



Choosing Chesterton

Ten Reasons Why Families are
Selecting Chesterton Academy
for High School Today

*“A dead thing can go with the stream;
only a living thing can go against it.”*

– G.K. CHESTERTON

Dear Friend,

Where are you going to send your child to high school?

It's one of the most important decisions you will ever make—even more important than where you send them to college. High school students need to be prepared intellectually and spiritually for the challenges they are certain to face after graduation.

Chesterton Academy was born from a desire to provide the very best high school education to prepare our children: an enriching, meaningful education in an authentically Catholic environment.

Our schools provide an integrated, Catholic education – one that emphasizes truth, beauty, and goodness in every subject. Every subject is connected to the central truth of the Incarnation.

A Chesterton education helps students experience Christ's saving love and, in turn, helps prepare them to proclaim the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Catholic faith to others. A Chesterton education helps prepare students as they leave high school to discern God's plan for their lives and encounter an increasingly dark and skeptical world so desperately in need of Jesus Christ.

Our aim is to raise up a new generation of leaders and saints who will joyfully defend the faith and build up a culture of life.

As you look ahead to selecting a high school for your student, we invite you to explore key criteria for evaluating your educational options, and learn why more and more families are choosing Chesterton. Join us as we work together to build up a joyful culture of life and restore the world through Christian joy and common sense.

Your servant,



Dale Ahlquist, President
The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton

*This guide was compiled by Dr. Eric DeMeuse,
Headmaster of Chesterton Academy of Milwaukee.
A key source was Archbishop J. Michael Miller's
5 Marks of a Catholic School.*



Dale Ahlquist, President
The Society of
Gilbert Keith Chesterton

About the Chesterton Schools Network

The Chesterton Schools Network (CSN) is an initiative of The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, a worldwide lay apostolate dedicated to evangelization through education.

The CSN inspires and supports a growing number of joyfully Catholic, classical, and affordable high schools with comprehensive curricula and support services. By fall of 2024, there will be nearly 70 schools in the Network operating worldwide.

Learn more at ChestertonSchoolsNetwork.org.

Choosing Chesterton

Ten Reasons Why Families are Selecting Chesterton Academy

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1. *“I want my child to be a saint.”*

A school inspired by a supernatural vision

“Take away the supernatural,” says Chesterton, “and what remains is the unnatural.”

The mission of a school, and how it is lived out, should be inspired by the truths of the Catholic faith. High school students in particular have a predisposition to know the truth. A school climate should encourage students to ask life’s “big questions” so that students can “discover” the truths of the faith. A high school that points students on this trajectory in life is a great gift, for there is no higher vision than “the reality of God and of the world to become the measure and standard for one’s own desire and action.”¹ A student who knows this can live with purpose and change the world.

2. *“I want my child to discover his or her vocation.”*

An educational model that forms the whole person

“An emphasis on the inalienable dignity of the human person – above all on his or her spiritual dimension – is especially necessary today. Unfortunately, far too many...perceive education to be merely an instrument for the acquisition of information that will improve the chances of worldly success and a more comfortable standard of living. Such an impoverished vision of education is not Catholic.” Education must seek to form children “to fulfilling their destiny to become saints.”²

A student’s direction and purpose flow from knowing what we were created for. An excellent school starts with the view of the student as *Capex Dei*, or being capable of receiving God. A school’s view of the human person is to reflect the needs of the student as both body (mind) and soul. With Christ as the true model, students may be led to develop their intellect and moral virtue to find true fulfillment and joy.

Christ helps us define our purpose and path in life – that is, what we are made for.

As Vatican II states, “...only in the mystery of the incarnate Word, does the mystery of man take on light.”³ Students need an environment to discover their unique talents and vocations to be at the service of Christ and his Church. An excellent school will educate and attend to both the temporal needs that one might fulfill one’s particular vocation and most importantly to provide preparation for one’s eternal end.

¹ Josef Pieper, *A Brief Reader on the Virtues of the Human Heart*, trans. Paul C. Duggan (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 20.

² Archbishop J. Michael Miller, “Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools,” Catholic Parents Online.

³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* §22.

3. ***“I don’t want my child to fall away from the faith.”***

An authentic, Catholic community that fosters a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

A school living out its proper mission provides access to the sacraments for students – in particular, the Mass, as the Eucharist is the most effective means of growth in the spiritual life by way of its effects. It is the source; the real presence of our Lord, and it is the summit, the supreme way to holiness (CCC 1377). The school and community rely on the supernatural help from the sacraments in order to live out their mission. Teachers, parents, and staff, reflect the living out of the sacramental life. The sacramental life is joyfully embraced and lived out with Mass, prayer, Rosary, lives of the saints, and celebratory feasts. School is a part of a much greater lived experience that merely study. For as G.K. Chesterton said, *“Education is not a subject...It is instead a transfer of a way of life.”* When students see the faith as a way of life, and the joy of the ordered life, it becomes much more difficult to leave.

4. ***“I want my child to find friends who share our values.”***

A community where students and families form friendships for life

Friends in high school are one of the most formative influences on a teenager—for good or ill. It is important that parents find a school community where they can trust the other students with whom their son or daughter will spend roughly 8 hours per day with—that’s over 5500 hours in the course of a high school career. As parents know, friends can lead children down a path of happiness or down a path of destruction. Thus parents should also seek a community where they can form meaningful relationships with other parents and families, and where their children can find lifelong friends who will challenge them to live virtuously and encourage them to follow the Lord.

5. ***“I want my child to learn that truth exists.”***

A curriculum with a point of view, where faith and reason meet in every class

There is no such thing as a neutral school, every school imparts a worldview. As G.K. Chesterton writes, *“every education teaches a philosophy; if not by dogma then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere.”* The school must impart the worldview that there is truth, and truth can be known. There is coherence in the world and in learning. All truth is God’s truth and therefore cannot be found in just theology but in all subjects. Faith and reason should be intertwined in every course each student undertakes. It is imperative that students find truth in all subjects and that they do not give rise to contradiction. High school students are quick to recognize and discredit hypocrisy. In each subject, Catholic values and beliefs are passed on to the students. This integration and consistency give further witness to the truth.

As G.K. Chesterton writes, *“The one thing that is never taught by any chance in the atmosphere of public schools is this: that there is a whole truth of things, and that in knowing it and speaking it we are happy.”*

6. *“I want my child to be surrounded by good role models.”*

Faith-filled faculty who are witnesses to the Gospel

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Pope Paul VI). The importance of teachers on a student’s life cannot be overstated. Research has demonstrated the necessity for children to have other adults in their lives that hold the same values and beliefs as parents. This grows in importance in high school as students seek independence apart from parents. If parents do not trust the teachers to be imitators of Jesus Christ, they cannot trust the school. Additionally, smaller schools provide greater opportunities for individual mentorship and healthy faculty-student relationships.

7. *“I want my child to be a lifelong learner.”*

An environment that fosters a life-long love of learning and pursuit of wisdom

Students spend a lot of time in high school immersed in reading and study. The content should thus be worthy and valuable. A high school should supply parents with the main reading list for all the courses for all the high school years. The main course of study should not be teacher-dependent, standardized-test-dependent, or subject to fads, but rather should be the most beneficial for developing habits and fostering wisdom. Parents shouldn’t accept the low bar of what is “not harmful,” but should demand that students’ minds and hearts receive the best that has ever been thought and said. Parents want the best for their children. Students steeped in the great intellectual tradition become themselves great minds and problem solvers. Parents should seek a school that highlights time-tested and beautiful texts, which students will find both enjoyable and challenging.

8. *“I want my child to be prepared for his future.”*

A broad-based curriculum that develops well-rounded students prepared to lead and succeed

While the trend in education is specialization, a liberal arts curriculum will develop skill sets and appreciation for a wide range of coursework. It is difficult for students to think longer term and discern what is best for them. Students can miss out by not challenging themselves or by not discovering a talent in an area not previously considered. A generalist course of study provides the necessary competencies and avoids the pitfalls of early specialization. Only 27% of college graduates go into the field in their course of study,⁴ and in the workforce, employees often hold several different positions throughout their career. A broad curriculum with few electives in high school leads to greater student knowledge and discernment and therefore to more focus in college and beyond.

⁴ Brad Plumer, “Only 27 Percent of College Grads Have a Job Related to Their Major,” The Washington Post, May 20, 2013.

9. *“I want my child to think critically.”*

An interdisciplinary education that encourages logical thinking and problem-solving skills

“...The modern academy has literally disintegrated itself into a plethora of fragmented particles, none of which is in communication with the other parts.”⁵ High schools that provide content and integration among disciplines will give students the opportunity to synthesize information and develop problem solving skills. Interdisciplinary connections, via integrated learning or combined subject coursework, help students develop these creative and higher-level thinking skills. Development and innovation in the world often come from problem solving ability of synthesis of disciplines. Finally, it is a beneficial career skill to appreciate and work with people from different disciplines within an organization.

10. *“I want my child to be able to articulate his ideas.”*

An environment that encourages conversation in the classroom

Seek schools that encourage conversation in the classroom. Interconnectedness with teachers not only increases a student’s sense of community, but it leads to greater engagement and school satisfaction. It’s no secret students learn more when engaged. Class engagement can happen from a variety of sources but usually it is often a result of teaching methodology. A critical pedagogy of historical significance is the Socratic method. Questions and class discussion naturally engage students. The Socratic method engages students, develops the ability to think on one’s feet, and provides practice to share and articulate one’s ideas. Students feel more connected and this yields greater student success. As stated in an educational study by Johns Hopkins, “During class, minimize ‘teacher talk’ time and increase ‘student talk’ time...”⁶ A dialogue is always better than a monologue.

Bonus!

“I wish they had this when I was a kid.”

Education and formation for the whole family

Upon review of the overall formation and culture of the high school, parents should wish that this education had been made available to them. And if they do, they should make this opportunity available to their child and participate in the education their child receives, discovering the joy of learning together. Parents know best, and they should choose a high school that they think provides the best formation for their child, even if the child is unsure. In most cases, when parents stay with their decision after prayer and thoughtful analysis, their children end up being grateful to their parents for making the right decision for them.

⁵ Joseph Pearce, “Chesterton and the Meaning of Education,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, February 27, 2014.

⁶ Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute, “Best Practices for Effective Schools,” *The Triad of Engagement*, 2, https://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/_PDFs/media/best_practices/effective_schools.pdf

Appendix | Approaches to Education: A Comparison

	Classical, Catholic Education	Secular Education
Philosophy <i>(Different views of man and world)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dignity is inherent. All men are made in the image and likeness of God. ▪ Reality in the true fullness of both material (body) and immaterial (soul). ▪ Direction and purpose are long-term and pointed to one's final end, which is union with God in heaven. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Materialist view; individuals are valued in relationship to production /contributions. ▪ Reality is limited to what is seen, and there is no acknowledgement of man's true final end. ▪ Actions are solely directed toward intermediate and immediate "ends" (college placement, pleasures).
Objectives <i>(Different goals)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To form wisdom and virtue, and to seek holiness through fulfilling vocation. ▪ Student to develop knowledge of identity and purpose. ▪ To foster wonder and develop the intellect and the will to know Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. ▪ To love knowledge for its own sake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasis on social and cultural norms; no moral standard given. ▪ Attention only to what is quantifiable and measurable (achievement test outcomes). ▪ Beauty, Truth, and Goodness are defined subjectively (relativism). ▪ Use of talent for self-gratification; knowledge is only a means to an end.
Curriculum <i>(Different content and methods)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive, integrated curriculum systematically planned from start to finish. ▪ Subjects are integrated within the same historical timeframe fostering deeper connections and greater retention of information. ▪ Curriculum is based on tried and true content and methods: the "great books," primary sources, Socratic learning. ▪ Faith and reason meet in every class. ▪ Students are taught how to think. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subjects are disintegrated (not connected). ▪ Large portion of course selection left to student preferences (electives). ▪ Strong alignment to standardized testing (teaching to the test). ▪ Emphasis on "new" and often untested methods. ▪ Focus on material sources of knowledge, generally omitting immaterial methods of reason (theology, philosophy). ▪ Students are taught what to think, not how.

Continued, next page

Character Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formation in what is good, beautiful and true. ▪ Development of virtue and citizenship, duty, self-control, and manners. ▪ Socratic discussion promotes civil discourse and rhetoric abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relativism and self-esteem. ▪ Lack of moral absolutes. ▪ Emotion and opinion-driven. ▪ Students learn to separate faith from daily life and from reason itself.
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All possess God-given dignity. ▪ Equal opportunity to use gifts and talents for the Body of Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal outcome. ▪ What can I get, versus what I give.
Parent/Teacher Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents are primary educators who collaborate with teachers and school. ▪ Teacher is mentor with authority put in place by parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent role diminished and separated. ▪ Teacher as facilitator and friend. ▪ Authority figures seen as barrier to freedom.
Student Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop the mind and will according to truth and virtue. ▪ Students assess opinions, feelings, and ideas in order to make critical judgments about reality. ▪ Students are active participants in their education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child is a product. ▪ No differentiation between objective and subjective truth; focus on feelings and opinions as an end. ▪ Students are passive receptacles of knowledge.
Student Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Happiness knowing whole truth and knowing identity and the purpose for life. ▪ Look toward eternal happiness. ▪ Able to overcome difficulty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Happiness tied to material pursuits. ▪ More apt to compare themselves to others, not see final end. ▪ More likely to be persuaded by false logic and the culture of the day.