

Competitive Advantage

Jefferson Academy offers a philosophy and instructional approach fusing the most effective methods used in the public school with the traditional or classical instructional approach which for centuries educated the world's greatest thinkers.

Knowledge for a Meaningful Learning Experience

The contemporary trend employed in most schools today (known as constructivism/inquiry-based learning) is “child-centered” where student interest and responses drive instruction and students create their own knowledge and understanding through inquiry and “real-world” experiences. Teachers act as a facilitator in the classroom, guiding students to use higher-level thinking skills in discussions of open-ended questions. Teachers refrain from sharing their own knowledge until after students have constructed their own understanding. Desks are often arranged in “tables” to promote cooperative learning. Students often work together on projects. Assessment often comes in the form of a project and rubric. Instruction is implicit in nature (implied for students to uncover), with less emphasis on grammar and spelling rules. In mathematics, abstract concepts are emphasized over memorization of math facts and rules. History, if taught, is changed to ‘social studies’. Constructivists believe self-expression is more important than truth. The problem that arises amidst this development of higher order thinking is that the most fundamental component of higher order thinking is missing – KNOWLEDGE! One cannot understand, analyze, apply, evaluate, or create unless one first KNOWS. In order for a student to have a meaningful experience, they must first have an adequate understanding or rather a measurable mastery of the content through which they will delineate their experience.

Core Knowledge Sequence with an Emphasis on History and American Heritage

Jefferson Academy’s instructional focus is principally rooted within the “classical” or “traditional” approach to learning, with an emphasis on content knowledge and teachers being experts of that knowledge. We emphasize mastery of core knowledge along with critical thinking skills and comprehension. We use explicit (clear, unambiguous) instruction. In

grammar and spelling, students learn patterns and rules. We expose children to great works of literature and students in turn develop an appreciation for challenging books. Latin will be taught to develop English vocabulary and writing skills will be developed through a structured format to teach students persuasion and presentation. Mathematics instruction emphasizes mastery of facts and rules to make math processes automatic. It is enhanced through continual review, mental math, and problem-solving skills. History is valued and our heritage appreciated. Independent work is expected. Assessments include daily formative assessments and summative assessments to regularly assess the students' acquisition of the prescribed standards. We believe self-esteem comes from achieving a set, high standard – not from lowering a standard to make a child feel he or she is valued. At Jefferson Academy, our “child-centered” staff creates a safe and caring learning environment; furthermore, we really do educate the whole child – especially the mind.