

CORE VALUES

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF TEXAS



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For

ROBIN LEWIS

Founder

Providence Christian School of Texas

The Core Values of Providence Christian School are dedicated with heartfelt gratitude to Robin Lewis, whose God-given vision for the education of children led to the founding of Providence Christian School in 1989 and to the development of other schools based upon its model. Mrs. Lewis directed Providence through its first dozen years and the establishment of a permanent school home on West Lovers Lane in Dallas. Her devoted work for Providence has blessed many hundreds of children and their families and will bless untold numbers in the years to come.



Proverbs 31:10-31

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF TEXAS

CORE VALUES

The “core values” of Providence Christian School are the bedrock principles that distinguish Providence as an institution and against which all new ideas and practices are tested. The core values are the primary assets to which the Board of Trustees is committed and for which it is responsible on behalf of present and future constituents. The administration, faculty, and staff are likewise committed to and responsible for implementing the core values in all policies and practices of the School.

FAITH

The School is committed to education grounded in Christian principles and to supporting and strengthening the Christian faith and character of its students, faculty, and families.

FAMILY

The School recognizes the primary responsibility of the family, under the leadership of the father, in educating children, and is committed to fostering a supportive community of like-minded families.

INTELLECT

The School is committed to helping intellectually promising, academically able students fulfill their God-given potential by means of time-tested and classical instructional methods and curricula and by encouraging the development of good habits.

COUNTERCULTURALISM

The School is committed to promoting innocent childhood while also preparing and equipping its older students for their further education in a world that neither knows nor honors the Savior, Jesus Christ.

STEWARDSHIP

The School is committed to faithfully stewarding the time, talents, and treasure entrusted to it, and likewise to fostering the faithful stewardship of its students and their families.

Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor.

Proverbs 4:7-9

The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright and out of that knowledge, to love him, to imitate him, . . . to be like him . . .

John Milton, *Of Education*

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

I Thessalonians 5:21

FAITH

THE SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO EDUCATION GROUNDED IN CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES AND TO SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CHARACTER OF ITS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND FAMILIES.

WISDOM: THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF A PROVIDENCE EDUCATION

Providence students live in a rapidly changing world, for which they need wisdom, the anchor of the unchanging truths of God's Word and His principles. We desire to help students know, love, and practice that which is true, good, and excellent, and to prepare them to live purposefully and wisely in the service of God and man. In so doing, Providence students will grow in wisdom.

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH: EDUCATION WITH A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

For the Christian, a Biblical perspective is the ability to see and understand life through the lens of Scripture—seeing life as God sees it, and by His grace, living in obedience to the truth. To teach our students to have a Biblical perspective and recognize truth from error in a world that is bent on “exchang[ing] the truth of God for a lie and worship[ping] and serv[ing] the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25):

- Providence integrates the truth of God's Word throughout our curriculum, as well as in our teaching practices, policies, and programs. All areas of our School aim to be in direct alignment with God's Word.
- Providence employs only faculty who have a clear Christian testimony and who wholeheartedly agree with our mission, philosophy, and core values. We encourage and promote the faculty's spiritual growth, realizing that only to the degree that the knowledge of God's Word and His love lives in them can it flow into the hearts and minds of their students.
- Providence faculty members teach the younger students from classic works that inspire virtue and appreciation of God's creation. As students grow and mature, the curriculum includes works of literary, artistic, or historical importance wherein students will learn to distinguish truth from error, beauty from ugliness, and goodness from evil by asking themselves, “What does God's Word say regarding this issue?”

EXCELLENCE: GIVING GOD THE GLORY

Providence desires to glorify God by its commitment to excellence in all that it does and to teach its students the proper motivation for excelling. The distinction between the world's godless notion of excellence and that for which Providence aims has been well expressed by author, educator, and pastor William McCrae:

Pagan excellence is . . . doing what we do, and all we want to do, with all our might, because this life is all we have. Christian excellence, on the other hand, is described in I Corinthians 10:31: "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." And Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." The difference is primarily a question of motive. The goal of Christian excellence is not self-satisfaction, self-glorification, or even self-fulfillment; it is pleasing God, glorifying Him, and fulfilling His calling in one's life.

In keeping with Providence's aim to glorify God, students do not discuss their grades or call attention to their athletic prowess or their material possessions. They do, however, rejoice in what God has granted them and in the achievements and gifts of others. They work hard to do their best to please God and to fulfill His calling in their lives.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Providence strives to strengthen the spiritual lives of our students, their parents, and our employees. It is our strong desire that our entire school community would seek to glorify God by finding their greatest joy and passion in their relationship with Christ; that they would treasure Him above all that this world has to offer; and that they would cultivate their Christian walk through active membership and worship in their respective churches; through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, Bible study, Scripture memorization, and meditation; and through service and stewardship of their time, talent, and resources.

CHARACTER FORMATION

The motto of Providence is *Esse Quam Videri*—"to be rather than to seem"—reminding us that teaching character is at the heart of the highest-quality education. One need only read the daily paper or watch the nightly news to find abundant evidence that we live in a society that has lost its moral compass. Our secular culture has adopted a philosophy that there are no absolutes and that truth cannot be known. Examples of weak, unethical, and evil character abound. Christians are surrounded by cultural forces that influence us to think and act in a way contrary to Biblical truth, hence the importance of Providence students' knowing that God's Word is true and absolute. Therefore, Providence strives to employ only those whose lives are marked by moral excellence and who desire

What is good character? Character is the inward motive to do what is right according to the highest standards of behavior in every situation. Character consists of the stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life, which determine his and her responses, regardless of the circumstances. Character is the wise response to the pressure of a difficult situation and what we do when we think no one is watching; it is the predictor of good behavior. . . . Character reveals the Lord Jesus Christ, since He is the full personification of good character qualities. . . .

Values are based on changing opinions of what people or groups feel is important. However, character is based on universal standards that are time-tested and recognized as being right.

*The Power for True Success:
How to Build Character in Your Life,*
Institute for Basic Life Principles
(2001), 10, 11.

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do . . .

1 Peter 1:15

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:29-32

to nurture, mentor, and disciple their students in their character development. We strive to teach our students to emulate the character of Christ.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As a Christian educational community, Providence is committed to maintaining an atmosphere of trust, love, joy, and peace. When this atmosphere is jeopardized by conflict, we are committed to restoring broken relationships and reconciling problems Biblically. As Christians, we are commanded by Christ to resolve conflict in ways that both please and glorify God and to restore the relationship with the person with whom we have the conflict. For example, if a conflict involves a teacher, a parent should, if possible, first define and clarify the problem by writing a note or e-mail to the teacher, which allows the teacher to be prepared for the conversation to follow. If the subsequent conversation fails to resolve the issue, the parent should take the matter to the head of the department (in Classes Five through Eight), then to the appropriate school head, and then continue up the chain of authority if necessary.

At Providence, we make a conscious decision to attack the problem and not one another. Specific steps we follow in conflict resolution are described in the *Providence Student Handbook*.

PROVIDENCE CHAPEL

Providence Chapel is carefully planned and directed to inspire students to worship in spirit and in truth. In short, chapel is part of their education—spiritually, musically, and behaviorally. We do not simply aspire to fill students' minds with great words and music; the higher goal is that the students of Providence Christian School will hear the truth of God and His Son, and respond in the Spirit with their minds and hearts. Our worship time in Chapel purposes to be "grace-filled." The students learn that worship is a conversation: God speaks to us, and we respond. Scottish theologian Sinclair Ferguson states that the conversation of worship is "the ultimate dialogue" of our lives, the "people of God gathered to address the holy Father." Learning this as children may be one of the most important lessons ever taught at Providence.

We believe Chapel should help participants become better worshippers in their private times. Eugene Peterson, a pastor and writer best known for *The Message*, a contemporary paraphrase of the Bible, has put the importance of setting aside worship time in this way: "Worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God—not because He is confined to time and place, but because one's self-importance is so insidiously relentless that if we don't deliberately interrupt ourselves regularly, we have no chance of attending to Him at all in other times and in other places." We "interrupt" our school day to help us attend to God in all times and places.

Hymns are the best musical source available to us to teach about God and His redemptive work. They affirm and incarnate the truth of Scripture, our ultimate source of God's Word. They model excellence of expression with

which to address God in the dialogue of worship. Hymns equip our students for leadership in the church and the world by laying groundwork of intelligent, thoughtful theology as expressed historically by some of the “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1) who have gone before us.

We recognize that Providence students attend churches that represent a wide variety of worship styles—from liturgical to traditional to the very contemporary. Many of our children may not even attend services of worship, but rather a child-oriented gathering. Therefore, our Chapel service may be quite different from that to which they are accustomed. But we believe Providence Chapel will help them become better worshippers no matter what their family’s denomination or its style of worship service may be.

Again, Providence is an academic institution. We purpose to teach to a standard of excellence that may not be easily grasped at first encounter. It is our desire that the music taught here and experienced in Chapel will serve the students of Providence Christian School for an adult life of mature worship of the God they will spend a lifetime coming to know and all eternity worshipping.

FAMILY

And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Proverbs 1:8

THE SCHOOL RECOGNIZES THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FAMILY, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FATHER, IN EDUCATING CHILDREN, AND IS COMMITTED TO FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY OF LIKE-MINDED FAMILIES.

One of the School's highest priorities is to help Providence families be successful: we are family-focused. We believe that God holds parents and, more specifically, fathers, responsible for the education and training of their children, and that this critical role cannot be abdicated to others. Because children emulate their parents, parents must prayerfully study and teach the Word of God to their children, leading them into Godly adulthood. As parents speak and live according to God's Word, truth is imparted to children, moment by moment.

There is a direct correlation between successful living in the home—a home where the mother and the children joyfully and obediently respond to the spiritual, loving leadership of the father—and Providence's ability to fulfill its mission. Therefore, Providence aims to be an extension of the Christian home, a resource to help parents fulfill their God-given responsibility. The School is committed to providing families as much time as possible to carry out their responsibilities and to have a meaningful family life. At the same time, if a child requires long hours of tutoring in order to keep up with the curriculum, family time is compromised. Providence thus may not be an appropriate school for every child in a family. Providence is not an appropriate placement for children who would be unduly burdened by its academic challenges and whose family life would thereby suffer.

Providence also recognizes the proper limits of a school's role in the education of the students entrusted to it and the responsibility of parents to rear their children as they are convicted, called, and led by the Lord. Toward that end, Providence

- Encourages fathers in their leadership role in the Christian home;
- Encourages parents to train their children in Godly habits;
- Listens to parents' concerns and questions, and values their parental wisdom and input;
- Limits school field trips to educational ones;
- Requires semester projects in the younger classes, through which family members and friends can pass along skills, interests, and hobbies to the children;
- Defers to parents the introduction of sensitive topics, such as sex education; and
- Avoids introducing elements of popular culture that may offend families.

Because the School values family time and the critical role parents play in the development of children, Providence

- Limits the length of school days, so parents can use additional time to round out their children's education;
- Values and includes playtime for young students;
- Strives to make homework both pedagogically valuable and manageable in terms of the time required to complete it;
- Defers most decisions for Christian and community service to the family, so that family time will not be stretched between church-sponsored and Scout-sponsored service, for example, and extra projects mandated by the School;
- Permits no solicitation of the school community for outside ministries and missions;
- Allows students in good standing to accompany their families on educational trips (the *Providence Student Handbook* spells out the current policies for excused absences);
- Encourages mothers to stay home with their students as much as possible;
- Does not invite mothers of very young children to serve in time-consuming Parents' Council jobs; and
- Avoids lavish fundraising events that require lengthy volunteer hours and months of preparation by parents.

GRANDPARENTS' DAY

One of the most important and joy-filled days in the Providence school year is the day on which the School honors grandparents and those who have filled a grandparent's role in the lives of Providence students. Ordinarily held just before the Thanksgiving holiday, Grandparents' Day brings together the entire school community to hear recitations and musical performances by students, to view students' semester projects and artwork, and to celebrate the Godly influence of loving elders in the lives of Providence students.

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

I John 2:15

But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow becomes a stumbling block to the weak.

I Corinthians 8:9

INTELLECT

THE SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO HELPING INTELLECTUALLY PROMISING, ACADEMICALLY ABLE STUDENTS FULFILL THEIR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL BY MEANS OF TIME-TESTED AND CLASSICAL INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND CURRICULA AND BY ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD HABITS.

Solomon answered God, . . . “Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?” God said to Solomon, “Since this is your heart’s desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. . . .”

II Chronicles 1:8-12

Providence was founded to serve academically able students who possess strong, God-given intellectual gifts, and whose parents desire that their children be given a challenging classical, Christian education. We seek to develop young scholars who are responsible, self-motivated, and intellectually curious—students who love learning and will become lifetime learners and good stewards of their gifts.

Providence focuses on the core knowledge and basic skills that intellectually gifted students need in order to be well prepared for high school at the most selective college-preparatory schools in the area. To appropriately challenge Providence’s academically able students, the academic program is designed to be a year ahead of most schools in all core subjects. Because the School focuses on a core curriculum, the school day is shorter than that at most schools. In this way each family may choose additional curricula or extracurricular activities it deems important, along with church-related and community volunteer work to which the family feels called.

CLASSICAL, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Providence offers a classical education in the broad sense of being traditional, time-tested, and intellectually rigorous rather than in the narrower sense of being centered in Latin and Greek studies. A classical education is based on great ideas, great books (including primary sources when possible), foundational truths and principles, and enduring traditions and skills. It holds to established standards.¹

Those who assume that methods used for millennia can be dismissed within a generation forget that time is the best laboratory, especially regarding human behavior. It has taken modern educators only fifty years to disassemble an educational system that took many centuries to develop and refine. This system educated most of America’s founding fathers as well as the world’s philosophers, scientists, and leaders between the tenth and early twentieth centuries.²

The “classics” at the core of a classical education at Providence are works of art, music, literature, history, or science, each of which expresses profound insight, artistic creativity, or enduring cultural value. By studying the classics, students encounter the most influential thinkers, artists, and writers, and gain an understanding of Western history and culture. The classics are

touchstones of excellence, so that by studying them, students learn aesthetic discernment and discrimination and how to soundly judge what is bad or worse, good or best. But much more than this, by filtering the classics through the grid of God’s Word, we impart to students a Christian perspective, which equips them to make moral judgments, not merely about the basic questions of right and wrong, but also about profound ideas, including those that directly clash with Christianity. The classical, *Christian* education is marked by the teacher’s ability to train students to make critical judgments about such matters— judgments based upon Biblical and philosophical truths.³

Providence purposefully departs from the classical model that follows a strict chronological timeline of study from the earliest years. Rather than confuse very young children who are just learning about their own heritage and the faith of their fathers, Providence begins not with classical antiquity and the Greek and Roman gods but rather with the children’s own Christian and American heritage.

THE CLASSICAL, CHRISTIAN TEACHER: COMMITTED TO LIFELONG LEARNING IN A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

Providence employs faculty who exhibit a calling to teach, who are knowledgeable and passionate about their subject, who are skilled in their pedagogy, and who love children. Faculty members at Providence are to be scholars themselves—inconstant readers and lifetime learners and researchers. Each member of the faculty must be determined to reach and teach the best material by the most effective means, never content to simply rehash old class notes or lesson plans. Providence teachers are to enthusiastically engage one another in dialogue and debate about the philosophy, content, and methods that constitute the best education. The faculty must stimulate and challenge one another because curriculum is never finished but is always subject to refinement. The faculty members must engage and improve each other because, in the words of educator David Hicks, the faculty is the “school within the school.”⁴ At the same time, faculty members recognize that instruction must be coordinated for consistency for students of different teachers. Additionally, faculty members accept the wisdom and leadership of their School Heads in preserving the educational mission of the School in adherence to its core values.

To help the faculty in these endeavors, the School commits to providing time and means for discussion, debate, and continuing education for teachers.

THE PROVIDENCE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

In an increasingly secularized world, the importance of a classical, Christian education has never been greater. Therefore, Providence’s curriculum is designed to teach its students to understand and hold in high esteem those literary, historical, and artistic works that not only have “stood the test of time,” but also are the foundation of Western civilization and our Judeo-Christian heritage. The following sections describe key distinctives of a Providence education.

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

II Timothy 2:2

DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS WHO MAKE THE MOST OF GOD'S GIFTS

We believe that God places a high value on children and that to be blessed with them is a sacred and solemn responsibility. It is Providence's privilege to love, protect, nurture, train, and educate the precious children God leads to the School. Our faculty members treat our students as unique individuals, created in the image of God, each with special abilities and needs. Providence strives to help our students realize their potential spiritually, intellectually, socially, physically, and creatively.

Providence offers a curriculum that produces well-rounded students through our commitment to the fine arts, physical education, and athletics; to semester projects in the younger classes; and to limited, carefully chosen extra- and co-curricular activities that encourage our students' creativity and enrich their lives.

Providence emphasizes the development of a strong work ethic and good learning habits. We desire to assist parents in inculcating habits of close attention, good organization, and effective use of study time to help students become successful lifelong learners. Toward this end, Providence faculty members strive to provide clear and complete instruction that engages students' interest; homework, essay, and project assignments that further understanding without being "busy work"; and encouragement to persevere in the face of difficulty. We expect diligent work, which includes students' correcting their mistakes. We require neat, consistent penmanship, which demonstrates discipline, carefulness, and regard for one's readers. Because we focus on children truly learning, not just completing work, we give detailed comments but no letter grades for the younger students. And we refrain from giving numerous trivial awards, striving rather to help students understand that pleasing God, learning, and achieving understanding are sufficient reward in themselves.

Finally, Providence values, and is committed to, appropriate class sizes at all class levels to ensure that each student has abundant opportunities to participate and lead, and so that our teachers can get to know their students well, can adequately monitor their progress, and can mentor them as they grow in stature and in understanding.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRIVIUM AT PROVIDENCE

Today, the meaning of a classical education is often unconsciously corrupted by a superficial understanding of what is "classical." Nowhere is this more evident than in the acceptance of the notion that the Trivium—grammar, logic, rhetoric—identifies only stages of learning. Such a re-definition of the Trivium may be a helpful paradigm to illustrate different stages of learning—as done, notably, by author Dorothy Sayers in a 1947 address at Oxford—but it has little to do with the original meaning of the term "Trivium." The Trivium was the foundation of classical education, based on a Greco-Roman model developed during the Middle Ages. It consisted of the "aspects of the liberal arts that pertain to the training of the mind"⁵. What is most important about the Trivium is not that it organizes a curriculum or provides a rigid formula for stages of cognitive

Give instruction to a wise man,
and he will be yet wiser: teach a
just man, and he will increase in
learning.

Proverbs 9:9

development, but that it centers on language: grammar—learning the basics of language; logic—learning to organize language to express one’s ideas cohesively; and rhetoric—learning to articulate logically sound arguments in grammatically correct and eloquent language. Those are the components of the Trivium, but grammar, logic, and rhetoric are *not* the ultimate goals of a classical education. Indeed, to quote Sayers, “The whole of the Trivium was, in fact, intended to teach the pupil the proper use of the tools of learning, before he began to apply them to ‘subjects’ at all.”

Providence’s curriculum is informed by a proper understanding of both the Trivium and Sayers’s analogy of the Trivium to the stages of learning. In the lower class levels—and this greatly distinguishes a Providence education from the “progressive” model found in most schools today—the emphasis is on facts and memory work. Thus, all courses of study begin with basic information—whether phonograms, math facts, maps, or butterfly specimens. As students mature, the coursework focuses additionally on gathering and interpreting information and on its limitations and logical implications. Ultimately, students learn to articulately present what they have learned, both orally and in writing. But Providence students develop through all the stages discussed by Sayers almost from the beginning, as younger students not only learn facts but also reason from and write about what they have learned, and older students continue to add new, more complex factual information to their store of knowledge in all of their studies.

Therefore, a key feature that distinguishes a Providence education from most modern approaches is that its students are carefully trained in language, that actual content forms its basis, and that reason and God’s Truth, rather than “feelings,” govern the conclusions students reach.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHARLOTTE MASON AT PROVIDENCE

Providence bases important aspects of its educational philosophy and pedagogical methods, particularly in the lower class levels, on the theories and practices of British educator Charlotte Mason (1842-1923). Miss Mason, a renowned “teacher of teachers,” founded a number of grammar schools and a college to train teachers in her philosophy and practices. The elements of Charlotte Mason’s educational *philosophy* that have been incorporated into that of Providence are the following:

- Parents are the primary influence in their children’s lives, and they must accept and fulfill this responsibility—it cannot be delegated. In Mason’s words: “More than anything else [it is] the home influences brought to bear upon the child that determine the character and career of the future man or woman.”
- Children are born as individuals of worth—as “persons,” in Mason’s terminology—and, as such, should be valued and respected. Curriculum for children, therefore, should reflect their value and potential as human beings and should never be “dumbed down.” Rather, the curriculum must be full of books and experiences that exemplify and teach truth, beauty, and goodness. In particular, a school’s curriculum should be filled

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

with “living books” and not simply textbooks, graded readers, and vapid works of the sort Mason termed “twaddle” (that is, works lacking in depth, breadth, and literary quality).

- The teaching and reinforcing of mental and moral habits help students automatically learn to do what is right and will aid them in their future development. Charlotte Mason believed children should be “taught what they ought, not what they want.”

The elements of Charlotte Mason’s educational *practices* that have been incorporated into those of Providence are, most notably, these:

- Nature study should be an integral part of children’s grammar school years. The study of nature allows children to develop all of their senses and trains them to observe, count, classify, interpret, draw, and record. Nature study helps children love and appreciate the magnificence of God as the Creator of all. Moreover, nature study is foundational to developing skills in inquiry, observation, and analysis that are integral not only to scientific investigation but also to fields as diverse as the study of history and of the visual arts.
- The use of “picture studies” helps students recognize, respond to, and appreciate art. Picture studies are done on a regular basis both for art appreciation and for their language-eliciting capability. Picture studies develop students’ memory skills and speaking ability as they study the history, style, and unique qualities of great works of art and the lives of the artists who created these works.
- The use of oral and written narration develops students’ overall language skills. Students tell back or “narrate” a story they have heard or read. They retell, as much as possible, word for word. As students narrate, they learn good writing style, as they often recite or write in the same style as the author. Narration also strengthens and develops their vocabulary and memory skills. Karen Andreola, a prominent teacher of Charlotte Mason’s methods, declares that “knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced. . . . [Narration] increases the mind’s ability to remember.”⁶

Just as one learns to distinguish counterfeit from real currency by studying authentic currency, one learns to distinguish good language from poor by modeling good writing and speaking. Narration enhances comprehension skills and fills the mind with rich ideas that inspire, and thus students expand their learning. If one cannot retell a passage, one does not know and fully “own” the ideas expressed in the material. The person who can retell it does own it.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS OF HIGHEST QUALITY

Wherever possible, the Providence curriculum employs original sources, rather than textbooks. We desire to surround our students, wherever possible and appropriate, with classical art, music, and literature that represent truth, beauty, and goodness. Toward this end,

- Our library collection, classroom literature selections, summer reading lists, and supplemental reading lists consist of books that represent the finest of children’s literature—works that ennoble the spirit as well as advance the understanding and fire the imagination of the young.
- Students are taught not only to know the history of great classical composers, but also to be able to name them and recognize their works. Teachers play only classical music or traditional hymns in their rooms, when appropriate, and parents do the same in their cars on field trips.
- Students are taught the history of great artists, and the entire art curriculum is centered on teaching students to appreciate and to produce traditional representational art. Only classic works of art are displayed in the classrooms.

MINIMAL RELIANCE ON COMPUTERS

Computer use is not emphasized in Providence Lower and Middle School programs owing to the School’s emphasis on core knowledge, on reading, and on expanding rather than diminishing students’ attentiveness. Parents who desire for their children to learn programming or to master sophisticated software applications may elect to pursue such instruction independently. In Middle School classes, students do submit their out-of-class papers in typewritten format.

THE PROVIDENCE CURRICULUM

Providence offers its students a rich humanities, sciences, and arts curriculum that integrates the study of literature and the arts with the study of history and geography. In that integration, and in the following subject areas, Providence curriculum is distinctive and may differ from other, comparable preparatory schools. In most subjects, the curriculum is advanced by approximately one year beyond typical school curricula.

ART

Art encompasses both aesthetic appreciation and creative expression. As Christians, we acknowledge God as the Ultimate Artist. The universe is His canvas, including our minds and souls. Created in His image, we thus possess an innate creative capacity. Such creativity witnesses to the impress of deity upon our souls, mirroring His image in us and radiating His mind through us as we create. As a classical and Christian school, we explore great works of art by past masters filtered through a Christian perspective. Such exploration enables students to experience the intellectual and emotional power of artistic genius while cultivating their own creative potential and aesthetic discernment. Students additionally study artistic methods in various media to learn how to create artistic works of their own. Each school year concludes with a Fine Arts Day display of each student’s best work during the year.

In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1,14

ENGLISH

Through the utterance of His Word, God spoke all things into existence; through the revelation of His Word, God established the means by which man might know Him; through the Incarnation of His Word, God showed Himself to humanity as our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Through the Word, humanity discovers God, the meaning of life, and our responsibility to love one another as God has loved us. The Word also encompasses language, including its meaning, its form and structure, and its communication. All three of these elements of language comprise the study of English at Providence, a curriculum that exposes students to the finest and most nobly written literature and that aims to provide students both the inspiration to be engaged, discerning readers and the skills to write clearly, engagingly, and nobly themselves. These aims are achieved through deliberate and attentive study of classic literature, poetry, drama, and historical texts and through frequent writing and rewriting. The textual analysis students learn and the repeated writing they do enhance their analytical and critical capabilities and their own powers of expression.

Providence particularly emphasizes our students' comprehensive understanding and competent use of the English language. Accordingly, the Providence language arts curriculum

- Teaches students to read phonetically, with great care taken by the School to the foundation laid;
- Teaches reading, writing, and spelling in an integrated format;
- Teaches and requires correct grammar and mechanics;
- Encourages neat, consistent penmanship, so that students' written words are legible and pleasing to the eye;
- Discourages slang, colloquialisms, and verbal tics such as "um," "yeah," or "like";
- Aims to encourage students to delight in books and acquire the habit of reading for a lifetime by helping them gain the common knowledge necessary for reading comprehension;
- Encourages students to read classic works of literature; and
- Teaches students to memorize Bible passages, poetry, and great speeches. In contrast to the current thinking of progressive educators, Providence believes that memorization and recitation provide significant benefits to children's intellectual development, especially in strengthening language skills.

Every element in this list requires substantial parental commitment, involvement, and reinforcement if it is to become part of students' academic skills and habits.

HISTORY

The term *history* derives from the Greek *historeo*, which can be

translated either “to visit” or “to see.” Both “visiting” and “seeing” express the Providence philosophy of history. We “visit” history through great books as we travel through time and “visit” kings and kingdoms, philosophers and fools, heroes and villains. Thus “visiting,” students learn to “see” in two ways—imaginatively and intellectually. Imaginatively, they “see” through factual and fictional works that stimulate and color their imagination about the events and personages of history; intellectually, they “see” by observing, analyzing, interpreting, and learning from the past. At Providence, we study the past to understand the present and plan for the future. Philosophically, as a classical school we emphasize the study of Western history and culture, but we also recognize the increasing importance of non-Western cultures—such as those of China, India, and the Islamic nations—in the twenty-first century, and therefore we integrate the study of non-Western history and culture into our curriculum as appropriate. In practice, we explore history through chronology, philosophy, biography, geography, and economics. We emphasize primary texts and the biographies of great figures in history. Most importantly, we recognize that history is “His story”—that is, history witnesses to the sovereignty and providence of God at all times and in all events, and thus “to visit” and “to see” history is really to visit and to see *His story*.

LATIN

Providence believes that language study promotes the intellectual development of all of our students and will be valuable to the Christian ministry of some of them. As we do not know whether particular students will be led to ministry requiring facility in Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, or some other language, and in keeping with our limited school hours and classical tradition, Providence instructs all students in Latin, beginning in Class Three and continuing through Class Eight.

While Latin is not a spoken language in the world today, it has significant value for modern students. First, Latin, the language from which the modern Romance languages are derived, provides both a thorough understanding of grammar and practice in translation. This foundation makes the modern languages easier to learn. Second, the logical structure of Latin promotes structured, logical thinking. Third, because many words in English have Latin roots, studying Latin increases students’ vocabulary. And, fourth, the study of Roman history and culture is foundational to an understanding of Western civilization.

Upon completion of Latin studies at Providence, students enter high school with the equivalent of two years of high school Latin, at which point they may choose to continue with Latin or to study a modern language. Providence recognizes that some families will choose to teach modern languages to their students from early childhood on, through family home study or extracurricular classes, and encourages their doing so.

MATH

Mathematics witnesses to God’s immanence in the orderly finitude of the material universe and to His transcendence beyond that universe unto

In the future when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws which the Lord commanded you?” then you shall say to your son, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.”

Deuteronomy 6:20-21

[B]e filled with the spirit; speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. . . .

Ephesians 5:18b, 19a

Nature gives certain dispositions of mind which we can get from no other source, and it is through these right dispositions that we get life into focus, as it were; learn to distinguish between small matters and great, to see that we *ourselves* are not of great importance, that the world is wide, that things are sweet. . . . Our hearts are inclined to love and worship; and we become prepared by the quiet schooling of Nature to walk softly and do our duty towards man and towards God.

Charlotte Mason,
Ourselves, vol. IV, page 98

infinity. Mathematics orients students' minds to God's mind, cultivating in them appreciation, knowledge, and mastery of math facts, computation, real-life math applications, and development of logical thinking. Mathematics also cultivates discipline in students, enabling them to participate in the scientific and technological stewardship of this world for the service of God and man. Mathematics instruction at Providence carefully reinforces every skill and concept learned by not dropping the concepts once they are covered but rather returning to them recursively, and with increasing complexity, throughout the school year.

MUSIC

Providence teaches music to every student. God's Word exhorts us to celebratory praise, reverential worship, and skillful expression of our faith through singing and through playing instruments. God's grace equips all of us with means to worship Him through music, and Providence's music program purposes to develop our students' musical skills. This process begins with teaching students to listen and hear discriminately in order to understand musical ideas, to sing correctly and accurately, and to have a working understanding of music notation. Students also become familiar with the traditional and classical music of our heritage. This includes folk songs of Western culture, classical music composed in the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, and the historical hymnody of our Christian heritage. Ultimately, Providence's music curriculum challenges students to appreciate excellence in music—which often means to reject the prevalent music of contemporary culture. An understanding and love for the classic, traditional values of music teaches Providence students to know and discern what is good, true, and beautiful.

NATURE STUDY

Beginning in Enrichment, the study of nature is an important component of Providence's science curriculum. Almost from birth, children begin to learn about God by observing and studying His creation. Nature study trains students in their powers of observation, recognition, counting, and classifying. It allows them to glorify God as they see the awesomeness of His design and the perfect order of His creation. Nature study at Providence includes gardening; tending small mammals, reptiles, and fish; careful observation, drawing, and maintaining records and data; experiments; dissections; and field trips.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Providence premises its athletic and physical education policy on St. Paul's ideas that our bodies are "not our own" because we "are bought with a price," and thus our bodies are the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19, 20). Upon these principles we build an athletic program designed to inspire a lifetime of enjoyment in a variety of sports and fitness activities, but the ultimate goal of which is to "present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). As God has given us bodies finely adapted for His service, He also gives us the responsibility to nourish our bodies with healthy food, to strengthen and refine our bodies in physical education and competitive

sports, and to train our bodies to be fit for future service to God. Providence believes that athletic and physical training produces lifelong results in students, strengthening the body, mind, and character through discipline, skills acquisition, consistent practice, self-control, and teamwork.

SCIENCE

Because human reason, the universe, matter, and natural phenomena are all finite, the knowledge acquired by and through these entities is finite as well. In other words, science is finite—knowledge has its limits. Of course humanity has not reached the scientific limits of the material universe, and therefore the pursuit of greater and greater scientific knowledge is a noble quest for the Christian student through such methods as observation, experimentation, inference, prediction, and classification. At Providence, students may dissect a pig’s heart, study an amoeba under a powerful microscope, classify and identify an unknown leaf, learn the types of clouds, and better understand principles of physics in building a medieval catapult or an electromagnetic engine. These endeavors are worthy, valuable, and exciting—and, we hope, will result in numbers of Providence students going on to become scientists and the rest to become lay people with an informed interest in science.

But when we reach the end of our rational powers, as scientists seem already to have done with quantum physics, knowledge must bow to mystery. Where *scientia* ends, *sapientia*—wisdom—begins. In a Christian school, the study of science looks beyond the limited horizon of empirical knowledge into the ethereal heaven of eternal truth. Where our knowledge can understand the creation, we rejoice in that knowledge, but when our knowledge must bow to mystery, mystery lays hold of the Creator by faith. Thus science at Providence represents a beautiful synthesis of *scientia* and *sapientia*, knowledge and wisdom.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

¹ Dan Russ, Ph.D., Director of Christian Studies, Gordon College. The definition of “classical education” is taken from an unpublished essay, “Classical, Christian Education.” Used by permission here and following.

² Russ. This paragraph is taken from “Classical, Christian Education.”

³ Hal Brunson, Ph.D., “What Is a Classical, Christian Education?” This paragraph is adapted from an address to Covenant Christian Academy, Colleyville, TX, 20 May 2002. Used by permission.

⁴ Russ. The paragraph to this point is adapted from “Classical, Christian Education.”

⁵ Sr. Miriam Joseph, Ph.D., *The Trivium*, 1937, 2002; page 3.

⁶ *Charlotte Mason Companion*, 1998; page 114.

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Matthew 18:2-6

COUNTERCULTURALISM

THE SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO PROMOTING INNOCENT CHILDHOOD WHILE ALSO PREPARING AND EQUIPPING ITS OLDER STUDENTS FOR THEIR FURTHER EDUCATION IN A WORLD THAT NEITHER KNOWS NOR HONORS THE SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST.

Providence understands that much of what it does as a conservative, classical, Christian school is countercultural, and in many aspects, counter to contemporary Christian culture. As Christians, we are increasingly besieged and affected by a secular culture that has lost its moral compass and is opposed to God's Word and His principles. However, Providence remains unwavering in its commitment to provide like-minded families the educational program defined in this core values document.

Philippians 4:8 guides Providence as it seeks to operate in a way that honors and glorifies God: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things." Providence seeks to expose children to what will ennoble them. We try not to expose them to information that is not age-appropriate and would be troubling for young ears and eyes. For example, we do not talk about the latest movies or music, or the scandals or crimes featured in the nightly news. We do not celebrate celebrity or notoriety. We celebrate acts of courage, works of ministry, things of beauty.

In an effort to support one another as "iron sharpening iron" (Proverbs 27:17), we expect Providence parents to create a home environment where Providence children can visit and play without parental fear that they will be exposed to worldly experiences that do not honor their own family's preferences and decisions. The *Providence Student Handbook* identifies specific ways families at Providence help preserve true childhood for their children and thus allow parents rather than the culture at large to decide when and how to prepare their children for being "in the world, but not of the world" as they enter other schools following their Providence years.

RESPECT FOR AND SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY

Scripture teaches that all authority is derived from God and that the powers that be are ordained of God (Romans 13:1-3). Thus, God has ordained government, church, and family as the structures of authority through which He accomplishes His purposes in the world. Therefore, every individual will be held responsible before God for his responses to authority.

It is Providence's duty (working in harmony with the home) to train its

students for future success by demonstrating to them, and requiring of them, an obedient, submissive, God-honoring response toward those in authority over them. Therefore, Providence students are taught to practice prompt, first-time obedience; to be always respectful in word, tone, and facial expression; and not to whine, complain, or talk back.

GOOD MANNERS AND COURTEOUS HABITS

Providence believes that courtesy and good manners are not only characteristics of mature ladies and gentlemen but also important aspects of “lov[ing] your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18), of showing honor and respect to others, of demonstrating the worthiness of others. Unfortunately, in our society, good manners have become a lost art. At Providence, we desire to follow Paul’s counsel to the Christians at Philippi, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3, 4). Providence teaches, reinforces, and encourages good habits in a student’s intellectual, spiritual, moral, and physical life in the belief that the development of a disciplined lifestyle, in the context of a relationship with Jesus Christ, will provide a solid foundation for a responsible and joyful life.

The School diligently teaches—and counts on parents to teach and reinforce—the specific good manners and courteous habits identified in the *Providence Student Handbook*.

SIMPLICITY

Just as children thrived and learned by reading books, playing board games, playing hide-and-seek in the fresh air, and helping their mothers bake cookies long before there were cable TV and video games, so Providence encourages an atmosphere in which the simpler things of life are valued. An attitude of “keeping things as simple as possible” has always been a priority in Christian family living. Providence helps its families promote an attitude of simplicity by such means as these:

- Providing structure and routine, which, in an unpredictable and insecure world, bear witness to a God who brings order out of chaos;
- Teaching organization—planning, order, consistency—as a means of achieving freedom, not constraint;
- Keeping our campus and classrooms serene and elegantly understated, in keeping with our classical philosophy, by avoiding elaborate and distracting classroom decorations; and
- Choosing not to raise funds through elaborate social events that would demand a tremendous number of volunteer hours and a great deal of expense, while at the same time excluding families who could not afford to participate in costly events.

As Paul counseled the Christians at Philippi, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:3, 4

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

STEWARDSHIP

THE SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO FAITHFULLY STEWARDING THE TIME, TALENTS, AND TREASURE ENTRUSTED TO IT, AND LIKEWISE TO FOSTERING THE FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP OF ITS STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Providence is committed to Biblical stewardship. For Christians, stewardship is the realization everything we have in our lives—our time, our talents, our resources, and our families—are all gracious gifts from God, and that He owns it all, not just a fraction or percentage. It is our responsibility, therefore, to wisely, intelligently, and carefully manage all that we have been given by God in a way that pleases Him. As a school, Providence is committed to stewarding its resources faithfully and wisely. Even more important, Providence recognizes and honors the stewardship duty we have to parents who have entrusted us with their most precious possessions—their children’s hearts and minds.

The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.” His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

Matthew 25:20-21

STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Providence is committed to raising the funds to endow financial aid sufficient that eventually no child will be unable to obtain a Providence education because of his or her family’s inability to pay the full cost of that education. Until that time, Providence is committed to devoting a substantial sum each year to provide partial financial aid for families who need assistance through the Scholarship Committee’s financial aid review process.

Providence is committed to administrative leanness so that most of its budget goes directly to instruction. The Providence faculty is committed to wise and frugal use of resources, from making photocopies to changing textbooks to turning out the lights.

Finally, Providence is committed to making a Providence education not only the best education available, but also the best value available.

FOSTERING STEWARDSHIP IN STUDENTS

STEWARDSHIP OF INTELLECTUAL GIFTS

Providence teaches students that their talents, skills, and spiritual gifts are a gift from God, which they must steward carefully and use to bring Him glory and honor. We support students as they discover and develop their gifts and talents by

- Helping students understand that individuals are each given different gifts and that each is important in the body of Christ;
- Creating a curricular program and extracurricular opportunities that

allow students with a variety of gifts to develop their talents;

- Instilling in students the importance of doing their best in all their endeavors—and doing so to honor their Lord rather than to seek the praise of men;
- Creating a school-wide atmosphere that shuns false notions of “self-esteem” in favor of hard work and genuine accomplishment; and
- Encouraging students to joyfully celebrate others’ successes and to humbly and graciously receive praise they themselves earn.

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

Providence further teaches students that how they use their time is part of how they serve their Lord. Providence teaches students to be good stewards of their time by

- Working with parents to help students develop self-disciplined, efficient study habits so that homework and studying for tests do not consume all of their after-school hours;
- Requiring and encouraging students to read the finest literature; and
- Teaching students that each day is a precious gift that cannot be relived. Students thereby learn not to squander their time on pointless, worldly activities, but rather to invest their lives in activities that reveal and promote truth, beauty, and goodness.

The stewardship of time in study is discussed more fully above with regard to the core value of “Intellect.” The stewardship of time in service is discussed above with regard to the core value of “Family.”

STEWARDSHIP OF PHYSICAL BEING

Our students must also understand that their physical bodies belong to God, and that they should practice good stewardship of their physical beings. To teach this principle, Providence

- Requires daily physical education activities after Class Two;
- Encourages participation in Providence sports teams after Class Six;
- Promotes nutrition and healthy eating habits by not providing or permitting carbonated drinks in lunches; by limiting snacks and rarely using candy as a reward; and by not allowing younger students to share food at lunch, so that parents have charge of their children’s diet; and
- Teaches and requires modesty by requiring uniforms; by limiting jewelry and makeup; and by focusing on the internal strengths, beauty, and character of each student. In so doing, the School limits distractions; promotes unity among students, regardless of their families’ financial means; and encourages the preservation of innocence amid cultural pressures.

And let not your adornment be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20
