

Home School to Classical School, Easing the Transition

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1) When is the best time to make the shift from homeschooling to school?

The “best time” for this important move will vary from child to child, even within a family. We recommend the earlier the better for boys, since they benefit from being away from mom, in order to learn to stand on their own. They also mature slower than girls in most areas, so this is obviously a tough, parental call. A good rule of thumb is to visit and observe the grade your child may go in to help you determine his readiness and compatibility.

From the school’s standpoint, there are some important transition points that we recommend for an easier transition. It’s usually easier to go from a homeschool and enter (as appropriate) the first grade, third grade, or fifth grade. At the secondary, we strongly recommend either a seventh or ninth grade entrance. In some classical schools, however, entering ninth means missing logic. We do not recommend entering later than ninth grade due to the academic speciality and level of difficulty.

2) How can we help our child prepare for the school routines?

Put simply, the biggest difference your child may notice is that school has more “rules” than home. So, to prepare for school, it would be a good idea to have your child practice raising his hand to ask questions or make a comment, keeping his eyes on his own paper, putting materials neatly back in the same place each time, getting to work without lots of questions, finishing work in a set length of time, and taking tests without assistance. The teachers will be patient with all the students, but these kinds of routines are taken for granted in school after the earliest years.

3) What are some typical changes we can anticipate in our child’s behavior after entering school?

If your child is entering an elementary grade, he may come home tired after a full day of school. This will pass rather quickly, especially if you ensure he gets enough rest at night. At the older grades, he will probably be a bit overwhelmed at first with the difference in the kind of work expected of him and the amount of work required. Again, assuming the admissions process was carefully done and he is in the appropriate grade, this too should pass. He will see his peers coping with the work and he will discover he can do it, too. Another possible change you may see is that your child may seem more independent. Though this may be painful to you as a parent, it is normal and good, if attitudes are still respectful, as we all expect them to be. Finally, it must be said that your child may bring home reports of other kids’ misbehaving. This, too, is normal, as we are all sons of Adam. However, always check out “the rest of the story” with the folks at school. Like you, we are committed to a godly education.

4) What are some of the unique academic aspects of the classical program we should be made aware of?

In the elementary grades, Latin is a subject that may not be studied in a homeschool setting. Some classical schools begin Latin in the third grade, so if your child enters at that point, there should be little problem. If your classical school offers a summer school, Latin, as well as some of the other unique classes, may be offered. This would be a wonderful opportunity to have your child get a less

formal beginning to school. The grammar stage will also use a lot of memorization and chanting as a means to teach the students. This may be unfamiliar to you and your family.

Logic is usually taught in the junior-high program, and it is very important that your older student not miss this building block. Again, ask the school about summer school possibilities, or even tutoring. Writing- including correct grammar and spelling – will be very critical to the classical program your child will enter. Plan to see an emphasis on this, as well as reading many titles (including historical biographies and novels), and using possibly a higher level of math and science than many other school programs.

5) Are there any peer problems we should anticipate, since our child is just joining the class, and may be the only homeschooled child?

This is often a concern, but rarely does it develop into a real problem. If our school is all we say it is, and if your child has been lovingly, firmly, and biblically trained, we should have a great time together. Your child should quickly find peers who, though not homeschooled, will become good friends, and will discover they have had many common experiences. Yes, there will likely be bumps and bruises with someone at some point, but that's life in a fallen world. Part of the benefit of being in a Christian school is the chance to settle those "bumps" in a biblical manner.

6) Does the school have any other advice for us as we consider this possible transition?

Well, since you asked, yes, we do. Sad to say, some homeschoolers put relatively little thought into the long-term educational plans for their children. As a school, we have had to do just the opposite. We have spent much time and effort building a consistent, quality program. Therefore, unlike a homeschool situation, we cannot quickly change certain aspects of the school. That may include even some undesired aspects. Your input, as with all our families, is critical to our success and improvement. We would just ask that you seek to understand that we are a school, and not ask us to change fundamental practices and philosophies we have committed to, and be patient with us as we do seek to make changes where we can.

Finally, we would urge you to look at this transition for the long term. That is, we believe it would be better for your child to come with the intention of completing his classical education, rather come one year, maybe homeschool the next, and perhaps seek to return to school the following year. Our experience has led us to believe this kind of fluctuation does not promote a consistent, solid education of any kind. Please examine your goals for your child carefully, then examine our school goals carefully. We hope they are a good match. When we admit homeschooled students whose parents have very similar goals to ours, those students become some of the best, biblically sound students we graduate! And to all of our joy, "...when they are old, they will not depart from it."