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Liberty Classical Academy in White Bear Lake

Misa Chappell ^[1]



Image Credit: Tate Carlson ^[2]

Sam Baum and Sam George get some help from their teacher, Kristine Brake.

The Liberty Classical Academy (LCA) ^[3] opened its doors in 2002 with 28 students. In a testament to faith and hard work, the student body is now 146 strong, and the school recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Founded by headmaster Rebekah Hagstrom, the pre-K–12 private school offers a classical education that combines high academic standards with a Christian outlook.

Hagstrom, mother of four boys, began the academy, seeking to fill a void in local education options, which boasted either strong academics or Christian values, but not both in one school. During her search for an ideal program, she discovered the Schaeffer Academy in Rochester, which was started by six families with a specific vision. Inspired, Hagstrom decided to gather a few other White Bear Lake parents to build a school according to her vision.

Part of LCA's mission is "building moral leaders for tomorrow" through faith-based values of gratitude, humility respect, purpose, compassion and prayer. Another key component is a rigorous classical education, which consists of three phases: grammar (rules or facts), logic (understanding) and rhetoric (critical thinking). Small children begin with grammar—hence the expression "grammar school"—which is distinguished by learning through chants, rhymes and repetition. For example, Mrs. Smith's second-grade class loves the "Books of the Bible" song, replete with clapping and pantomime. "Their brains are sponges at that age," Hagstrom says. "Learning that way really sticks."

Besides a rigorous and broad liberal arts curriculum, in middle school, kids study logical arguments and the mechanics of understanding. High school adds rhetoric, emphasizing

analysis, synthesis and communication. Seniors are required to write a 20-page thesis on a controversial topic, and also must give a 10-minute speech and a 10-minute defense on the subject.

LCA's students are high achievers. They consistently earn better test scores than the national average, and the last three graduating classes have been awarded \$280,000 in scholarships. Alumna Savannah Treleven, a magna cum laude graduate, was surprised at how academically prepared she was for college compared with other freshman. "I will always be thankful to God for placing Liberty in my life," she says. "My teachers showed me how to look for God and walk the walk as a proud Christian."

Lauren McGregor is a senior at LCA who had transferred there after freshman year in public school. "It was not benefitting me spiritually or academically," she says. "The student-to-teacher ratio was so high that I had to stay after school to get my questions answered." After McGregor transferred, her grades improved even though she was in a much more rigorous course of study.

The children wear uniforms, but are confident in their individuality. "We emphasize love with structure, and our kids are joyous, not constantly afraid of punishment," Hagstrom says. The school welcomes pupils from all backgrounds. "We think that this program is so excellent that we don't want to keep it to ourselves," Hagstrom says. "We want our students to go out in the world and make a difference. We are not in a holy huddle with only other Christians."

The school hosts a monthly development tour to connect with the community and raise awareness about the academy. The tour offers a glimpse into the daily rhythms of the school, beginning with the morning *Salve Deus* ("Good morning, God") assembly during which the kids gather for prayer, announcements and the pledge of allegiance. If there is a birthday, the students sing "Happy Birthday" in Latin. The children are primed to start each day on an upbeat note and file out of the chapel singing in unison.


"People call us the hidden gem because not a lot of people know about us yet," Hagstrom says. "But we hope to change that."

& Interested in attending a development tour? Contact Bethany Zenner at [651.955.4082](tel:651.955.4082) [4].

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