



TRINITY ACADEMY

Innovative Classical Learning

30 Questions Parents Should Ask When Choosing a School for Their Children Trinity Academy's Answers

What is your school's greatest strength? What do you do better than other schools?

The Raleigh area boasts many quality academic schools (both public and private), and offers a wide selection of faith-based schools. Trinity Academy rivals the finest academic schools in the area when it comes to college placement and scholarship statistics while also empowering students to grow, test, doubt and prove their own Christian faith. Trinity students don't have to choose between academic quality and authentic Christian nurture. The approach taken is "education;" not "indoctrination." We don't tell our students what to think. We teach them how to think.

What are your school's core values?

Over the years, Trinity's Faculty has collectively affirmed a commitment to partnering with parents to achieve an environment that values, models and imparts a God-entered life, respect and humility toward God and others, a genuine love of learning, authentic integration of faith and knowledge, effective communication, an exercise of wisdom, a pursuit of excellence.

By God's grace, we intend to deliver:

- A true integration of faith and learning: there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular, no dualism in separating daily life and learning from our "Christian lives." All truth is known to be God's truth, every aspect of life and creation itself is seen as belonging to God and a reflection of His self-revelation to his image bearers.
- A program that systematically and incrementally engages students in all aspects of the classical liberal arts and the true sciences: a full complement of fine arts, sports, classical and modern languages, Bible and Christian Doctrine, mathematics, natural science, history, literature, logic and rhetoric are provided, beginning with the desired "outcome" skills, knowledge and virtues and working down from 12 to TK to ensure each discipline is properly covered and each outcome is achieved.
- An achievable rigorous program: that balances high academic expectations with a pace and schedule that does not over burden students.
- An ethos that balances justice and mercy by maintaining an atmosphere of responsibility seasoned with grace: kids are allowed to be kids, while being encouraged toward maturity.

Children are educated and disciplined as best suits them as unique individuals and “sameness” is neither fostered nor expected. Every student is loved and valued as being created in God’s own image and a “wanted” member of the community of faith and learning.

- A professional environment characterized by modeling Christ-likeness, and a commitment to excellence and joyful service: faculty and staff are eager to find ways of constantly improving the education they provide and are energetic and happy/thankful to be a part of the organization. We are about joyfully serving others.
- A physical plant that reflects the classic beauty and historicity of the education provided: there is “wholeness” or integrity in the learning environment that is consistent with the truth, goodness and beauty that the education teaches students to recognize. Note: This core value relates to our intentions regarding the natural beauty of our campus and our future architectural plans.

How would you describe your school's culture?

Trinity’s whole-school culture is that of a close-knit community. Many parents form life-long friendships with the families of their child’s classmates. The school offers numerous whole-community and class-based opportunities for social engagement, but new and continuing families are encouraged to plan and participate in informal parent-scheduled family gatherings. The desired student culture balances responsibility with grace. We want our students to enjoy their everyday school experience while growing into responsible adults. The “feel” is generally characterized by “nurture” in the lower grades and by “mutual respect” in the upper grades.

What spiritual emphasis, if any, does your school provide?

Trinity is non-sectarian and non denominational, yet unapologetically Christian in both instruction and culture. Younger children commit whole scripture passages to memory, along with the Lord’s Prayer, the historic Creeds of the unified pre-reformation Church, and the rudimentary principles of orthodox Christian doctrine as outlined in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Students of all ages engage in Bible or Religious Studies classes, and participate in regular Chapel services. But more importantly, personal spiritual formation and Christian worldview development is intentionally integrated into all aspects of the curriculum from Biology to Basketball. The goal is for every student to grow in confidence in their own spiritual tradition, while simultaneously growing to respect other traditions as well. Ultimately, by God’s grace, we intend to break the pattern of young people leaving the Christian Faith upon leaving home for college.

What is your philosophy of education?

Trinity Academy’s mission reflects a belief that the Classical Arts and Sciences, taught through historically proven methodologies in authentic Christian context, is the best possible preparation for college and for life. We believe that a combination of purposeful spiritual formation and critical life

skills development is the surest way to shape willing young learners into tomorrow's transformational Christian leaders.

What curriculum do you use for my child's grade level?

Most schools take one of two approaches to curriculum selection. Many schools adopt the newest possible materials and implement the latest technology with little thought as to how these materials or technologies affect learning outcomes. This approach leads to constantly changing curricular emphases and serious gaps in knowledge and skills development. Limiting textbooks and support materials to those available for particular media (e.g. Apple, Google or Microsoft tablets) effectively allows technology companies to establish the school curriculum. Other schools adopt "boxed" curricula for multiple subjects. These curriculum suppliers may be strong in some subjects, but consistent quality across many subject areas is unlikely.

Trinity Academy carefully selects textbooks and educational materials that best support our own faculty-developed "top-down" curriculum, and implements technology that enhances and does not distract from the education process. Specific grade-level curriculum and materials are delineated under "Academics" on our website.

How do you select educational materials that support your curriculum?

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What instructional methods are used in the classroom?

The classical model employed at Trinity matches instructional methodology to student cognitive development, supported both by ancient wisdom and the latest brain research. Another way of expressing this is that we teach "with the grain," pitching instruction to our students' natural ways of learning. We combine three classical traditions by offering Latin, by emphasizing the classical linguistic arts of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric, and by integrating multiple learning areas into a seamless curriculum from TK to 12. We blend four instructional methods at every level, balancing the four in age-appropriate ways. These methods are didactic instruction, coaching, Socratic dialogue and student presentation. Our youngest students benefit from a higher concentration of didactic instruction, while our high school students benefit from more Socratic dialogue. All students benefit from individualized coaching and student presentation. Technology is not viewed as an educational end in itself nor allowed to distract students from authentic learning experiences, but is employed, where appropriate, to naturally enhance classical instructional methods.

What outcomes do you intend for your graduates? What knowledge, skills and virtues do you instill in your students, and how do you deliver them?

Trinity Academy purposes to develop the whole person; mind, body and spirit. The goal is to help children and young adults become men and women of faith who are independent learners, critical

thinkers and effective communicators. Beginning with the end in view, we have crafted a “12 to TK” or “top down” program of instruction that incrementally builds godly character and imparts life skills that predispose our graduates for success in future study, professional life and personal relationships. Strategic objectives include persistence in a life of faith beyond high school, transformative leadership skills and empathetic appreciation for spiritual, cultural, intellectual and ethnic diversity. Specific skills include, but are not limited to, long-term memory development, reading mechanics and comprehension, biblical and secular content analysis, interpretation, synthesis and application, math computation and problem solving, scientific investigation, penmanship, grammatical, research-based, persuasive and creative writing, inductive and deductive reasoning, oration and persuasive rhetoric, delivery and defense of multiple arguments, individual and team productivity, listening and understanding, technology use and development, foreign language acquisition, choral sight reading, artistic skill and creativity, athletic skills and sportsmanship. Practically, each intended skill is incrementally imparted with rudimentary elements being taught in the early years, culminating with mastery before graduation.

What foreign language courses do you offer, and for what grades are they offered?

Latin instruction begins in TK. High School students are required to take three years (and encouraged to take four years) of the same foreign language; currently Latin or Spanish.

How many years of each language do you offer at the high school level?

High School students are required to take three years (and encouraged to take four years) of the same foreign language; currently Latin or Spanish.

How many years of math and science do you offer or require at the high school level?

Students may gain 4 or more credits of Math and Science, and are required to accumulate at least 7 combined credits in Math and Science.

What is your school’s commitment to technology?

Trinity Academy uses technology to enhance learning, not as an educational end in itself. Experience and research have shown that technology use is naturally and easily acquired by children and young adults, and does not need to be taught in the school setting. When employed for purposes of teaching basic learning skills (e.g. reading, writing, computation, oration), technology becomes a distraction, slowing the learning process and leading to bad habits that have to be “unlearned” (like overcoming a poor golf swing). Many early learning skills require the use of multiple physical modalities (seeing, hearing, saying, touching and movement) in support of proper brain formation and long-term memory processing. Technology skills and development, on the other hand, must be properly learned and should be taught according to a curricular scope and sequence that is age-appropriate. In principle, we do not hold students accountable for skills or knowledge that we have not taught them, and once taught we hold students accountable to use skills and knowledge with incremental growth and alacrity. Technology use for instruction can be seen throughout the school, with a greater concentration in the

upper school where every classroom is equipped with “smart technology” in support of interactive projection from PCs and airplay from smart devices. E-texts, Power Point, Prezi, Khan Academy, YouTube, Vimeo and “flipping” are employed as appropriate didactic instruction techniques, but not to the exclusion of Socratic dialogue as a primary means of instruction. Sixth grade students receive instruction in virtual robotics, seventh grade students take computer navigation courses, older students employ these and other technology skills on an ongoing basis, and additional classes that teach technology development and skills are in the planning stage.

What fine arts programs do you offer, and for what grades are they offered.

Music and Art are required for TK-8. Thereafter, students may take one or two Fine Arts offerings each year, choosing among Chorus, Ensemble, Visual Art, Pottery, Acting, and Theatrical Production.

What physical education programming do you provide, and what sports do you offer? At what grade levels are these offered?

Sixth-twelfth grade students participate in at least one interscholastic sports season each year, and TK-5th grade students receive Physical Education instruction that focuses upon motor and sports skill development and on understanding basic rules and strategies for currently offered team sports, which include boys’ and girls’ soccer, boys’ and girls’ basketball, boys’ and girls’ tennis, coed swimming, coed cross country, coed track and field, girls’ volleyball, boys’ baseball, coed golf, and cheerleading.

What Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses do you offer?

College and University Admissions departments want to know if students have taken the most challenging program available to them at their high school. When high schools offer large numbers of AP or IB courses, they unintentionally present their students with the impossible dilemma of choosing between taking an overwhelming full load of extremely challenging and terribly time consuming courses and taking a reasonable academic load while having to tell college personnel that they have NOT taken the most challenging course of study. Schools that understand this reality either limit the number of AP or IB courses available to their students or choose to not offer such courses at all. Either solution is preferable to being faced with too many “college level” courses in high school, but if no AP courses are offered, students miss an opportunity to gain college credit upon performing at a suitable level on the AP exams. An additional unintended disadvantage imposed on students by many schools involves the block schedule. AP exams are only offered in the late spring, so students who take AP courses during the fall block schedule are not as prepared for the exam as are students just finishing the course in year-long or spring block schedules. At Trinity, students may sit for the AP European History exam in 10th, AP English Language and Comp and AP US History exam in 11th and AP Calculus AB, AP Chemistry, AP Spanish Language, and AP Latin in 12th grade.

Does your school follow the Common Core? Why or Why not?

The Common Core may improve education for a segment of public school students in certain districts. However, any national or statewide education reform effort can only (at best) establish a least

common denominator - a minimal standard of achievement for all students. Trinity's standards far exceed those of the Common Core for all areas of instruction, so we do not follow the Common Core.

For what grades, and how often do you administer standardized achievement tests?

Second – Eighth grade students take the Educational Records Exam each year, 9th, 10th, 11th take the PSAT and 10th grade students take the PLAN each year. ACT and SAT college placement tests may be taken multiple times in 11th and 12th grade.

Which achievement tests do you use, and why?

The most commonly used standardized tests are state-level End of Year Tests and nationally normed tests, including the Iowa, Stanford Achievement, and California Achievement Tests. These tests are used by most public and by many private schools, and assess basic learning, comparing student, class and school performance to others who take the same tests at the same time of year across states or across the nation. When Trinity used the Iowa Test a vast majority of students placed in the 95th to 100th percentile in all learning areas, making it impossible to identify areas of weakness for individual students or to uncover gaps in our curriculum or instruction. The ERB test is used by the highest performing public and independent schools in the US, and better differentiates student performance, essentially magnifying the top 5% from other tests to give a closer look at specific areas of strength and weakness. Trinity moved to the ERB in 2008 in order to better assess areas of need and to address them by adjusting our curriculum and/or instruction for individual students. By tracking ERB score trends over several years we are able to demonstrate consistent and improved learning for our students, comparing their performance to that of the top schools in the nation.

How do your class-level and whole-school achievement scores compare to other schools or districts?

Many private schools keep achievement scores artificially high by only accepting students who perform at the highest levels on admissions tests. Such students would perform well on achievement tests irrespective of the school they attend. Trinity believes in genuine “value added” education, accepting students who can succeed and improve over the course of their education with us. This means that a range of academic abilities exists at Trinity, with students performing at the A, B and even C levels and standardized test scores with track accordingly. When compared to the top schools in the nation, Trinity student performance will range from average to exceptional achievement, with many achieving the highest levels of performance on many or all areas of instruction. Whole class comparisons to national ERB averages are generally between the 85 and 95 percentiles.

What is your teacher/student ratio? What is your average and maximum class size?

Student to teacher ratios are calculated by dividing the total number of students enrolled at a school by the number of instructional staff, including classroom teachers, teaching assistants, specialists (e.g. art, music, PE, etc..) and administrative staff who either hold teaching credentials or teach one or more classes. By this common standard, Trinity's student/teacher ratio is just 11 to 1. As to class size, Trinity's research-based approach to matching instructional methodology to student cognitive development results in an inverted pattern class sizes to that of most schools. At every level and in every class we combine 4 instructional methods, balancing these in age-appropriate ways according to our students' cognitive and social development. The four methods are didactic instruction (involving whole-class teacher to student direct instruction), coaching (circulating the room to provide individual feedback), Socratic dialogue, and student presentation. While coaching and student presentation are fairly consistent throughout the grades, didactic instruction diminishes in favor of Socratic dialogue as students move from grammar school to middle and high school. Since didactic instruction is effective with larger numbers of students, and Socratic dialogue is best suited to smaller numbers of students, Trinity's ideal class sizes are as follows: TK, 16; K, 18; grades 1-8, 22; grades 9-12, 16. This ideal notwithstanding, Trinity's average class size is just 15, and some classes may accommodate as many as 24 students when pedagogically appropriate.

What college guidance services do you provide? How many students is each college guidance counselor responsible to advise?

Trinity boasts one of the most effective college guidance programs in the region. Taking our lead from the expressed needs of major employers and the admissions requirements for prestigious state and national universities, Trinity's High School curriculum, graduation requirements, and annual course requirements are strategically crafted to equip every student with essential life skills while meeting the most rigorous of college admissions standards. Although most schools' college guidance services begin in the senior year, and better college guidance programs begin in the junior year, Trinity's service begins in 8th grade. Each year thereafter, students (together with their parents) are coached as to what specific course of study is best suited to the college and career wishes they express, and are guided toward establishing a robust portfolio of extra-curricular, leadership and service experiences according to each student's particular interests. College essay writing makes up the early portion of a required senior writing class, and, students are instructed in interviewing techniques and are coached through mock admission and scholarship interviews during the senior year. Additionally, we work diligently with each student to find merit-based scholarships and need-based tuition assistance for attendance at his/her top choice institutions. Although our college guidance program serves each student over a 5-year period, only 20 to 30 seniors are served per college guidance counselor.

What colleges and universities do your graduates attend?

Trinity's goal is not one of building institutional prestige through select college and university placement. Rather, our objective is to work with each student to find the best possible fit among the nation's nearly 4,000 institutions of higher learning, matching the student's interests, strengths, and

goals to those of a mutually selected group of suitable colleges and universities. A complete list of colleges that have admitted Trinity graduates is published on our [School Profile](#).

How many merit-based scholarship dollars have your recent graduates been offered to attend colleges and universities? Considering the size of your graduating classes, how does that total equate to scholarship dollars per graduate, on average?

At this time, 100% of Trinity graduates have gained admission to college. For the past four years, the average total merit-based scholarship amount offered to Trinity graduates has been \$1,140,000, and the average per student has been \$76,500. These figures do not include need-based awards that many Trinity students secure to cover full or partial college tuition. While these numbers far exceed those reported by most other schools, it is not a guarantee that every Trinity student will receive a college scholarship. This depends more upon the student than upon anyone or anything else. A high percentage of Trinity graduates get “full-ride” offers from colleges and universities, many others receive partial scholarships, but some receive no scholarship offers, hence the average of \$76,500.

How can I get involved as a parent at this school?

Parental volunteerism is encouraged at Trinity, and there are many ways for parents to get involved. Please consult your child’s teacher, the school head or the parent association president to discuss your ideas and specific wishes for volunteering.

How would I get an appointment with the head of this school?

The head of school hosts regular meetings with parents several times a week, and invites parents to schedule a formal meeting or casual visit by emailing him directly or by calling the school office to arrange a meeting at a time convenient to you. Impromptu and “walk-in” meetings are also welcome, but are subject to availability. Parents who have concerns about their child’s classroom experience are encouraged to first meet with their child’s teacher and/or the supervising school head before contacting the headmaster in order to find the quickest possible resolution to the situation. If no suitable resolution is found, a meeting with the head of school is encouraged.

How does your school respond to reports of bullying?

We take bullying very seriously and will not tolerate any pattern of bullying. It is important to distinguish between actual bullying and behaviors that are common to children as immature and fallen (i.e. sinful) persons. True bullying involves the repetitive intentional malicious exercise of power (physical or emotional; face-to-face or online) by one or more persons over another, and most likely occurs during times when students are unsupervised. We are proactive in preventing bullying through purposeful character and spiritual formation, and by providing adult supervision as much as we reasonably can. When bullying does occur, we act to address it and to educate perpetrators, targets and bystanders with corrective and restorative guidance. If corrective measures are ineffective,

perpetrators will be suspended, non-renewed or expelled as appropriate. Such extreme measures are rare at Trinity, but have been implemented when necessary.

What measures are in place to ensure my child’s safety at your school?

Trinity works hard to balance “access” with safety. We value and want to foster a sense of community characterized by the ability for parents and grandparents to move freely about our campus, looking in on their student. At the same time, we are committed to keeping our students safe from natural disaster and/or violence. Our buildings are wind-rated for 120 miles per hour, and are compliant with all fire code regulations. Safety drills are routinely held on a monthly schedule. Lower School doors are badge entry controlled, and safety surveillance cameras are operational throughout the campus. In the event of a disaster, proper authorities will be immediately contacted and parents will receive a “broadcast” communication via email.

What is your school’s position on “hot topics” such as creation/evolution, choose life/pro-choice/debate, and gay rights?

Among Trinity’s primary objectives is equipping students with a biblical worldview through carefully crafted curricula and programing that guide them toward an understanding of how all of life can be viewed through the lens of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. In keeping with our principle of “not telling our students what to think, but teaching them how to think,” we resist the very strong urge to tell them what position they should take on these and other important moral and social issues. We do not shy away from any of these topics. Rather, we engage our students on such topics through open dialogue about science, philosophy, Christian ethics and apologetics, to name a few, without insisting on their acceptance of our views as their teachers and mentors. Trinity’s statement of faith is broadly orthodox, focusing upon essential doctrines that unite Christians of all branches of Christ’s Church in common belief. Beyond these essential doctrines, although we feel strongly, we have no official positions.

What is the total annual dollar amount I will be responsible to pay (apart from food, clothing and overnight lodging), including all tuition, athletic and activities fees, field trip and other travel charges, books and supplies, compulsory capital building fees, event attendance charges, yearbook and school pictures, and other incidental fees or charges?

Trinity Academy “bundles” all required fees into a single student activities fee so that parents know from the outset what they can expect to pay for their student’s attendance. All field trips, athletic fees, fine arts fees, travel costs and athletic and choral event admissions are included for students and adults. While contributing to annual and capital funds is encouraged, it is not required or assessed. Books and supplies are included for tk-9th grades, while 10th- 12th grade students purchase these as they may be of later use in college and beyond. Optional items such as class pictures and yearbooks are offered at additional cost. Upper school year-end Service and Extended Learning Activities (SELA) trips and projects are also at an additional cost. The tuition and student activities fee schedule for each grade is published under Admissions and Tuition and Fees on our website.