



The Weekly Leigh Mail

April 22
2008

Words of Practical Encouragement— Classical Model

Good Morning!

This year, I have learned more about the classical model as I studied for my Doctorate, attended meetings with other classical educators, met with CC Training Teams, and began investigating brain processes. I am at the grammar stage in so many subjects, but I am excited to share what I am learning with you this summer at the Parent Practicums. I have been privileged to spend many days this winter training the other Practicum speakers, so we can do our best to promote good academic habits while understanding how humans learn. This group of men and women dedicated to the classical model are just as excited and equipped to encourage parents as I am. I value their time and efforts and am sure you will leave your Practicum as inspired as ever.

We have a brand new topic this year. Each morning, we will begin with a session sharing what we have learned this year about the classical model. Then the Speaker will lead you through *Understanding Math: From Counting to Calculus* as he or she helps you to discover the foundational language of math. None of us, including me, are an expert in this arena. We need your help as we discover together how to reduce the language of math to basic grammatical concepts that will equip teachers and students to examine math problems for fundamental ideas. To me, this is as exciting as being in on the ground floor of the genome project or even our own Essentials program. It has taken the CC team many years to figure out how to teach the basic structure of all written languages. Now we want to begin the same process for math.

I know that if I can understand the basic design of math, and (this is the most important part) learn how to share it with young students, I will become a better math teacher. More importantly, I will be able to show myself approved unto God when I am able to have an answer for the math and science community when they ask me to defend why I believe we live in a world of order and not chaos.

Brain research has shown that the memory functions best by 'chunking' ideas in small patterns or groups of about seven ideas. Funny how there are 7 sentence patterns, 7 colors in a spectrum, 7 notes of music, 7 days of the week, etc. There is a place in the brain where the 'chunking' occurs for face recognition. Humans immediately analyze 2 eyes, 1 nose, 1 mouth, 2 cheek structures, and 1 hair type (about 7 ideas) and determine if they recognize a person from over 6 billion options. This same place in the brain holds chunks of data that we use regularly. Master chess champions tend to look at a game board and spot 7 common groupings of plays in order to memorize the board and intuitively predict the next winning move as fast as most of us recognize a friend. Most humans are quick to recognize faces because we see faces repeatedly, over long periods of time, and often within intense emotional context. Turns out that the same is true for any common grouping or pattern. What seems intuitive to a professional athlete comes from recognizing the same plays over and over. They know what will happen next because they have seen the same situation so many, many times. Amateurs call it experience. Professionals call it hard work.

So I am excited to learn from the parents at our 2008 Summer Practicums. The Lord will give us tools for learning math so we can give Him the glory. What patterns will we discover? Will seven be significant? Will the Holy Spirit manifest His strength in teaching math? How do symbols and words relate? Why is math perceived as being difficult? I can't wait to see you again and find out what you have to teach me!

Dear Lord, this summer help us to refresh our excitement about learning so we can continue to lead our children in the game of hide and seek with their Creator. Thank you for allowing us to find order in a fallen world.

Love, Leigh

P.S. This is my last Leigh_Mail for the 2007-2008 school year. Thank you for allowing me to share my excitement about home-centered learning with you. And please, feel free to send these emails to all of your friends interested in home-centered learning. I hope they can encourage all classical educators and those interested in home-centered education.