



Two Rivers Classical Academy is distinctively “collaborative.” Though this model is new to our community, it has a well-established track record of success across the country. The following provides a brief explanation of the collaborative model we intend to use, as well as resources for further reading and consideration.

Background

The model goes by several names: “collaborative,” “hybrid,” and “University Model®.” As the names suggest, the model aims to combine the best attributes of homeschooling with the best attributes of traditional schooling, integrating them into one educational experience under one cohesive curriculum.

TRCA will provide comprehensive, classical curriculum. Students will learn in the classroom two days per week with professional, qualified teachers. This will be a full school day with the full range of subjects. Parents will teach lessons and oversee assignments on the alternate homeschool days. In pre-grammar and grammar school (grades pre-K-4), the fifth day will be a flex day – a day for catching up on coursework, attending enrichment activities, or simply spending time with family. For logic and rhetoric schools (5th thru 12th grades), the fifth day will be used as flex days and for potential additional coursework at home.

While the model is relatively new to Central Iowa,¹ hundreds of schools across the U.S. are successfully using it. Many of these schools affiliate with one another through the National Association of University-Model® Schools,² the Association of Classical Christian Schools,³ or other organizations and accrediting bodies. TRCA may seek to associate with one or more like-minded associations for the purposes of teacher training, resources, and development.

Similar schools that we have noted:

Trinity Classical Academy of Omaha, NE
tcaomaha.com

Emmaus Academy of Rockford, IL
emmausacademy.com

Classical School of Dallas, TX
classicaldallas.org

Charis Classical Academy of Madison, WI
charisclassical.com

What It's Not

The collaborative model shares several features with other educational options, so it is naturally confused with those options. Therefore, it may be helpful to distinguish what it isn't:

Part-Time School. Although students sit under classroom teachers twice a week, education occurs five days per week using a unified curriculum and plan. Some days are on campus, and some days are at home.

Homeschool Group or Co-op. Though we celebrate the tremendous success of the homeschooling movement and of classical homeschooling options, collaborative education is something different: a comprehensive, unified curriculum under the co-teaching of professionals and parents.

¹ St. Thomas Classical Academy in Des Moines began in the fall of 2018 and follows a similar model with an emphasis on Catholic teachings. See stthomasclassical.org

² See the National Association of University-Model® Schools, umsi.org

³ See the Association of Classical Christian Schools, classicalchristian.org

Professional Tutoring. Tutoring is specific to one subject or area. By contrast, a collaborative school functions from a holistic paradigm of education that seeks to shape students in every area of learning.

Traditional Private School. Though we will work in a spirit of partnership with private schools throughout our community, collaborative education is different - and requires a larger commitment of time and effort from parents in the direct education of their students.

What It Is

For starters, a collaborative school is a "real school," with professional teachers, a head-of-school (much like a principal or dean), an established curriculum, and a cohesive vision for K-12 education. TRCA is a registered nonprofit corporation, led by a board of directors and governed by the nonprofit laws of the State of Iowa.

Collaborative education seeks to maintain the biblical responsibility God has given to parents to be the primary educators of their children. This responsibility belongs to parent – not to the state, not to the church, and not to the school (Deuteronomy 6). Our model empowers moms and dads to take a direct leadership role in the education of their children, while still reaping the benefits of a structured school environment.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Parents who select TRCA to assist in educating their family will benefit from a ready-made curriculum package and carefully-crafted lesson plans. The academy teachers choose each piece of curriculum according to TRCA's classical and Christian distinctives, and then write lesson plans for both the classroom and homeschool days to take students through each subject at an appropriate pace over the course of the academic year. On the classroom days, students benefit from the rigor of the disciplined environment, a range of instruction methods, and social learning opportunities.

During the remainder of the week, parents co-teach, guiding their children to complete coursework prepared by the classroom teacher. This arrangement gives parents more time to enjoy and train their children, with freedom from choosing and planning curriculum and always being "on" as the teacher.

We hope to push students back to their families instead of drawing them in to a busy slate of academy-focused activities. This allows the family to prioritize time together as well as involvement with their church and community. Families can choose areas of interest in which to participate, whether open-enrolling in a school to utilize athletic or music programs, selecting community offerings for leisure or educational pursuits, or finding private lessons or home school coop opportunities. Likewise, parents may recognize specialized training that would appeal to their family specifically, such as speech therapy or learning a foreign language, and TRCA would be happy to assist these families in finding external programs to supplement their studies.

Sample Weekly Schedule

- Monday: classroom school day
- Tuesday: homeschool day
- Wednesday: classroom school day
- Thursday: homeschool day
- Friday: "flex day" with activities varying by grade/stage

The learning schedule during homeschool days can be adapted to a student's particular learning needs. The following are estimates for how much time will be needed on the average homeschool day to complete coursework. These numbers are simply a framework and will certainly vary based on the child.

Homeschool Times

- Pre-K: home assignments are optional.
- Kindergarten thru 1st grade: 1-3 hours (2 homeschool days per week)
- 2nd thru 4th grades: 3-6 hours (2 homeschool days per week)
- 5th thru 12th grades: 5+ hours (2 or 3 homeschool days per week)

Conclusion

The beauty of this model is the ability to preserve the influence of parents and to provide valuable academic resources, the skills of multiple teachers, and an affordable price tag. The classical Christian curriculum and culture emphasize each student's character development and growth in assuming personal responsibility for learning.⁴ Perhaps the greatest benefit is the gift of time: parents have more time for imparting their own faith and values to their children. In this unique partnership, parents and the school work together toward a mutual goal: to produce wholesome, competent, and virtuous followers of Christ who are prepared to enter vocational training or college.⁵

Two Rivers Classical Academy will seek to provide an excellent education by combining the best of both worlds: parents and teachers, classroom and homeschool, individual and group, and flexibility and structure.

Two Rivers Classical Academy admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at our school and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

⁴ For another example of the benefits of the University Model[®], see the chart under "The Gift of Time" at umsi.org/about-umsi/about-the-um/

⁵ In one study, University Model[®] students "averaged equally high or higher scores than traditional, comprehensive Christian school seniors on all three common standardized exams." See ICCTE Journal, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 2014: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1123&context=iccte>