

# The Latin Way:

Where Academics and  
Character Converge

Washington Latin PCS



## Tonight's presenters

### **Diana Smith, Chief of Classical Education**

- “Capture the culture” at Washington Latin
- Promulgate our unique blend of academic and character education.
  - “To know the good is to do the good.”
  - All education is moral education.

### **Other Presenters**

- Khashiffa Roberts, Principal, Cooper Campus
- Bill Clausen, Assistant Principal for Academics, Cooper Campus
- Jennifer Thorpe-Lewis, Manager of Family Engagement, Washington Latin
- Cydney Roberts, Class of 2025, 2nd Street Campus



## Current State of Character Education

- It is once again *fashionable* - even necessary - to talk about character education. (See Brooks' "How America Got Mean" *Atlantic*, Sept. 2023)
- *Human flourishing* one of the current stated goals of education. (OECD 2022)
- *Adult culture* must be healthy in order for a school to thrive.
- Schools with a *narrow emphasis on performance virtues* - executive function, grit, industry - not faring as well on either achievement or flourishing scores.
- Need to teach "*practical wisdom*" (*phronesis*) - the ability to do the right thing at the right time, especially in a school that does not follow a systematic playbook.



## Latin's Character Funders

### *Kern Family Foundation Convening on Character and Culture*

- The Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues in Birmingham, England
- Institute in Advanced Studies and Culture at UVa (directed by Jim Hunter, “Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America” (1991))

### *Charter School Growth Fund Convening on Character and Culture*

- 15 schools present: e.g. Ednovate, DREAM, Brilla, Valor, Libertas, Voices, Fugees, Uplift
- Washington Latin one of 4 schools to present work on mission and culture



# **A Classical Education for the Modern World: A Purposeful Tension**

**Fall in Love with  
Enduring Ideas**



**Trust  
Courageously**



**Seek the  
Conversation**



**Serve the  
Common Good**



## Fall in Love with Enduring Ideas

Our education is an invitation to fall in love with deep, enduring ideas - Truth, Beauty and Goodness - and so to be changed. We believe that education should be transformational, involving both mind and heart; at their union character develops. Our curriculum introduces students to truths beyond their context yet within their grasp; our pedagogy of questioning opens ideas to critique and encourages students to wrestle with timeless ideas to make them their own.



## Seek the Conversation

Words matter and we teach students to use them with care. Our school is built for conversation, and we aim for students to embrace the idea that many perspectives and voices are the means to a richer learning experience for all. We believe that a true education sparks discussion and provokes thought; conversations – with each other and with the thinkers of the past and present – are the crucible for all learning. The exchange of ideas is a moral act: it catalyzes the character development of the speaker and the listener, calling on both to be reasonable, informed, and flexible in their opinions.



# The Latin Way



[The School of Athens, Raphael 1511](#)



# Seek the Conversation

The Latin Way

The Latin Way 2 - Seek the Conversation  
Washington Latin PCS

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# THE LATIN WAY

EPISODE 3

A Teaching Film

05:50

vimeo



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## Trust Courageously

Our school is built on relationships rather than hierarchy - trust is at the heart of everything. We courageously trust each other to do good in the world. As teachers, we trust ourselves to do right by our students and by each other. We trust our students and give them the freedom to be courageous themselves - to try, to make mistakes, and to realize over time how to direct their own paths.



## Serve the Common Good

**Non nobis solum nati sumus.**

*We are not born for ourselves alone.*

We believe education is the path to a fuller humanity, only possible when we weave ourselves into a tapestry broader than our own individual interests. Our school aims for students to understand and celebrate our shared humanity, so that they can see themselves as both individuals and as part of a whole.

Ultimately education's greatest purpose is to guide our students in their development as citizens committed to contributing to the common good.



## Applying the Latin Way to our decision-making

### Fall in Love with Enduring Ideas

What are the core principles or ideas that should guide this decision?

Where can we draw from the wisdom of the past as it applies to this decision?

Is this decision aligned to our purposeful tension of the classical education in a modern world?



### Seek the Conversation

Who is accountable for this decision? How are we seeking input, especially from those most impacted by the decision?

Do we engage a balance of opinions, perspectives and/or styles? If not possible, can we try to hold any missing ones?



### Trust Courageously

Do I trust myself to make a decision free of my own biases and with an awareness of my own fears, feelings, blindspots, and patterns?

Whom do I courageously trust? Who am I not trusting and why?



### Serve the Common Good

What's the potential impact on the community? Have we considered possible risks in making or not making this decision?

What is the common good that is bigger than just the people making the decision? Does this decision serve the common good and not an individual interest?



## A Classical Education for the Modern World: A Purposeful Tension

**We believe in the uplifting and liberating power of our classical education for all learners.** The academic and social experiences we strive to create at Washington Latin are in service of this freedom – freedom that allows our students to be at once disciplined and flexible in thought and action; freedom that allows them to fully embrace the humanity of others as well as their own; and the freedom that gives them the tools to identify and experience all that is good, true and beautiful in the world around them.

Inherent in our school's design is a purposeful tension between the ideals of the classical approach to education and the mindset of the modern times in which we live. ***We embrace this tension deliberately, recognizing the application of the classical approach to a modern audience will necessarily mean an intellectual give-and-take.*** We aim neither to impose outdated views on a modern audience nor to honor modern views solely for their familiarity and comfort.

- ***From the classical tradition***, we honor the emphasis on transcendent ideas, the concept of shared humanity, a commitment to courageous inquiry, and a dedication to the moral development of the young.
- ***From the modern era***, we embrace the belief that all people, regardless of age, race, gender, or background, can walk a path towards enlightenment. We honor the modern era's emphasis on a diversity of perspectives.

