

## Core Curriculum - Principled Academy aspires to be a character education school

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Although The Principled Academy aspires to be the character education school of the Bay Area, we do not overlook the importance of a core curriculum. There is significant knowledge that students must learn from preschool through middle school.

Almost 20 years ago, I attended a conference sponsored by the Core Knowledge Foundation established by Professor E. D. Hirsch. In a book published by Hirsch, *The Schools we Need* (1996), he explains how "The institution of the common school, proposed by Jefferson and fostered by

Horace Mann, had the goal of giving all children the shared intellectual and social capital [knowledge] that would enable them to participate as autonomous citizens in the economy and policy of the nation."

In studying the work of the core knowledge foundation, it became clear to me that the curriculum of The Principled Academy must provide all students with a coherent foundation of knowledge in all major subjects. Students learn on the basis of what they know, not on a romantic concept that they will naturally evolve at each stage of development as problem solvers and valuable citizens.

So, for example, in my middle school World History class I use a text published by the Core Knowledge Foundation. It covers a range of subjects that students need to be familiar with if they are to succeed in high school and college: Greek and Roman Civilization, the major religions, European civilization, the medieval Christian Church, Latin American, African, and Asian civilization.

Obviously, the text can only introduce students to these topics, but over the 180 days of the school year a framework of knowledge will help students with further study. Imagine if none of this was taught. It would be difficult for students in high school to understand the impact of classical civilization on the United States.

In my survey of American civilization I use texts to cover the founding of our nation, the colonial period, the national period, the Civil War, the industrialization of America, and so forth, leading to the contribution of many cultures to make for the American experience.

I try to provide students with the knowledge of the best of America, as well as how we have often failed to live up to our ideals. I want students to love our country so they can see themselves as contributing to the best of what America represents. I want them to be patriots. For if we send our students to further education, they need to see the importance of what they learn so that they can use their lives and their work in building a better America.