- Are students prepared to engage with others in a variety of settings?
- How will students be prepared to engage the world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity but which also desperately needs Jesus?



FACULTY

At any school, the faculty are the primary adults who will interact with and teach your children. Qualified faculty should love Jesus, love children, love learning, and love leading children with wonder and excitement. During the process of evaluating a school, we recommend parents speak to faculty and ask questions of them directly.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- Do the teachers love children and genuinely desire to understand and nourish each child and his or her gifts? Do the teachers cherish each child?
- Are the teachers interested in the ideas, practices, and virtues that shape each student as he or she matures? Are these things viewed as being equally important as the academic knowledge they acquire?
- Do faculty members consider themselves lifelong learners?
- Do faculty members sign a statement of faith? Do they re-affirm that statement at regular intervals? Are board members and administrators required to sign? Parents should read the statement of faith and make sure it is one they agree with as well.
- If the school does not require faculty to sign a statement of faith, what requirements are there regarding the faculty's beliefs?
- What do the hiring requirements and hiring process for faculty members look like?
- Is continuing education provided for or required of faculty members?



COMMUNITY & SCHOOL CULTURE

No matter which school you choose, it will be the focal point for many or most of the friends your child makes until graduation. As your child makes friends, you will interact with the parents of other students on a regular basis. For this reason, the community and school culture will make a lifelong impact on your student and your family.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- How do the current parents describe the school environment and community?
- Does the school host events that promote families gathering together? Does the school have a culture of helping one another and praying together?
- Does the school view its culture as a central component of the overall educational experience? Does the school holistically "pull" kids in the direction of manners, virtue, and positive relationships?
- Are parents welcome in the classroom? Are they invited to participate in class parties, field trips, and special projects?
- Are parents expected to be actively participating in the classroom and events?
- Are any experiences regularly shared across the grades? Are there any opportunities for older students to mentor younger students?
- What is the process by which families are evaluated for admission? Are families required to sign a statement of faith?



THE ARTS

A thorough Christian education should highlight the beauty of God's creation and steward the creative attributes He has put in every student. Beauty is an attribute of our Creator, and so students should learn that glorifying God includes making the work they produce beautiful, whether it is painting, singing, handwriting, mathematical equations, cooking, or woodworking.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- Are students encouraged to produce beautiful work?
- How does the school connect its arts programs to the students' understanding of God and His character?
- Are students taught to connect their creative impulses and abilities with God's creative activity in the world?
- Is beauty highlighted in places other than the arts such as molecular structures and mathematical equations?
- Which arts disciplines are explored during the time that he or she is at school?



TECHNOLOGY

The modern world offers technological conveniences that past generations could not even dream of having. At the same time, the widespread use of screens in our culture has eroded attention, comprehension of written words, and person-to-person interactions, especially in students. Too often, the latest technologies are adopted into the classroom without critical examination of their long-term effects on students.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- What is the school's philosophy of technology use? At what age are new technologies introduced?
- Is technology present to enhance teaching or replace teachers?
- Are students being given screen time instead of interacting with others?
- Are students being given access to influences that might conflict with your values?



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

As children grow into adults, the character they develop becomes just as important as the knowledge they possess. Children that are honest, confident, mature, humble, and possess grit are prepared to succeed in the roles to which the Lord calls them.

Christian parents are keenly interested in shepherding the kind of people their children become and want to know how their choice of school helps lead to virtuous adults.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- How does the school help students know love the Lord and serve others?
- Does the school's discipline policy seek to address the hearts of the students or just their behavior?
- How is Jesus' command to love one another practiced at the everyday level?
- How does the school handle students dealing with their shortcomings and failures?
- How does the school promote continuity between character development in the home, and in the school?
- Do students greet adults, look them in the eye, offer to help when needed, and engage in fruitful conversation?



RECESS & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Over the last few decades, the amount of built-in recess time in American schools has slowly but steadily been eroded, often due to a greater emphasis on testing. Although the time in class has increased, the results of less free time have not been good for the students. A Christian philosophy of education should include the understanding that children need time to exercise their bodies as well as their minds.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

- Does the school understand the relationship between the energy children have and the effectiveness of classroom instruction?
- Is time outside viewed as optional or as an essential part of the school?
- Is there unstructured recess time as well as structured physical education?



MOVING FORWARD

The cost of investing in a Christian education should be weighed against the value a school provides for your child's academic preparation, faith and character development, and ability to learn in and adapt to an ever-changing world. Education is more about formation than information and careful consideration should be given to the setting in which they will spend a considerable portion of childhood.

NEXT STEPS

- Pray for God's help as you work through the process of discernment.
- Using the criteria in this book as a guide, list your family's priorities.
- Evaluate potential schools based on the list you generate. Starting with the school's website, gather a clear idea of each school's vision, mission, and offerings.
- Schedule a tour of the schools you believe might be a good fit for your child. Ask questions of the faculty, students, and other parents that are most important to you.
- Pray for God's wisdom and provision as you make your decision.



A PARENTS' GUIDE TO
**CHOOSING A
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN ROCHESTER**



Rochester
Classical Academy

Rochester Classical Academy
1775 East Ave
Rochester, NY 14610
W: www.rochesterclassicalacademy.org
P: 585-340-7470

Connect With Us!
facebook.com/ROCClassicalAcademy

All images except cover by Breese Photo