

# Definition of Classical Education





Presented by Nova Classical's  
Pedagogical Leads: Brandon  
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# Tonight we will:


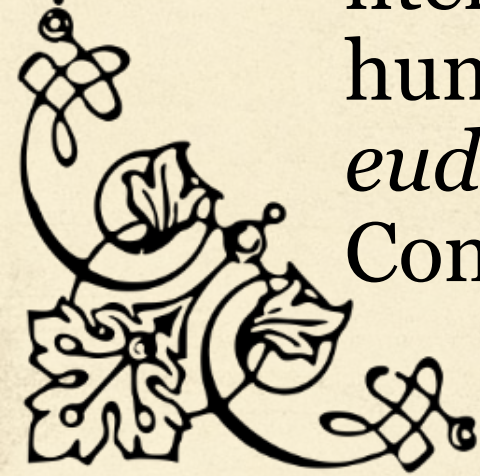
- Present the proposed definition of classical education at Nova Classical, a revision of one drafted in 2016-2017 as a training for staff.
- Give information synthesizing what we do and don't mean within this definition.
- Take questions along the way.



We believe that classical education is participation in the Great Conversation which links humanity in trying to discern what is universally True, Beautiful, and Good. Classical education utilizes the Trivium — the Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric subjects of learning — as well as the Quadrivium — the subjects of Arithmetic, Music, Astronomy, and Geometry — as the best way to prepare students to participate by thinking for themselves and being liberated from blindly following others.

Within each stage of the Trivium, students practice knowing (didactic instruction), reasoning (logic/coaching instruction), and generating (rhetoric instruction) information, as classical education focuses on training thinkers. Additionally, virtues are embedded in all instruction because knowledge without virtue is meaningless in the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

The goal of our classical education is engagement in the higher ideals of making deep thinkers who seek to live life well and effective citizens who are wise, moral, and ethical. Thus, the end of Nova Classical Academy's approach to classical education is the *eudaimonia* of each of its students. Loosely translated as “happiness,” or more literally “good spirit,” *eudaimonia* refers in Aristotelian philosophy as the highest human good. Like *arête* (virtue) and *phronesis* (practical or ethical wisdom), *eudaimonia* can be difficult to define, which makes it an excellent topic for the Great Conversation.



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- Learning from past minds by studying their words and knowledge while also sharing what understandings we gain from what we've learned.
- Seeing the importance of what has come before while also striving to add new knowledge for future generations.
- Understanding that all of humanity is linked together in this desire to learn, apply, and share so that we all can be better humans.



We believe that classical education is participation in **the Great Conversation** which links humanity in trying to discern what is universally True, Beautiful, and Good.

- This focuses solely on “Great Works” or Western Civilization.
- Only an elite level of educated people are able to participate. Or that you have to reach a certain level before you can participate.
- It’s just “coffee shop conversations” that have no application in the real world.



We believe that classical education is participation in the Great Conversation which links humanity in trying to discern what is **universally True, Beautiful, and Good.**

- We believe that there is a universal definition of these ideals, though we also believe that humanity has yet to know it clearly. Our goal is a better understanding.
- We study these ideals wherever they may be and search for them in places where they aren't as obvious.
- These are broader ideals than the way these words are typically used.

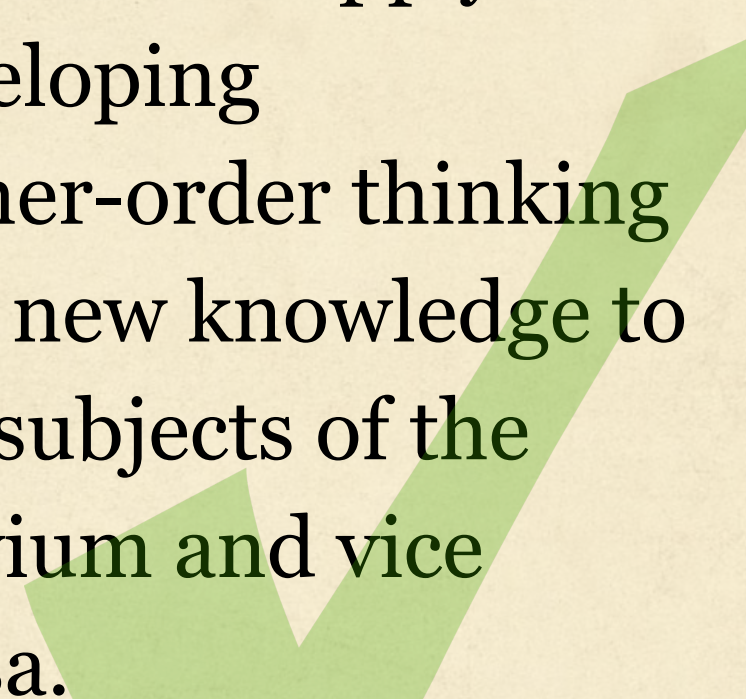


We believe that classical education is participation in the Great Conversation which links humanity in trying to discern what is **universally True, Beautiful, and Good.**

- What is True, Beautiful, and Good changes.
- There is no value in knowing this, or these things are unknowable.

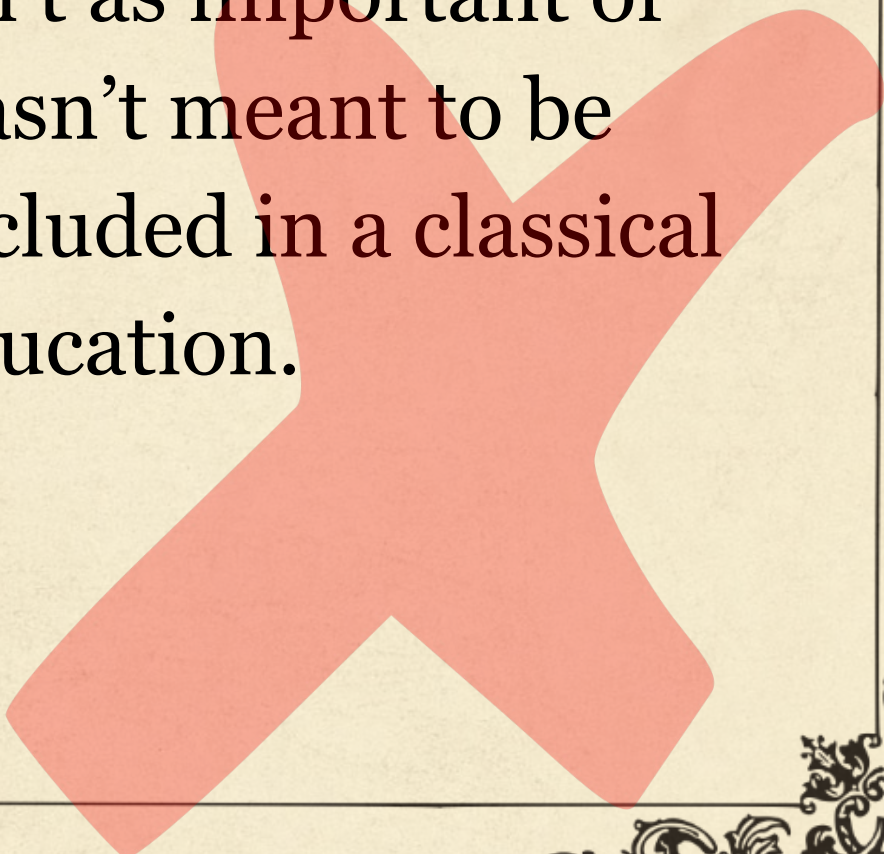


Classical education utilizes the **Trivium** — the Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric subjects of learning — as well as the **Quadrivium** — the subjects of Arithmetic, Music, Astronomy, and Geometry — as the best way to prepare students to participate by thinking for themselves and being liberated from blindly following others.


- Each of these subjects may be taught separately, but they are woven together in a tapestry of knowledge that support and elevate each other.
  - The Trivium subjects are meant to be taught first as learning how to learn, but that includes the grammar, logic, and rhetoric of all subjects, including math, science, music, etc. at an age-appropriate level.
  - As students enter the subjects of the Quadrivium, they continue to apply their developing higher-order thinking and new knowledge to the subjects of the Trivium and vice versa.
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- These subjects are only taught at certain points and once you've covered them, you're done.
  - These are each “stand alone” subjects. Also, you only need some of them to be well-educated as long as you get to a high enough level.
  - If a subject (like history or physical education) isn't specifically listed, it isn't as **important** or wasn't **meant** to be included in a classical education.
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- Liberated means not enslaved to another person nor to our own desires. It does not mean being liberal. It comes from the Latin *liber*: “free, not a slave, unrestricted.”
  - Rather than assuming someone’s information or viewpoint is correct because students lack the knowledge to say otherwise, they continue to learn and then verify or disprove. This is true no matter the source of information.
  - To not blindly follow others, students must seek to know themselves and the world.
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Classical education utilizes the Trivium — the Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric subjects of learning — as well as the Quadrivium — the subjects of Arithmetic, Music, Astronomy, and Geometry — as the best way to prepare students to participate by thinking for themselves and **being liberated from blindly following others.**

- Students are taught to go against their family values or to agree with whatever their teacher is presenting.
- Students will develop a sense of hubris that they know everything and are better than others, especially those who were not classically educated.



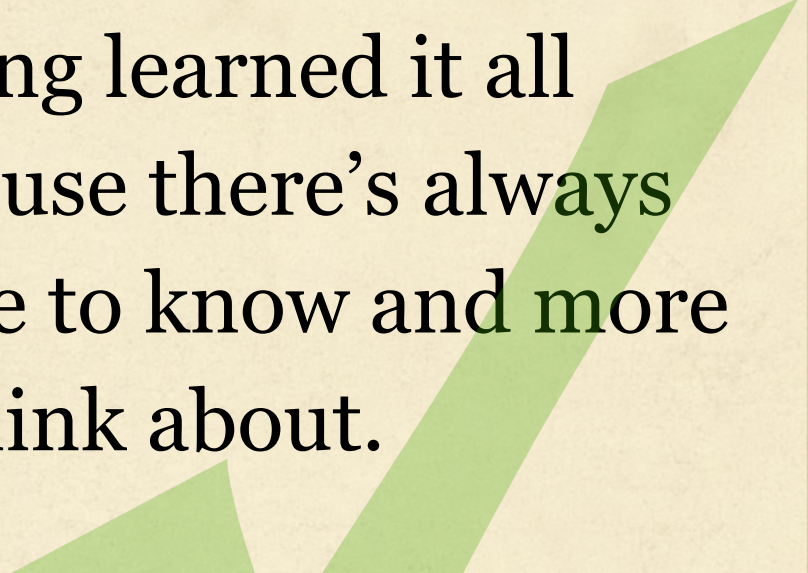
**Within each stage of the Trivium**, students practice knowing (didactic instruction), reasoning (logic/coaching instruction), and generating (rhetoric instruction) information, as classical education focuses on training thinkers.

- Students at different stages of the Trivium have different learning strengths and needs, but should always be given opportunities to know, reason, and generate at their level.
- There is flexibility in how to apply these skills at different stages of the Trivium. What might be generation for a grammar student may be knowing for one in the rhetoric stage.
- Knowing, reasoning, and generating are repeated within a unit and even within a single lesson. A lesson should flow back and forth these things based on the goals of the lesson and the needs of the students.

**Within each stage of the Trivium**, students practice knowing (didactic instruction), reasoning (logic/coaching instruction), and generating (rhetoric instruction) information, as classical education focuses on training thinkers.

- Students in elementary school are always in the grammar stage of learning. Middle school is always the logic stage and high school is just the rhetoric stage.
- Students in the grammar stage aren't ready for generating their own information, and students in the rhetoric stage don't need to worry about memorizing facts.
- All students are ready for the next stage at the same time. Also, how students know, reason, and generate ideas should also look the same.

Within each stage of the Trivium, students practice knowing (didactic instruction), reasoning (logic/coaching instruction), and generating (rhetoric instruction) information, as **classical education focuses on training thinkers.**

- Good training takes a lot of time, repetition, and thoughtful application. This is true of playing a sports or a musical instrument, cooking, painting, carpentry... Good thinking takes just as much hard work!
  - Just as Olympic athletes have very systematic training routines, so does classical education. There is a purpose to everything that we do in order to achieve this goal.
  - Again, just as other training is ongoing, so is classical education. There is no such thing as having learned it all because there's always more to know and more to think about.
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Within each stage of the Trivium, students practice knowing (didactic instruction), reasoning (logic/coaching instruction), and generating (rhetoric instruction) information, as **classical education focuses on training thinkers.**

- Classical education focuses on lots of rigor and students must be exposed to an accelerated curriculum to be thinkers.
- Students are taught what to think.
- Any thought is as good as any other thought.



Additionally, **virtues are embedded** in all instruction because knowledge without virtue is meaningless in the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

- While the virtues are explicitly taught (grammar stage of learning), they should be present in all other instruction as well.
- The virtues are presented as being very black and white to younger scholars and become more nuanced as the students develop through the stages of the Trivium.
- Virtue instruction starts through the lens of temperance —mastery of ourselves for the greater good—but grows into a deeper application in life as well as a thread in the Great Conversation.



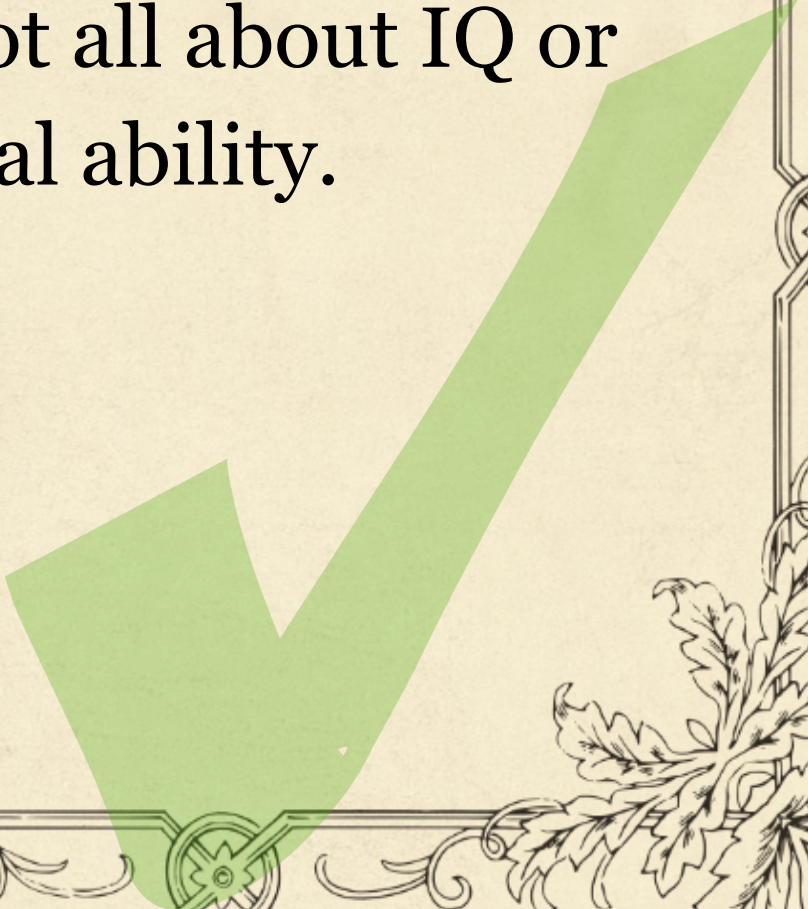


Additionally, **virtues are embedded** in all instruction because knowledge without virtue is meaningless in the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

- Virtue education is its own subject. Also, if we don't have time to get to it, that's okay.
- The virtues are mainly used as disciplinary tools.
- Once you've memorized the song, you know all about that virtue.



Additionally, virtues are embedded in all instruction because **knowledge without virtue is meaningless** in the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

- Knowledge used without virtue is dangerous to a society as well as to humanity and does not further the Great Conversation.
  - Since we believe that a goal of classical education is to improve things for future generations, then virtue must be included in the that use of knowledge.
  - Often the students who learn the most at Nova Classical are the ones who have developed strong virtuous habits. It's not all about IQ or natural ability.
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Additionally, virtues are embedded in all instruction because **knowledge without virtue is meaningless** in the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

- Good grades are not the same as great knowledge.
- Good grades are also not the same as being a virtuous person.
- Discussion on virtues happens in isolation from subject specific curriculum or across the curriculum.



The goal of our classical education is **engagement in the higher ideals of making deep thinkers who seek to live life well** and effective citizens who are wise, moral, and ethical.

- Students truly are lifelong learners who approach new situations with the ability to adapt and grow.
- They apply the skills of knowing, reasoning, and generating in every area of their life to be the best individual they can be.
- They are able to see a bigger picture as well as the small details and can balance what is important and what isn't through thoughtful reflection.



The goal of our classical education is **engagement in the higher ideals of making deep thinkers who seek to live life well** and effective citizens who are wise, moral, and ethical.

- This means our only goal is to get students into top colleges.
- Students must be successful in everything to live life well.
- They spend all their time focused on themselves and doing whatever they want.



The goal of our classical education is engagement in the higher ideals of making deep thinkers who seek to live life well and **effective citizens who are wise, moral, and ethical.**

- Students know how to act for the good of their communities and the world.
- They are advocates for what is True, Beautiful, and Good (as best as they can be defined).
- Students are aware that graduation from Nova is the starting point of their next role, not the pinnacle of what can be achieved.



The goal of our classical education is engagement in the higher ideals of making deep thinkers who seek to live life well and **effective citizens who are wise, moral, and ethical.**

- Students must be vocal.
- They will all advocate for the same things.
- Efficacy is measured only by significant or major contributions to society.

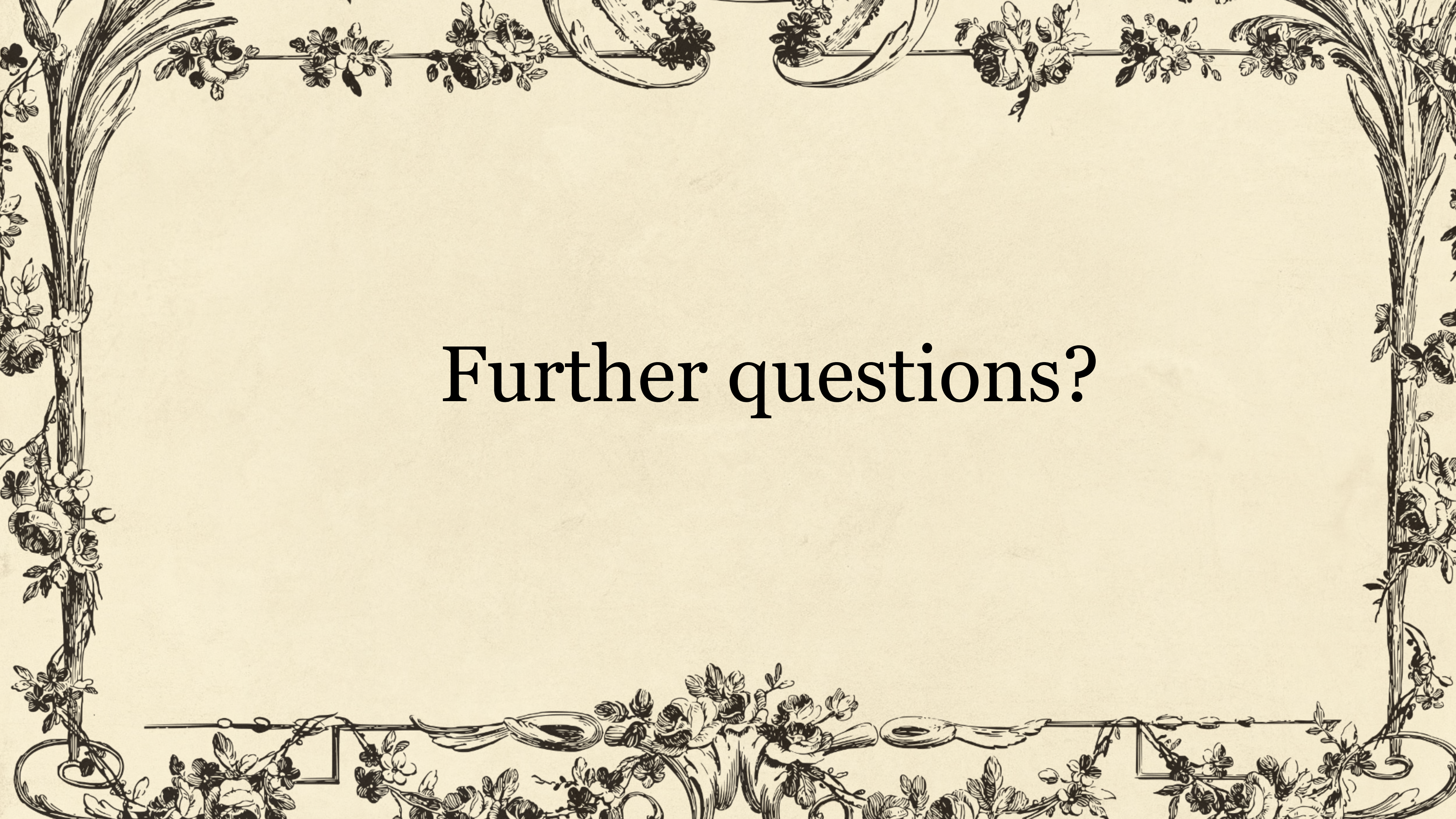




# eudaimonia

Thus, the end of Nova Classical Academy's approach to classical education is the *eudaimonia* of each of its students. Loosely translated as “happiness,” or more literally “good spirit,” *eudaimonia* refers in Aristotelian philosophy as the highest human good. Like *arête* (virtue) and *phronesis* (practical or ethical wisdom), *eudaimonia* can be difficult to define, which makes it an excellent topic for the Great Conversation.



A detailed black and white decorative border surrounds the page. It features a central horizontal band with repeating floral motifs, including roses and smaller flowers, interspersed with stylized scrollwork. Vertical borders on the left and right sides consist of a central stem with large, detailed roses and smaller blossoms. The corners are filled with intricate floral designs, including what appears to be a lily or iris-like flower. The overall style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book ornamentation.

Further questions?