

Three Minute Thesis

Proposal – Reignite Educational Excellence

Christy Anne Vaughan

Recently, the Gospel Coalition (Zylstra, 2017) published an article touting amazing academic progress made in an inner city school where most had not graduated high school and the ones who did read at an eight-grade level. This school utilized the Classical Christian education method which has been popping up across America in the past 25 years. Similarly, *The American Spectator*, published an article in 2013 entitled “Why Classical Schools Just Might Save America.” Strachan (2013) wrote that those who “value truth, morality, the unfettered pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, and the Western canon” should look to the Classical Christian education movement with its “study of Latin and Greek, the development of analytical and critical faculties,” as “exactly what is missing from the modern American public school” (para. 4).

Can we really reignite excellence in American education? Could it be that this small resurgence of an ancient but Biblically-based instructional method sparked in the 1980s in tiny Moscow, Idaho contains the Phrygian cap of intellectual Liberty while simultaneously inculcating a joy of learning through recognized developmental steps outlined by both Piaget and the Apostle Paul?

An excellent education, according to the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (2012c), should include how to learn, when and what content is to be learned, as well as the worldview from which to interpret and apply all knowledge. Yet no other studies have compared standardized test scores from Classical Christian to non-Classical Christian schools.

In my dissertation, I report the outcome of a quantitative study comparing mean scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) compared between Classical Christian schools and non-Classical Christian schools to see if there are any statistically significant differences. Classical Christian schools are defined as private schools employing a distinctly Christ-centered and developmental instructional method. What I found, through collecting data from a headmaster's survey of more than 4,400 mean scores on the PSAT from the ten-year period 2003-2013 in reading, math and writing, was that Classical Christian schools scored higher in all three academic areas. Effect size measures indicated Classical Christian methodology should have a large, positive effect on PSAT scores. More research should compare other standardized test scores.

The implications of this study reach far beyond the classroom to include improved teacher training, more institutions training teachers in the Classical Christian method and philosophy, and more research to identify which variables may hold the most promise as correlated to standardized test performance. Secular teacher training programs should also take note and investigate where techniques, methodologies, and philosophies might be incorporated into current thought or replace current paradigms completely.

Let us reignite the educational fire Plutarch praised! Don't drown it in the bucket of mediocrity.

REFERENCES

Association of Classical and Christian Schools. (2012c). What is Classical Christian education?

Retrieved from http://www.accsedu.org/what-is-cce/what_is_Classical_christian_education

Strachan, O. (2013, November 5). Why Classical schools just might save America. *The*

American Spectator. Retrieved from <http://spectator.org/articles/56821/why-Classical-schools-just-might-save-america>

Zylstra, S.E. (2017). The exponential growth of classical Christian education. Retrieved from

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-exponential-growth-of-classical-christian-education/>