



## **Arlington Archers: New Family Orientation**

Module 4: Curriculum and Pedagogy



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# *Why does Great Hearts exist?*



# Philosophical Pillars

The **Philosophical Pillars** of Great Hearts are aphorisms in support of the core and never-changing purpose of the organization: *to cultivate the hearts and minds of students through the pursuit of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.*

- We believe that the world is ordered and knowable and that the human intellect, while imperfect, can attain knowledge of reality through reason, hard work, and a coherent program of study.
- We believe that truth exists, and we must seek it relentlessly by disciplined study and good-willed conversation.
- We do not dispute the usefulness of a liberal arts education, and we gladly prepare our students for college studies, but our main purpose is the formation of the heart and mind.



# Focus on the Western Tradition

The Western Tradition is one of great depth and diversity (of peoples and ideas) and will serve as a superb foundation to our students as they go on to be lifelong learners. This focus is not intended as a statement about other cultural heritages; indeed, our students are introduced to the rich art, culture, and history of major ancient and modern civilizations. However, the Academy's focus is on the Western Tradition because we believe that many of the principal values and ideas that underlie our own American society may be clearly traced to the classics we study, and because we believe that the years spent at the Academy is just enough time to offer students a comprehensive introduction to the great works of the Western Tradition, including literature, philosophy, history, math, science, languages, and the fine arts.



# Focus on the Great Books

“The Great Books are works that have stood the test of time as exemplary for their beauty, eloquence, impact on history, and profundity in addressing the essential questions of what does it mean to be a human being,” explained Dan Scoggin, Great Hearts co-founder. These classics teach us how to question and think deeply about the world around us, addressing great ideas such as Justice, Liberty, Equality, Truth, Beauty, and Goodness—whether it be through philosophy, literature, poetry, or drama.

Robert Maynard Hutchins described our interaction with these books as the “great conversation.” Our students seek to learn from the knowledge of these past authors and their works by reading and analyzing them, and discussing them with their fellow students who also seek the wisdom of the ages. When they do this, students gain a fresh perspective with which they can understand the present world and tackle questions of the human condition that are just as relevant now as when the authors penned the works.



# The Socratic Method

*Wisdom begins with wonder--Socrates, 5th Century B.C., Athens.*

Socrates led rigorous dialogues in quest of the truth. He took the different premises of his Athenian interlocutors and civilly demonstrated how they contradicted each other. In this way, Socrates and his partners arrived at a refined understanding and a resolve to continue exploring. The teacher using this method engages the student by asking questions that provoke deep reflection. Students evaluate every statement they make and use each other's arguments to arrive at new conclusions while discovering more questions. By applying the Socratic method to literature and philosophy, students can engage themselves with the material in a way that no textbook or system of memorization can provide. But this kind of philosophical Socratic discussion, led by the teacher, also has an important place in other courses. More generally speaking, something like Socratic discussion happens whenever a teacher asks a question that provokes deeper thought, or answers a question with a question. This is teaching by questioning, learning by discovery. At Great Hearts, Socratic moments begin in kindergarten and first grade, and culminate in the upper high school grades when our scholars wrestle with the highest order questions of the human condition.



# Course of Study, 6-8th Grades

Literature and Composition	Vocabulary • Literary Works • Grammar • Composition
Foreign Language	Latin
Mathematics	Variables • Pre-Algebra • Formulas • Fractions • Algebra
History	Ancient World and Medieval History • Texas and American History • Geography
Science	Life Science • Physical Science • Earth Science
Fine Arts	Studio Art • Music
Other Core Subjects	Physical Education



# Course of Study, 9-12th Grades

- Humane Letters - A seminar-based course combining History and English classes
- Honors Mathematics - Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry, and Calculus
- Honors Science - Biology, Chemistry, Physics I and II
- Economics, Drama, and Senior Thesis
- Latin III and IV or a Modern Language
- Fine Arts - Honors Music/Choir, Honors Poetry, Studio Art III and IV
- Physical Education



*What does a K-12 Great Hearts Education look like?*



# Course of Study: Language Arts

Language arts aims to cultivate a love of the good and the beautiful in the souls of our students. This is achieved through rigorous study in the areas of literature, poetry, phonics and spelling, grammar and composition. In every grade level, students are steeped in beautiful language of high-quality children's literature. These texts serve as the primary source for reading and grammar practice. Teachers uses specific guided instruction to train students in decoding and spelling skills through the Spalding method. Leveled readers are utilized to support students in their reading skills. Writing begins with dictation and imitation, and develops into well ordered compositions. The study of language is also the science of grammar: classifying, describing, parsing, diagramming, declining and conjugating.



# Course of Study: Foreign Language

A human being is the *zôon logon echon*, the “verbal animal” (Aristotle). As such, language is the absolutely fundamental, essential liberal art of the human being. While any language can be studied illiberally—i.e. “business English,” “Spanish for the tourist,” or “Latin and Greek roots for SAT prep”—we teach all language liberally, for the cultivation of the mind.

The study of Latin is the beginning of a Great Heart student’s experience with the language in which many of the seminal classics of Western Civilization were written. Students in grades 6-8 will enjoy exposure to the authors, history, and classical literature, and will begin to appreciate language as such.

Students in grades 9-12 will embark on an in depth four-year study of either a classical or modern language. As fine literature is the highest expression of a language, the ability to read and delight in it is the capstone of a Great Hearts student’s foreign language study.



# *Discovering Understanding by Communicating*



# Course of Study: Literature and Poetry

Literature - the idea of story - is fundamental to the human experience. It is a way of pursuing Truth through human experience in ways that a skilled writer crafts - a laboratory for the human heart. The goal of literature at Great Hearts is to help our students to fall in love with reading and with story. In pursuit of this end, students read beautiful stories and have discussions in class about those stories. These conversations allow the teacher to address concepts such as setting, character, narrative, etc., as they arise in the context of the story.

Poetry is another introduction to that which is Beautiful. Students will focus on the memorization and recitation of poems, and will begin to ask questions about why a poet chose a particular word or phrase, or wrote a line in a particular way.



# Course of Study: History

History is the story of people through place and time; it is a literary art. We teach our students history to give them facts, stories, insights, and models, but more importantly we teach them history as part of the greater human project of remembering who we are. Through a coherent course of study, students will arrive at an educated knowledge of the people, societies, places, governments, arts, and religions that have shaped Western Civilization.

Each year students in grades 6-8 will focus on a major civilization as well as a section of Texas, American, and medieval history. In high school, students will follow a sequential study of American history through modern Europe, and will then work their way back to the beginning of Western Culture.



# Course of Study: Mathematics

Like all disciplines, mathematical exploration is the pursuit of truth. During their time at the academy, students move from the exploration of concrete objects, towards a pictorial representation of the objects, and finally on towards the abstract symbols and algorithms for operating on these symbols.

The 6th grade Fundamentals of Math course is a bridge between our K-5 Singapore Math's concrete and pictorial to seeing math in the abstract; it is also preparatory for 7th and 8th grade algebra. High school students will progress through a rigorous course of Euclidean geometry, trigonometry, and calculus.





# Course of Study: Science

Our students explore the natural world through direct observation, demonstrations and experimentation, reading and lectures. They learn how to hypothesize, test, infer, construct models and theories, and see what the limits of the sciences are. Our robust and carefully sequenced course of study prepares our graduates for specialized university studies AND provides all students a robust foundation that is often superior to university requirements for non-science majors.

6-12 students study the foundations of all the major sciences: Biology, Astronomy, Chemistry, and Physics.



# *Finding Truth through Critical Thought*



# Course of Study: Fine Arts

The Great Hearts curriculum would not be complete without the study of the musical, visual, poetic and dramatic arts. Instruction focuses on both the skills at the core of the medium and an appreciation for its beautiful works. This two-pronged approach requires thoughtful integration of the making and performance of the arts – *poesis* – with the formation of a student’s aesthetic sense in studying great works of art, poetry, drama and music.

Students should come away with an appreciation of human potential for excellence – for the individual and the collective. They will step outside of themselves and their own times, appreciating the value of participation in a collective endeavor (a dramatic production that fulfills the vision of Shakespeare, or a choral performance of a Brahms motet). The study of great works will allow them to see the origins of excellence and better understand the traditions from which new and creative works are generated.



# Course of Study: Physical Education

Athletics has a two-fold benefit for the athletes. First, the training and disciplining of the body leads to an excellence of physique, health, and happiness. Second, competition will lead to perseverance and teamwork. *Competition* has two Latin parts: *petere*, which means *to seek*, and *com*, which means *together*. *Competition* literally means to seek or strive together. In athletics there is both struggle and camaraderie.

PE lessons consist of traditional and non-traditional sport activities that encourage teamwork, leadership, focus, and building concrete habits. We foster the love of the game by emphasizing the fundamentals of each sport. Additionally, we teach and demonstrate good sportsmanship, how to lose and win with honor, how to be a good person on the field, and how to carry that into the classroom, on campus, and into the community.



# Questions?

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Great Hearts Arlington! While we have endeavored to provide meaningful information about our **curriculum and pedagogy**, we recognize that there may be unanswered questions. Please feel free to reach out to us at [ArlingtonInfo@GreatHeartsTXSchools.org](mailto:ArlingtonInfo@GreatHeartsTXSchools.org). Go Archers!

In partnership,

The Great Hearts Arlington Upper School Team

