

WHAT'S  
SO GREAT  
ABOUT THE  
CLASSICS?  
TJEd for Dads

*35 Reasons the Classics are the Best Curriculum  
for Education, Career, Finances, Family, and Life*

Oliver DeMille

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*If you want to build a ship,  
don't drum up the men to gather wood,  
divide the work, and give orders.*

*Instead, teach them to yearn  
for the vast and endless sea.*

—Antoine De St. Exupery

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# Introduction

*“My father gave me the greatest gift  
anyone could give another person:  
he believed in me.”*

—Coach Jim Valvano

There are three things dads can do that will make a huge positive difference in the education of their kids. First, and most importantly, they can realize that children and youth look to their fathers for confidence.

That’s right, **confidence**. Young people typically look to their mothers for a vision of what they can become in life, a sense of what they can accomplish. But they need their Dad to show them acceptance, confidence.

A young person needs his or her father to exude the message, “I am so impressed with you, son. I am so impressed with you, daughter. I know you’ll do great things. You are up to it. You are amazing.”

Dads can hardly say these things enough.

## **Dad Power #1: Build Confidence**

A father that does this is incredibly effective. Indeed, this is among the very most important things a father can do. Sadly, many fathers don’t do this very well.

Instead, with words and looks and attitude they too often communicate the following: "I'm not very impressed with you." "I doubt you'll ever measure up to much in your life." "Why do you always fall short?" "Why can't you be better?" "Why can't I trust you?" "Why do you make so many mistakes?" "What's wrong with you, anyway?"

As Dr. James Dobson put it, every twelve-year-old boy is a wounded soul in need of healing. And the great novelist Salman Rushdie wrote: "The reality of a father is a weight few sons can bear."

If you are a father or grandfather today, think back to when you were a young man. Did your father make you feel confident? Worthy? Capable? Amazing?

Or did you often feel like you weren't measuring up?

The power of a father's influence is very real, and in most cases it lasts a very long time. Some dads do a great job of helping their children and youth feel amazingly confident.

Speaking of those fathers who don't do this very well: most of us don't fall short because we fail to try. Not at all!

Most try very hard to be great fathers. But they just don't clearly understand that their main role is to surround their children with Dad's confidence. Or, for many, they are unsure of how to do it.

This isn't taught as widely as it should be. In fact, many fathers feel that their main roles are to provide and protect. Both of these things are important, of course. But instilling confidence in their kids is a third role at the same level as protecting and providing.

Fathers who don't do *all three* fall short in giving their children what they really need.

## Role Reversal

Many dads provide and protect, but instead of instilling confidence they try to do a mother's role: give the children a vision of who they can be. This is why so many dads are often critical—they just want to help their kid do better so he'll "measure up."

This seldom works. In fact, it usually backfires.

Criticism from a dad is the opposite of showing confidence.

For example, a friend of mine, a successful business leader, who was raised by his mother after his father's death in an accident, told me that when his mother wanted to instill vision in him and his siblings, she talked to them directly.

But when she felt they needed confidence, she would say, "I'm going to go have a talk with your father."

Then she would go to her room alone, and when she came out she would say, "I had a long talk with your dad, and he is so impressed with you because..."

This mother clearly understood the teaching roles of fathers and mothers. Some of the greatest educational psychologists of modern times, Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson, both taught that the parenting roles are vital.

Fathers and mothers both provide and protect, love and nurture; but young people get a sense of life goals from mothers and the confidence in themselves to pursue such goals from fathers.

—Or not...depending on the parents' choices.

Oh, and just like a father trying to promote a young person's life mission (instead of building confidence) can come across as controlling or not trusting the youth's own sense of purpose, a mother who tries to build confidence (rather than instilling vision) often seems doting, out of touch, and

puts pressure on the youth to live for Mom rather than to seek one's own path in life.

The best results usually come when mothers emphasize vision, and fathers build confidence. I think in our heart of hearts, we kind of know this.

This isn't always possible in every family, but when it is, and to the extent that it is, fulfilling these roles is incredibly powerful.

## **Initiative vs. Guilt**

For example, Erikson taught\* that between ages 3-6 children learn the lesson of Initiative vs. Guilt. Those who embrace Guilt don't internalize the real lesson of childhood—they've learned the counterfeit.

Parents have a huge influence on whether or not a child learns Initiative.

Children look to their mothers to gain a sense of whether they should Initiate what they want in life, or just follow the orders of other people. Should they lead, or should they just try to fit in? And they look to fathers to determine for themselves whether or not they are capable of Initiating what they want in order to become successful and attain their goals.

Are they up to it? Can they do great things, or are they just destined to mediocrity? The answers are reflected in Dad's attitudes – mainly from whether he tries to build confidence in them or gets sidetracked doing other things (or worse: criticizing).

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\* For more on this, see chapters 1-2 of *Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning* by DeMille and DeMille.



ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		
0-1	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope
1-3	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt	Will Power
3-6	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose
6-12	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence
12-18	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity
18-40	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love
40-65	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care
65+	Ego Integration vs. Despair	Wisdom

If the message they feel from their father is that they aren't good enough to really achieve, they retreat into Guilt – sometimes manifesting as indifference or rebellion – and spend years (or even decades!) wishing they were somehow better.

Fathers have a huge power in this, just by the words they say, their body language, the expressions on their face. A father's attitude is incredibly powerful in this process.

### **Industry vs. Inferiority**

As the child moves to ages 6-12, the lesson shifts to Industry vs. Inferiority, according to Erikson.

Again, in this stage of development the young person looks to Mom for a sense of goals and life purpose, and to Dad for confidence to proceed.

If Dad's words, attitude, or body language say, "You are a disappointment," or anything less than "I am so impressed with you!", "You are amazing!", "You'll do great at whatever you choose in life!", the child tends to choose a sense of Inferiority rather than Industry.

This is obviously just the opposite of what fathers want their children to learn. But too often they don't understand that their role is to show great confidence in each kid. They don't realize that they should show confidence even if it isn't "merited" (yet)—because this is the way merit will actually develop.

This is so important. If dads could just understand and apply this one thing!

If this is news to you, keep reading. If you already knew this, it's an important review. Nearly all dads fall short in showing enough confidence in our kids. Most of us fail simply because we don't really know better. That's what this book is all about.

If you are a dad, show more confidence in each of your kids. Show a lot more confidence! This one thing will make you a much better father.

## **Identity vs. Role Confusion**

From ages 12-18, Erikson found that young people subconsciously choose between the lessons of Identity and Role Confusion.

Again, they look to mothers for a sense of life goals, and to fathers for the confidence to work hard and overcome obstacles. But dads can only really teach these lessons by showing huge confidence in each child—over and over.

Indeed, the most important times for fathers to show confidence are when the child hasn't really "earned" it yet. This isn't wimpy. It's visionary.

It's what every great coach, boss, or leader does who gets truly great performance from his people. It's confidence in their *potential*, in their

*character*, in their *ability to overcome* themselves to do what they were born to do.

This is so important! This flies in the face of most men's life experience, what they have come to see as "the real world," or "real life." Their natural tendency is to "...just tell it like it is. If the kid doesn't measure up, don't sugar coat it. Tell him straight. How else will he/she learn?"

Fathers who think like this don't understand how youth develop. The truth is that the world is full of people who will do exactly that—tell the kid straight, outline his or her weaknesses, rain on his parade, all through his life.

## **The Bully Pulpit**

That's just part of life. But it isn't the *dad's* job. The dad is supposed to do the opposite. If not, he often falls short in a vital fatherly duty – in the process of pointing out the failings of those he loves and wants desperately to mentor effectively.

There is a huge difference between all those people in life who will talk to your children straight and tell them they don't measure up, and what they need to hear from their father.

Here's the difference: Most people actually *believe* their father's assessment, even if they don't want to.

The criticism from others can be more easily dismissed – or even internalized as constructive feedback! But from Dad, we tend to lump the acceptance of criticism in with the unconditional love we want to feel for him, and can't dismiss the one without losing the other. So we embrace his view of us – or at least, what we think it is.

In short: if a young person's father has great confidence in him, he will nearly always choose Initiative, Industry, and Confidence, regardless of what other people say or do in his life.

If, in contrast, a young person's father has shown little confidence in him, or her, he will tend to choose (and/or struggle with) Guilt, Inferiority, and Confusion in life, even if the other people around him—including his eventual spouse, boss, coach, etc.—are positive and supportive.

A father's power is just plain *huge*. Again, this is wonderful if it's used to boost confidence. And it can be devastating if the opposite is true.

This bears repeating, and the ones most frustrated by repetition of this point are often the ones that need it the most, so I'll risk annoying you in hopes that one or two more of us use our Confidence-Builder Dad Power and turn away from the Dark Side of the Force!

## **Practice Run**

Here's the rub: since a young person is, by definition, young and inexperienced, she is going to make mistakes. She isn't always going to "merit" her Dad's confidence. And his expressions of confidence don't have to depend on his son's or daughter's *current* level of achievement!

He can help the young person see and believe that youthful ignorance, inexperience, habits and weaknesses don't need to define who they are, or predestine their future. If they believe that WE believe that they'll succeed, no matter what it looks like today, they will have the will to keep trying and to find the way past the things that hold them back.

Again, it is true that most children and youth will "merit" a lack of confidence a lot more often than they'll earn real confidence. But isn't that what homes, families and parents are for? So youth can mess up a little without life-long consequences, while they have our love, support and training to help them learn from their mistakes? Indeed, that's what *youth* is for—to practice, learn from failures, and keep improving.

So, in spite of (because of?) our Dad Power #1, fathers who "just tell it like it is" usually raise children who become adults full of Guilt, feelings of

Inferiority, and lots of Confusion about themselves, their choices, and their lives.

But it doesn't have to be that way. A Dad who realizes that the child is just a child, but who knows that he or she will grow up to become an amazing adult, can avoid negativity and criticism and focus instead on building confidence, building confidence, building confidence.

This is what great fathers do.

And this is at least as real as confidence-searing, "tough love", realism—because confidence-building dads nearly always end up with adult kids who are Confident, Industrious and full of Initiative. That's real. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy!

Fathers have to choose which "real life" they're going to support—the one right now, when the kids are just kids, or the one that will come if the kid has real confidence and grows into an adult who is downright amazing.

That's the first educational role of fathers: build confidence. Every day, day after day, week after week.

Fathers who focus on this—even if they themselves are caught in a bit of Guilt, Inferiority, and even Confusion about their life—become great fathers.

By the way, that's one reason the classics are really helpful. They can show us examples of great fathers (e.g. Mr. Stanton, Mr. Wilder, Mr. Moody, Mr. Ingalls, etc.) to emulate. Many dads don't have a real-life example of how to build confidence in their kids, but the classics can teach them. Very effectively, in fact.

But more on the classics later.

## Dad Power #2: Read Aloud

The second thing fathers can do that will make a huge positive difference in their kids' education is to read good books aloud to the kids.

Just ten or fifteen minutes of reading done 2-3 evenings a week, or another time of day if it works better, will do miracles. The children's educational success will skyrocket. This really works! I've witnessed it in thousands of families.

I've written a lot about this elsewhere. For example, I wrote an article for *The Weekly Mentor* entitled, "The Thing Dad's can do in 30 Minutes a Week that Will Drastically Improve their Kids' Education." (Long title, I know.)

But a lot of fathers told me this was hugely helpful. In this article, I wrote:

*Almost nothing is more powerful in parenting than a dad and/or mom who reads aloud with the family.*

*This has a direct and lasting impact on the quality of the kids' education, because example is more influential than words.*

*It also greatly increases the quality of relationships between parents and children.*

*When dads and moms read to their kids, the children feel much closer to their parents, trust them more, and want to do better in the various aspects of their young lives.*

*In fact, when dads read aloud to kids, it creates a much closer bond than pretty much anything else.*

*When dads read to—and with—the family, it also tends to increase the romance with their wives.*

*Bottom line, most wives find it very attractive, better than flowers or chocolates.*

*And dads don't even have to do it every night. Just 2 or 3 evenings a week will make all the difference.*

*Even just one night a week will do the job—if you are consistent over time.*

*Somehow the experience of hearing dad read to the kids has a major impact on the educational achievements of the family.*

*If one parent (dad or mom) isn't available to do it, reading with the other parent is still truly great.*

### ***Every Other Verse***

*Education expert [Andrew Pudewa](#) has written about how hearing words and phrases read aloud by parents has a direct influence on the writing ability of youth when they grow older, and educator Glenn Kimber suggests having everyone in the family take turns reading a verse or paragraph, with every other verse read by dad.*

*His research showed that dad's voice during family reading drastically increased the retention as well as the children's interest in learning and getting a better education in general.*

*In business and the professions, [top CEO's listed reading great classics as the most important thing](#) that got them ahead in their careers, and the upper classes have always made such reading the central part of educating their children for leadership.*

*Indeed, there are few things that will have as lasting an impact on a young person's future success as family and personal reading of the greats.*

*If there is one single thing dads can do to really lead out in the family's education, it is to bring the family together for a brief family reading time each day.*

*Allan Bloom wrote in [The Closing of the American Mind](#) that one reason American education is declining is that families don't read or think together as much as they used to.*

*And the major growing divide in modern free nations is between the new classes—the elites have read the classics, make a lot more money, and run the nation, while the masses don't understand the language of the classics or the experts and generally leave politics to the experts.*

*As a result, [our freedoms are in decline](#).*

*Any dad or mom who really wants to help the kids' education can make a huge impact simply by reading aloud to and with the family 2-3 nights a week, for as little as 10 minutes.*

*This small investment brings huge dividends.*

*The key is to make it fun, read a book everyone can enjoy, and just keep doing it.*

*The results will far outweigh the small effort needed to do this.*

*Parents who do this one small thing will witness great educational improvement in their kids—especially six months from now, which is when the results usually kick in.*

### ***Is It Really Enough?***

*Over the years, I've had a lot of dads ask me in seminars, "But it seems like my kids just aren't studying enough. My wife seems fine with it, but I don't see them doing enough math or hard learning. Is this normal?"*



*I usually respond by asking, “What book are you reading aloud with your family right now?”*

*Many dads just look at me in surprise, and I say, “Nothing will have more impact on the quality of your kids’ education than you reading aloud to them at least once a week and preferably 2-3 times a week. If you want to see their education really improve, show them. Stop telling them, and just show them.*

*Most of us dads make the mistake of telling too often, showing very little. But that’s exactly the opposite of what works. Show them, then when you tell them you’ll have real credibility.”*

*So many fathers have told me later that they tried it and it really works.*

*Moms can do it, and in fact many do; but there is something special for kids and youth to have their dad read to them and with the family.*

*Or, if dad is in charge of most of the daily education, mom can really add to things by reading aloud to everyone a few nights a week.*

*Try it in your family.*

*You’ll see amazing results: About six months after you start, your kids will suddenly make a drastic leap in improved education.*

*And if you do it now, you’ll see them go to a whole new level next fall—just in time for their next school year.*

*Normal students will become great students, and good students will become top leaders.*

*Put this to the test.*

*It works.\**

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\* To read the full text of this article, go to <http://tinyurl.com/tjed-dads>

Whatever you do as a father, don't short-change this.

Dads who read aloud with the family, even just a little, as long as it's consistent over time, help their kids drastically improve their learning, skills, and life success.

## **Dad Power #3: Fall in Love With the Classics**

The third thing fathers can do is simple: fall in love with the classics. That's what the rest of this book is about, because it matters so much. Dads who fall in love with the classics bring a whole new, higher level of learning, relationships, and even prosperity to their families.

Let's discuss why, and how, this happens.

### **Each Child Has Genius**

To begin, why has our modern educational system all but lost the idea that learning is about greatness?

Each child born has genius inside, potential greatness that could greatly bless the world.

But unless this genius and greatness is nurtured, supported, encouraged and polished (i.e. unless it becomes confidence and skill) it seldom has the great positive impact that it could. That's what education is all about—or should be.

The modern conveyor-belt system of education settles for much less by emphasizing conformity, fitting in. It trains children to *change themselves to fit the system*. It too often focuses on the rote, and defines grade levels toward the middle (or even lower end) of the pack.

In spite of the best efforts of talented and passionate educators who can be found in virtually every school, the system doesn't reward their efforts to individualize and personalize. It simply can't. Or at least it hasn't figured out how to do this yet. And this attachment to conformity and mediocrity doesn't usually encourage greatness—it more frequently stifles it.

Yet education should be so much more!

Education is about the soul, about educating great young people who have great souls. This applies to every child. The role of a true teacher (including parents) is to see greatness in every student, even (especially) when the student doesn't realize it is there.

## **Vision Loss**

But too often the modern educational system forgets this truth—many times promoting administrators and teachers who excel at the institutional, conveyor-belt process, and who don't see such greatness as the very purpose of their work.

And too many parents allow this to happen, even though it stifles the potential of their children.

There are two main reasons for this shift in modern times away from “education for greatness” and toward a more rote, mediocre, conveyor-belt approach. The first is that education is now considered mere job preparation. We'll discuss this more in a minute.

The second reason for what former New York State public school Teacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto calls the “Dumbing Down” of America, and what the great Allan Bloom called the “Closing of the American Mind,” is the thinning use (and misuse) of the classics, the truly great books, in nearly all schools.

Consider the history of this trend. The British became a world superpower at least in part because of the Oxford method of learning: young people reading classics and then discussing them with other students and dedicated mentors.

C.S. Lewis referred to this as a group of learners reading all day and then discussing important themes and ideas late into the night—for several years. This type of education led to the national leadership that ensured the sun never set on the British Empire.

Early American education emulated this Oxford model, and in typical American fashion added a few New World improvements: the Harvard model introduced case studies not just from the old classics but also more recent and even current successes.

The operating principle was “greatness.” Any classic book, model, example, or other case study that achieved truly great things was deemed worthy of study. In fact, it was often called, simply, “Classic!”

This new type of learning—the best of the old, and the best of the new—spread to most American community schools.

By the time of the Greatest Generation, those who sacrificed to stop Hitler and keep Europe and America free in World War II, nearly every young person in North America had the opportunity for a quality education in the great classics of the world.

By the 1960s, this was increasingly available to boys and girls of all races and in every corner of North America.

Again, the prime directive was “greatness,” because students studied the greatest classics of the world—in history, science, mathematics, literature, social studies, the arts, the humanities, leadership, etc.

## **Deliberate Mediocrity**

Then something happened. In fact, it had already begun over a decade earlier when the soldiers returned home from World War II. Governments made college available to these returning heroes at a level never before realized, and colleges and universities inevitably changed.

This had many good results, and a few negative and/or unintended consequences as well.

The new influx of students, the huge rise in numbers, caused higher education to re-evaluate.

Liberal Arts universities that had emphasized quality education, the classics in every academic field, and teacher training for elementary and secondary schools around the world, changed to meet the needs of their new clientele.

Instead of going to college to get a broad, great education in the great books, or train to be an educator by doing the same thing, young people now went to school to get job training—as engineers, accountants, hotel operators, business managers, bankers, nurses, etc., etc., etc.

Almost no career was left out of the college trend (even, ironically, athletics and entrepreneurial business).\*

There had been specialized trade schools before, but now almost every college and university became a career school—with dozens of career training paths. At first, this added a sense of “Hire” Education to Higher Education. Having both of these options greatly benefitted the nation, even though the Hire Education majors didn’t use the classics very often. For those who wanted the classics, the old majors and programs were still available.

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\* This is ironic because in most fields of knowledge the experts taught beginners the basic and then advanced parts of the subject, but in the new college model after 1946, depending on the field of learning, a number of teachers had less skill or ability in the field than their students.

From the 1950s to the 1980s campuses offered two main types of learning: 1) Higher Education majors, steeped in classics and focused on historical-style Oxford/Harvard goals of greatness and education for leaders, and 2) Hire Education majors, where students were trained for a specific specialized career.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, writers like Allan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch began warning that another trend was escalating: the Higher Education side of campus was ditching the classics and leadership education and adopting more and more techniques and systems from the Hire Education majors.

One major problem with this was that this shift in priorities bled down to the high schools and elementary schools. As teacher training at the university level stopped emphasizing classics and the greatness that each young student should strive for, the Oxford/Harvard model was replaced by the factory system of schooling.

The conveyor belt became the norm, replacing largely individualized leadership education with a rote and impersonal machine model of learning.

### **“Men Without Chests”**

As mentioned, Allen Bloom called this “The Closing of the American Mind,” and warned that it would drastically hurt our future.

C.S. Lewis had predicted the same thing in Britain a few decades earlier, forecasting that this shift from classics and individualized learning to what we now call conveyor-belt education would create a nation of “Men Without Chests,” as he called it—meaning a loss of greatness, a national embracing of mediocrity in our schools and, as a result, our careers.

Lewis and Bloom projected that this change would cause us to substitute things like grades, credentials, test scores, and rote memorization for deep thinking, innovation, quality, and leadership. Such a shift inevitably causes national decline.

It ended the status of Britain as the world's superpower, and it is doing the same for the United States. Of course, the U.S. is about 40 years behind Britain on this cycle.

The fact that Lewis' and Bloom's predictions came true is a further warning for our time.

The conveyor-belt approach to education actually creates a caste system in society, while the original Harvard model of taking case studies from greatness and then seeking to emulate them had helped America make incredible strides toward reducing the class divide.

Today we have reversed this trend, and the divide between upper and lower classes is rapidly widening. The middle class is sinking closer to lower class levels, not rising toward upper class lifestyle as it did before the 1990s. The rich are getting richer, and the middle classes are finding it much more difficult to make ends meet.

What does this have to do with dads? The answer is, everything!

Dads who understand this seek a different kind of education for their kids than dads who don't. It really is this simple.

Education is at the center of these class divides. The wealthy still educate their young in the Oxford/Harvard style, with wide and deep use of the classics and a sense of greatness—great books, great case studies, great learning, great personal goals in life, and doing great things.

Few fathers in the upper classes would even think of not giving their kids this kind of education. Why? Because they know what's ahead for the economy, and what their kids will face in the career and work environment of the decades ahead.

## The Classics and the Real World

Most young people in North America today get something less than an individualized, leadership education in the great classics. Instead, they settle for a rote, often mediocre, dumbed-down version of education. Since their focus in schooling is to qualify for a job or career, most parents in the middle and lower classes don't take notice of this problem.

The result? The wealthy get richer and the lower classes get poorer—generationally. The middle classes are split. The majority of them are watching their children and grandchildren headed for a lower standard of living, the natural result of factory education.

A few in the middle class realize that there is something better, that their kids can get the kind of leadership education the wealthy give to their children—and that this will tend to have a hugely positive career, leadership, and financial impact on their kids and their future.

This is the current state of modern education. As such, there are four kinds of reasons to read the classics.

One is that the classics still emphasize greatness of soul, learning to think greatly, to think about great things day in and day out, and to seek a life of great accomplishment and great service rather than settling for anything less.

A second is that the classics have a huge impact on family life, as does the *lack* of reading great classics in a family.

As families struggle amidst the multiple challenges of modern life, this is increasingly important. Families are less functional without the classics. If you've never made the classics part of your regular family life, you'll be amazed at how your family life can flourish when you effectively make this change.

A third reason is that classics have a direct impact on how students perform in school and career. This is true on many levels, and even parents whose



highest goal for their children's education is just getting a good job someday will find this kind of reason extremely compelling. Students who engage the classics tend to do much, much better in school.

The fourth kind of reason to read the classics deals with income and finances. This may not ultimately be as important to some people as the first three kinds of reasons, but it is still very significant. And, of course, for some people this will be one of the most important reasons to read the classics.

The wealthy study the classics. The lower classes usually don't, at least not in the same way. But here's the main thing: Those in the middle classes who study the classics have high upward mobility, while those who don't study the classics a lot tend downward toward the lower classes.

This is reality. This is the real world today. It may seem like a strange, unrelated coincidence – but it is not; and later in this book we will discuss how classics and career success correlate.

Dads and moms have huge say in all this, and how their children and youth deal with the world and economy as it really is. They can help their kids greatly prepare for the future, or they can miss the mark.

Sadly, most dads and moms don't clearly understand this choice or the information that will help them make it in the best interest of their children and grandchildren.

This book addresses all four of these kinds of reasons to read the classics.

We'll start with the impact of the classics on a student's future finances and income, then discuss the impact on school performance and career success, and finally we'll deal with the most important issues of all—the place of greatness in learning and life, and the future of families in education.

These are among the most important topics in the world today. Especially for dads. Especially for moms. And especially for families and teachers.

Let's get started!

# 1

## **The Classics and Your Family's Prosperity**

The wealthy are getting wealthier, and the poor are getting poorer. Simultaneously, for the first time since the Great Depression, the middle class is getting poorer as well.

In all this change to our modern culture, the wealthy have a secret.

Those who know this secret are increasing in generational wealth. Those who don't are losing ground.

We can no longer depend, as our grandparents did, on the rising tide of a growing economy to help our children have a better life than we have known.

That is not our children's economy, and not their reality.

To protect and provide, future fathers and mothers will need to know this secret—much more than yesterday's parents.

Those who know it will guide their children in different directions than those who don't, and this will have a huge impact on their income, finances, careers, standard of living, and lives.

## **Teach Me to Fish**

Stephen Covey told the story of two fly fishermen who went fishing together. One of them caught dozens of fish during the day, but the other didn't catch any. They used similar rods, poles, casting technique, and they fished in the same stream just yards apart. So, why did one man do so much better than the other?

The answer: one of them wore polarized sunglasses. This little change made all the difference.

Fly fishing requires the sportsman to cast a line and dangle the lure just above the water, moving and flicking and teasing the fish, trying to make the lure look as much as possible like an insect flying on the stream's surface.

The fisherman with the polarized sunglasses was able to see the light, shadows and currents better than his buddy without such technology. This one small tool made the difference between great success and failure.

The same is true of quality education, and the secret of the wealthy (the educational polarized glasses, so to speak) is the classics.

## **A Brief History of Time**

The wealthy classes in human history—aristocracy, royalty, super-rich—have always utilized the classics at the center of their children's education.

The middle and lower classes, in contrast, have emphasized learning a trade, job skills and job training.

The middle and lower classes have typically ignored the classics, or even ridiculed them as "mere stories," "impractical," "irrelevant," or "a waste of time."

Yet generation after generation, century after century, the upper classes and their offspring have read the classics and increased in wealth, while the lower classes have neglected the classics in favor of job training and generally remained in the lower class.

In fact, the middle class has only grown and flourished during eras of history where lower-class students were given the opportunity to receive upper-class style education in the classics.

Today, the middle class has stopped emphasizing the classics in most of its public and private schools, and—no surprise—the gap between the wealthy and the middle class is rapidly widening.

Nearly all experts, both from the political Right and the Left, now consider this one of the biggest challenges of our time. The middle class is being squeezed into a lower class—decade after decade.

If this trend continues, by the year 2025 America will once again be much more aristocratic than democratic. In many ways, it already is.

### **“No, Mr. President”**

The reason for this change is surprising to many people. The determinant difference between the upper and lower classes has always been education.

Specifically, when Presidents, Prime Ministers, CEOs, Senators, Judges, Investors and Bankers read the classics while most Americans don't, wealth flows to those with the higher quality of education.

America tried to overcome this class divide between the 1780s and 1960s by working to spread classics-based education to nearly all students, thus creating the greatest democratic republic in modern times. As we already

mentioned, today, sadly, there are three very different types of education in Europe and North America:

- Upper-class education rooted in the classics
- Professional education that trains people for careers working primarily for the upper class
- Middle- and lower-class education emphasizing basic job training

As a result, we are seeing a shift in American culture. Instead of a large middle class and small wealthy and lower classes, which dominated American society from the 1830s to the 1980s, we are now seeing a new society take shape: with a small upper class, a small professional upper-middle class, and a rapidly growing lower-middle and lower class.

## **Which Class?**

To define these terms, the upper class doesn't need to hold down a "job" to support itself (though its members are usually far from idle, working at building wealth and opportunity, charitable and social leadership enterprises, etc.).

The professional class supports itself and increases its net worth (although just staying afloat is more often the objective, with the decline in the general economy) with the salary and income of one or two working adults per family.

The lower class can only support itself (even with two adults working in many cases) by using debt and/or government programs.

The average American household has nearly \$10,000 in credit card debt, plus a significant mortgage and other debts, thus making lower class status the new average. If an adult in the average U.S. family stops working, by layoff or by choice, the family must make major downgrades in its standard of living. Again, as mentioned above, lower class means that the family has a

mortgage and/or other major debts and can't make ends meet without growing reliance on debt and government support.

At the center of this growing class divide is education. Specifically, the wealthy class secret of education: the classics.

The fact that only a few people understand this is part of the reason the wealthy stay wealthy and the middle class is getting poorer, joining the lower classes, watching its standard of living decrease with each decade, and taking on more and more debt. This is essential knowledge for parents in today's economy.

## **Reading Classics is a Financial Investment**

Why should you and I read the classics? One reason is very simple: to avoid becoming part of the growing lower class, steeped in debt, working harder in scarce jobs for pay that buys less and less.

The classics change this. Not immediately in most cases, but in the long-term, which is why the upper class tends to get wealthier and wealthier.

### ***But how?***

Why would “mere books” change this downward spiral for many families?

What most people in the middle and lower classes don't see—though it is obvious to the wealthy—is that the classics are actually *leadership* training, not job training.

**In other words, those educated in the classics are trained to lead—and it's no surprise that they end up leading. And leaders get paid more.**

**Those whose education is mostly job training end up—well, with a job. But jobs seldom compete financially with the careers and compensation of leaders.**

## Nine Lives

This doesn't just happen. There are real reasons for it. Most people in the middle classes just haven't taken the time to think through these reasons, or why the upper classes insist on educating their own children in the classics. Classics accomplish this major change in education and careers—the equivalent of polarized sunglasses—in at least nine ways:

### ***1- The classics teach us how to think.***

Job training usually teaches the student *what* to think, or even *when* to think—to do his or her job and follow directions from the boss.

The classics naturally teach readers *how* to think. Nearly all classics were written by authors who were thinking “out of the box,” thinking creatively, independently, innovatively. That's what made them classics.

For example, Jane Austen's works revolutionized society by making the case that a person's character, sense, and contribution was more important than his or her class, money, or pride. This greatly influenced the democratic ideal that anyone, through hard work and character, could succeed.

This was tempered by the work of the Bronte sisters and Charles Dickens, among others, who showed that in striving to improve one's situation in life it is vital not to let pride, extreme ambition, or avarice rule the day.

Likewise, Aristotle's reliance on reason and scientific evidence swayed a world that tended to believe in ancient traditions rather than proven reality.



Shakespeare's insistence that principles, not caste or status or title, are at the core of all progress greatly shifted the world in the direction of modernism.

Picasso's artistic cubism argued that modern, scientific, technology-centered life was missing something—the morality, humanity, love and goodness that has always been a requirement for happy society.

Frederic Bastiat's classic books showed that government must not become so powerful that it moves away from its roots—meaning that government, not just individuals, must follow true principles.

Going back even further to the greatest classics, the stories of Moses, David, and Paul taught that no humans, not even the most powerful of us, are above principles. This was the great message of Israel and Athens, and their great classics—the Bible and the writings of Homer, Sophocles and others.

This list goes on and on. The classics became classics because they innovated. Their authors looked at the world around them, thought about and saw things that most people in the current culture of the time didn't, thought outside the box, and suggested solutions that were surprising, creative, and needed.

**This required thinking. And by reading these and other great thinkers (the best thinkers in the history of the world, in fact), today's student comes face-to-face with greatness. The reader also comes face-to-face with thinking. And both of these—greatness and thinking—rub off.**

**This builds leaders.**

But this won't happen as long as the classics are stuck on the shelf, gathering dust. We have to read them, ponder them, discuss them, and re-read them, and when we do, our thinking skills deepen, broaden and increase. Reading the classics is like physical exercise for the mind—it gets us in shape, starts us thinking like the greatest thinkers in history.

Okay, right about now, some guys are reading this and thinking to themselves, “Okay, sure. I’m going to do just that. NOT. Sounds like a great idea, but life’s too short! Sounds like a total drag!”

*Au contraire.* (That’s French for “No way, dude!”)

Truth is, the reason these works have been around for so long, the reason that so many people have read them and re-read them, is that they are really that good. Seriously. They are the manuals of the upper class.

But back to the main point: Classics build and expand our minds! Now that’s education. Which is exactly what the wealthy classes understand. In fact, this is why education was invented in the first place. It really is. Most people understand this instinctively, which is why they put a high emphasis on the education of their kids. Too often, however, they forget that great classics-based education is real education. The rest falls short.

## ***2- The classics emphasize the topics that our national leaders must deal with.***

The biggest issues, what Mortimer Adler called “The Great Ideas,” aren’t the main theme of textbooks. But in the classics, the great ideas are the whole point.

When students—young or old—read deeply about the most important ideas in the world and all through history, and in the universe for that matter, it naturally impacts how they think, and what they think about.

For example: in the American founding era, the average American merchant, farmer and small business owner was thinking about the same concerns as the most celebrated elected officials. Just consider the Federalist Papers, written in newspapers for the regular citizen to read, discuss, and debate.

There is a word for this kind of system—where the regular people read the same books and think about the same ideas as their presidents, senators, and top business leaders. The word is *democratic*.

In contrast, when the regular people don't read the same books and think about the same ideas and concerns as their top business and government leaders—day in and day out—the system is *aristocratic*.

Pure and simple.

In an aristocrat nation a small class of elites rule, and the rest of us just have to follow.

If we read the classics, we join “The Great Conversation,” sometimes called “The Great Debate” or, when applied to economics and politics, “The Grand Bargain.” These ideas are what run our society, and if only a few people take part in this, we live in an aristocratic nation.

**When the regular people take part in reading the great books and discussing our national future, they have a say in how the laws and government are structured—and as a result they create a nation where everyone has widespread opportunity to succeed, where their children have as much opportunity as the children of the wealthy.**

**In the United States this was called The American Dream, the idea that anyone could flourish, thrive and lead. But this only lasts when the regular people are reading the same books and classics as their top leaders. When the top leaders read the classics (all or most of them), and the regular people don't, the nation naturally creates laws that benefit the wealthy and make it harder and harder for the lower and middle classes to rise—or even just pay their bills.**

**When this develops to the point that there are two kinds of schools (classics schools preparing the wealthy youth to be leaders, versus non-classics schools training the middle and lower class youth for jobs), the elite class drastically increases its rule over the regular people.**

This is where we are today. A study by Princeton<sup>·</sup> showed that the United States is now operating like an “oligarchy,” where the few at the top make most of the decisions. The study showed that most people have very little power to influence the nation.

This is the natural result of the masses not reading the classics any more. Look through history, and you’ll find that the groups who consistently educate their children in the classics are the same groups that run their nation.

This isn’t a coincidence; it’s the natural consequence of quality versus mediocre education.

The classics are that powerful—they carry the top wisdom of the ages, and when one class of people applies this wisdom while the regular people don’t ... well, the results are obvious. Class divides increase, and hard-working families get further behind.

Many parents don’t see this, because it doesn’t seem like just reading some classics would make that much difference. But usually the same parents do see the power of education in the lives of their children.

The disconnect here is sad. The only people who really understand and see the power of the classics are those who read them—not in an ostentatious or affected “stuffy old English teacher” way, but in a search for a deep, quality education that opens the doors to leadership (and the careers and benefits that go with it).

But there is an even more direct reason the classics boost one’s prospects.

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<sup>·</sup> Gilens, Page: “Testing Theories of American Politics,” for the upcoming *Perspectives on Politics*, Fall 2014. For a summary, see: <http://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/constitution/item/18120-princeton-northwestern-study-seems-to-conclude-u-s-an-oligarchy>

### ***3-The classics teach us what's coming.***

People who have read the great classics know how to recognize the new classics being written or otherwise created in our time—the books, trends, businesses, budding leaders and other things that most accurately forecast and shape what's happening in our world, propose big “out of the box” changes, and suggest how to move forward as a society.

The wealthy use this knowledge to know where to invest, what the big coming trends are, where to put their time and energy, and how to get ahead of trends—to profit by them and help lead them. The masses are usually way behind in this process, often struggling for the next paycheck.

For example, after World War II the wealthy (because they read and understood the classics of history and current events) sent their young adults to professional schools, in the mid-1950s into entrepreneurship, in the late 1960s into banking and real estate, in the mid-1980s into high-tech, in the 2000s to the professions, and today into entrepreneurialism.

The middle and lower classes generally followed the same pattern, but always a decade late on each choice: professional schools in the fifties, banking and real estate in the late seventies, high tech in the nineties. The result? The wealthy got wealthier and the middle and lower classes fell further behind.

Today the middle and lower classes are still sending their young adults into the professions, while the upper classes know that the next three decades will be led by entrepreneurs.

This is essential wisdom for parents today. Understanding the classics has a direct impact on how you educate your children, and whether or

not you help them lead societal trends and salary/income levels or find themselves always behind the curve.

This is a huge secret! It's not something the elite class wants people to know. In fact, the very act of telling these secrets makes whoever shares them a revolutionary (one who wants everyone to have the opportunities the elites have) and a target (of anyone who thinks the current educational system has any merit).

I, for one, think that (in spite of the fact that virtually every school has gifted and dedicated educators who labor almost in vain against the odds) the current educational *system* is truly struggling. It needs to be almost entirely revamped. It makes the poor poorer, the wealthy wealthier, and the middle class poorer. It supports the current elite class, by educating everyone else to work for elites.

Following this path has hurt the American standard of living, as mentioned. Seriously, this bears repeating. We need to realize how big a deal this is. In the 1950s, most families lived on the income of one working adult, with little or no debt. Houses were paid off in a decade or less. By the 2010s, most families can't quite make ends meet with two working adults, fewer children, longer work hours, and perpetual mortgages. And they still need a lot of debt to keep things afloat.

If this trend continues, our children's generation will only make ends meet with two working adults, lots of debt, the use of many government programs, and a European-style downsizing, where most families live in apartments rather than homes and seldom have more than one vehicle—or even one. This is the very European lifestyle that some U.S. leaders hold up as the goal for America's future.

The answer, the antidote, to middle class slippage is simple: read the classics. Read them all. Re-read them. And help your children and youth do the same. Create a culture of reading them.

Again, this is obvious to the upper classes, but most parents who haven't joined the culture of the classics find this idea strange. They



realize they aren't increasing their family's long-term lifestyle and trajectory, but they just can't seem to believe that classics would do this. Even though they realize that education is the answer. And even though this is the educational culture of the wealthy and powerful.

Instead, they just keep thinking "jobs, jobs, jobs." But few of them like their own job, or find that it makes sense for their kids and grandkids. Still, since they don't know what else to do, they stay caught in this rut.

Those who do put two and two together are on the verge of a major revolution for their family, children, and future generations.

It's as big a revolution as the one Thomas Jefferson helped lead against the aristocratic dominance of England in his day. By getting a Thomas Jefferson Education in the classics, we create a revolution of more and more leaders in society.

The irony, again, is that the wealthy already understand this, but many in the middle and lower classes scoff at it. Their scoffing is a lot like a drowning man mocking the small boat that has come to save him. "I'll wait for a bigger one," he says. The sad part is that this generation frequently makes this choice for its children and youth.

I know that at this point (probably long before this point, in fact) many people may be frustrated that a book on classics is even dealing with finances, careers, money, and all this seemingly-materialistic stuff. But let's be clear: great education will make the difference between a future nation that is free and one that loses its freedoms.

That's what this is really about. If we lose our freedoms, prosperity will decrease for our children and grandchildren. If we lose our freedoms, religious freedom will be part of it. If we lose our freedoms, the rights to choose for our families without more government interference will be part of the loss.

Yes, the continuation of mediocre education, and the acceptance of mediocre education by the lower and middle classes, is directly hurting our family and religious freedoms. This is true.

It isn't just about money. In fact, money isn't as important as religious and family freedoms. And opportunity to support your family is the most important part of the money question. All of these are highly at risk in our current society, because conveyor belt education hurts all of these freedoms.

So if this feels too materialistic, or too career or power or class-system oriented, think again. Do you care about your freedom to believe as you choose? Do you care about your freedom to make choices for your family without government intervention? If so, all of this is vitally important.

And make no mistake, the groups that will determine these decisions in our nation are those that are consistently making the classics a key part of the education of their youth. Those who don't, have very little say in our future. That's why education is the center of the battle for our future.

The elite class understands the power of education, which for them is defined as the power of the classics.

#### ***4- The classics connect fields of knowledge.***

Most textbooks, and indeed most modern books, are written about one topic, one field, one subject. People who get most of their learning from such materials automatically learn to think in narrow ways.

In contrast, nobody told the authors of the great classics that their stories and essays should be broken down into one topic at a time. The classic authors thought out of the box at least partly because they thought about multiple topics and subjects at the same time. As a result, they saw the connections between things, and in fact, many of

them became masters at understanding the world because they simultaneously gathered information from myriad places and (by today's standards) seemingly unrelated sources.

The wealthy learned that this skill directly translates to increased innovation, well-timed financial and career choices, profitability, success and leadership, and so they valued this kind of learning—and the classics that fostered it. They desire to educate their children and youth in this same skill, using these same classics.

They know that by doing this, they give each child the best opportunity to lead, prosper, and have the most influence and options in his or her life.

### ***5-The classics teach short-term, intermediate, and long-term thinking.***

Most books don't do this. Most books focus not only on one topic, but on how it applies in the current world, the short term. Textbooks are especially short-term, which is why few of them last without revisions for more than a few short years.

When our young people are trained in one topic at a time in words, ideas, examples and assignments written in short-term language, they naturally learn to think in the short term. This “dumbs them down,” making them less prepared than elite-educated youth to lead, scrutinize and take wise risks, analyze big projects in terms of finances and external implications and other intricacies, and less valuable in the market place.

This lack of classic understanding decreases their earning power and their lifetime income. In contrast, the classics swing between short-, intermediate-, and long-term thinking, and they automatically train readers to do the same, to be good at all three. This has a huge impact on how the young person learns, what is learned, and how applicable it is in the real world.

This difference creates a huge divide between the upper classes and the rest. They think differently, because they think classically.

***6-The classics inspire readers to think big thoughts, dream big dreams, and pursue big goals.***

Textbooks simply don't do this. I've never read a truly inspiring textbook. Maybe some exist, but I don't know of any. Actually, a few stories or examples in many textbooks are inspiring, but these tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

In contrast, the classics are chock-full of big ideas.

Predictably, students who read books that inspire big ideas, dreams and goals are going to generally pursue bigger things than students who read inferior works. History clearly proves this reality.

***7- The classics teach readers that the way to learn truth and know what works in the world is to read, gather information from other people, and then deeply and independently think things through.***

In contrast, the textbook/conveyor belt style of education teaches students that the way to learn truth and know what works in the world is to listen to the experts.

These two approaches could hardly be more divergent. The first creates independent, self-thinking leaders; the second trains followers. A person trained in the first, naturally has more professional success, greater "opportunity", higher compensation, etc.

The classics tell and teach readers to think, not to accept things at face value, to dig deeper and find the truth, not to rely solely on any expert, and above all to really think things through and trust a higher truth – both by example, and by contrast.

The classics show this in a thousand ways in stories and examples, in the most basic classics from nearly every Shakespeare play to the writings of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, John Steinbeck, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Ayn Rand, etc.

The classics also just say this outright—that we must think and act independently—from the Bible to Homer to Aristotle, Cicero, David Hume, James Madison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, C.S. Lewis, Stephen Covey, etc.

**Whether you agree or disagree with the ideas taught in the classics, they make you think. They teach you to consider all sides, all the evidence you can gather, all the opinions, and then to make your *own* decisions – and take responsibility for them.**

**This is what classics *do*. They speak outside of the norm, out of the box, by causing us to think deeply. As I mentioned above, this is what made them classics. And they teach us to do the same.**

**But only if we read them.**

The sooner we start reading them, preferably as youth, the sooner these skills and abilities become a key part of our thinking, character, and worldview. These skills greatly impact the quality of our education, career, and service.

***8- The classics clearly demonstrate what is wrong or doesn't work.***

This is key. No education is complete, or even very good, without an understanding of *what doesn't work*.

There are a number of classics that are just plain wrong. Think of Engels' and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, or any other books that fit this category. Reading these teaches us to compare what works with what doesn't—for ourselves, based on thinking and improving our own judgment, not because of what some expert says.

The textbook approach doesn't do this nearly as well. In fact, most conveyor-belt schools go out of their way not to take a stand on much of anything. They value being neutral as often as possible. When they do take a stand, it is usually a stand for neutrality (e.g. "Your son hit another student, and we have a zero tolerance policy. Yes, the other student was hitting your daughter, and your son was just trying to defend his little sister from being punched any more, but we still have rules. Don't ever hit, no matter what." ... "Well, yes, I guess it is good that some people stood up against Hitler and fought, but that doesn't apply here." ... !! "Well, yes, I guess he should have just let his little sister get hit repeatedly while he went to find a teacher.")

Nobody actually says that last sentence, do they? But it is frequently implied. If you ask them this directly, most school officials will change the subject. What else can they do?

Ridiculous. Again, the textbook approach, the conveyor-belt model, and the belief in forced neutrality generally lead to reliance on experts, as Emerson warned us over a century ago. In fact, as Solzhenitsyn

taught, standing up for the right is the main part of morality. Sadly, the textbook approach seldom teaches such vital lessons – and often reinforces the opposite.

When we train young people not to take a stand for the right, we train them to be failures in life. When we teach them to read mediocre works, instead of books that teach the right and also some books that are downright wrong, and to tell the difference, and act on it, we raise up what C.S. Lewis called “Men Without Chests.” The classics fix this, if we’ll read them and make them central to education.

Another type of classic goes out of its way to show the high price of doing things wrong, like *The Lord of the Flies*, *Macbeth*, *Jane Eyre*, or *1984*. These works teach readers that principles matter, as do the right kind of life and the right kind of leadership. They teach such vital lessons by showing what happens when things are done in the wrong way.

This is part of any good education, and it is downright essential to leadership training. Young people whose education is steeped in greatness will learn to be their best. To take a stand when it is right. If a student doesn’t learn this lesson, he doesn’t have much of an education. Not at all.

Mediocrity doesn’t serve us well in education.

### ***9- The classics teach everyone the language of the elites.***

This helps everyone understand what is really going on in society, what our national leaders are really saying, and what any political promise really means.

This is essential in free society, since no voter who doesn’t understand these things can really make a good decision at the ballot box. When a nation is made up of voters who have read the classics, we elect a different kind of leader than when the voters believe every campaign



promise. As I said earlier, democratic society can only last if the regular people read the same books as their government officials. Any other system leads to elite aristocracy.

If we want to educate leaders, if we want our young people to rise to their best potential, we simply must help them get an education to match their missions in life. Anything less is a tragedy. Any education without the classics is a lesser education.

*“Great works are performed not  
by strength but by perseverance.”  
—Samuel Johnson*

# 2

## Classics, Academics, and Career Success

The list of reasons to read the classics could go on for a long time. The classics help in many, many things in academics and career.

For example, as a professor for over sixteen years, I worked with many college and some high school students who came from homes or secondary schools where the classics were frequently read and discussed, and also with even more students without such a background.

I learned that there is a clear, noticeable difference between those who have read a number of classics and those who haven't.

Specifically, those who had some experience in the classics exhibited certain strengths and skills that were always—literally, *always*—missing in other students.

Moreover, when the students without these skills and strengths read great books for six months or more, *they began to exhibit these same strengths and skills*.

Parents and teachers deserve to know about this, so they can help their children and youth accordingly.

## Skills and Strengths

As a general rule, students with a background of reading a number of classics, either alone or with their families, have the following traits at a much higher and noticeable level than those who don't:

**10- They are typically better readers** (they read more, and they better understand what they've read).

**11- They also tend to learn more from what they read, to see more connections between things.**

**12-They tend to read more through life.**

**13-They tend to be better writers.**

**14-They tend to be better public speakers.**

**15-They typically have a larger vocabulary.**

**16-They usually understand business planning and strategic thinking more readily, easily and deeply.**

**17-They often have better analytical skills:** reading between the lines, noticing symbolism, seeing ramifications of decisions before they are made (inductive reasoning), understanding unclear details (deductive reasoning).

**18-They readily understand the history of things, and the importance of learning the history behind things.**

**19-They frequently have more developed listening skills; they hear details that others more frequently miss.**

***20-They typically think about things with an eye toward application in the real world.***

***21-They more consistently see both the strengths and weaknesses of things and people.***

***22-They tend to be less judgmental of weaknesses, and more skeptical of “accepted” wisdom and superficial promises.***

***23-They tend to think about solutions while they are still learning about problems.***

***24-They usually think in terms of possibilities, rather than just “yes” or “no.”***

***25-They tend to be more effective observers.***

***26-They usually see learning as just the first step of producing.***

***27-They more frequently seek to understand things in depth, instead of taking appearances at face value.***

***28-They generally like learning.***

***29-They frequently like change and dealing with challenges more than most of their peers.***

***30-They tend to have bigger goals.***

***31-They are more likely to be self-starters.***

***32-They often have more highly-tuned social skills.*** For example, a 2013 study conducted by the New School for Social Research found that “the readers of literary fiction [as opposed to popular fiction or non-fiction] find themselves scoring better on tests measuring empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence. In some cases, it took

reading literary fiction for only a few minutes for the test scores to improve.”

All of these skills have a significant impact on both academic and career success. They are, in fact, an excellent summary of the best any school or education could hope to give its students. And almost any employer wants people with these strengths in his or her company.

## **“Please Sir, Some More?”**

In short, there are a lot of reasons to read the classics. They are the best that man has come up with—in almost every field of human life, educational topic, and economic sector—and in the case of scripture they are the best that man understands from God.

**The classics are the measure of all education, because they are, by definition, the pinnacles of mankind's very best.**

But they are also the best wisdom we have about all the practical parts of real life far beyond the classroom: from relationships, parenting and marriage, to leadership, economics, freedom, success, progress, integrity, and every other walk of life.

## **Go Fish**

Most people today don't realize how important classics are to prosperity, freedom, and the future of our nation. But if one fly fisherman is catching lots of fish and the other fisherman isn't catching any, everyone can see that something is different between the two.

When it becomes clear that just by putting on a pair of polarized sunglasses the second fisherman can do as well as the first, it's time to make a small change. Go buy some glasses. They're available to everyone, for less than \$5 at many stores. (A little tip, man-to-man? Look in the fishing section of sporting goods – not in the sunglasses section where the same kind of glasses can cost over \$200.)

Likewise, when several generations maintained and even increased their freedom (1776 to 1976), and our generation is quickly seeing its freedoms decrease, it is clear that something has changed. In reality, only a few people realize that the great difference is education—specifically the decline of classics in mass schooling.

In fact, the ones who are quickest to realize this problem are, not surprisingly, those with an education in the classics—either formal or informal.

## **“Show Me the Money!”**

Sadly, these things often fall on deaf ears. And the irony in it is absolutely stunning. We shifted away from classics in the name of economic/job

preparation – and took a direct hit in our pocket books. Our lifestyles decreased as a result. Beyond all the academic, career, freedom and societal reasons to read the classics, just consider the financial impact. The future of the class system, and of your family's place in it, is as simple as polarized sunglasses, or in this case reading the classics.

The classics are available in almost every library. You probably have a number of them in your own home. Your choice to use them, or not, will have drastic impact on your family's, children's, and grandchildren's financial future.

There are, as outlined above, a number of reasons to read the classics beyond money and career, and many people would argue that a lot of these reasons are more important than finances. I agree. In fact, in the next chapter we'll address the deepest reasons of all.

To be clear, finances are not the only, or the most important, reason to study the classics. I believe that reading the classics would be incredibly important even if it were at great sacrifice to present and even future comfort. The classics are so valuable for so many other reasons.

But for those who aren't particularly motivated by "the beauty of education" argument, who feel that higher education really should be "hire education," that the main purpose of schooling is to get a better job or career, just consider the money.

"Show me the money," you say? Okay. Where you find wealth, generation after generation, you'll find families that teach the classics to their children. Period.

Like it or not, this is true.

The real question is: Are you helping your family get on the path of prosperity? If you aren't creating a culture of reading the classics, you aren't. They're on some other path.



If this is the case, honestly ask yourself: has the time come to change your family's financial direction, trajectory, lifestyle and future? If so, bring on the classics.

*"May you live all the days of your life."  
—Jonathan Swift*

# 3

## Classics and Great Souls

With all that said, we still haven't addressed the most important reason to read the classics:

### ***33- Reading them inspires a greatness of soul.***

This goal is something that is hard to find nowadays, in many of our schools and businesses.

Greatness of soul, the desire to truly serve, to really make a positive difference in the world, is still a part of life for most people. This speaks to our deepest yearnings, our most important goals, our true dreams in life.

Education should speak to this deepest part of life. ***The classics do this.***

They do this in a way that pretty much nothing else can. Scripture, the classic of classics, is the greatest source of greatness in learning, and without the classics, greatness is seldom present in our schools, classrooms, or even libraries.

The classics bring us face to face with greatness. This is their job—the very reason they were penned, composed, sculpted, painted, constructed, calculated, saved, collected, and passed down.

## **Good is the Enemy of Great**

Moreover, the classics are inspiring. They inspire greatness. Not every classic inspires greatness in every student, of course. But reading the classics over time changes a person.

**The goal of reading the great classics is not to get the reader through the classics as much as to get great classics through the reader.**

**And it works. The classics are a collection of the best and greatest we possess in this world—from man and God. Without them, any education is anemic, lacking in greatness and inspiration.**

## Family Ties

This applies to the family as well. As Allan Bloom wrote in *The Closing of the American Mind*:

“People sup together, play together, travel together, but they do not think together. Hardly any homes have any intellectual life whatsoever, let alone one that informs the vital interests of life. Educational TV marks the high tide of family intellectual life.”

Bloom blamed this on one thing—***not reading the classics together as families***. Indeed, this leads us to two more, two of the very most important, reasons to read the classics:

### ***34- The classics bring a special kind of family connection.***

This is true because they provide family intellectual bonds that are practically impossible to duplicate in any other way. Find a family that reads classics together daily, for example, and you’ll nearly always find a very tightly knit family.

### ***35- When done right, reading the classics is one of the very most enjoyable ways to learn.***

Put simply: Classics are actually fun; and learning from the classics beats pretty much every other method. When students are forced or nagged into reading, no kind of learning is particularly enjoyable. But when parents, mentors and teachers truly inspire students to read the classics, no other system of learning is as fun for as many learners.

## Two Paths Diverged...

In short, there are two major ways to approach learning. The first is to divide it into a number of tasks and assignments, hoping that somewhere along the

way the learner will get inspired and really go deep. The second is to effectively inspire greatness, and then model the necessary tasks to achieve it.

The first seldom works. The second usually does. That's what Thomas Jefferson Education (TJEd) is all about. Let's do what really works! Our children deserve the best.

As Antoine De St. Exupery put it so eloquently: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

When people yearn for the sea, they'll do the needed tasks to build the ship. When people love learning and yearn for great knowledge, skills and wisdom, they'll do whatever it takes to acquire them.

Even read classics.

**The classics foster such a yearning, in a way that no other curriculum ever has.**

**The classics are inspiring, because they are great. The classics are challenging, because they are demanding for everyone—even the teachers, and the top experts, business and national leaders. The classics are the best, the very best, collection of ideas, principles, case studies, and examples of failure and success.**

**Because they are the best, the classics naturally bring out more of the best in those who read them than any other curriculum. Not everyone who reads a classic or two feels inspired to greatness, but those who persist, who read the classics and then read more, eventually find greatness.**

**And in the greatness, they find themselves. Then, almost automatically, they seek to better themselves. Then to better serve others. There is something about greatness that rubs off and brings greater success.**



**Greatness makes those near it want to emulate it. Greatness gently invites, encourages and inspires those near it to become greater. When children and youth are exposed to greatness, they naturally set out to become great. They conceive of a different potential than they would have without this exposure to greatness. And no collection of greatness exists at the same level or availability as the classics.**

## Take it to the Bank

Great education will always be better than less-than-great education.

Fathers and mothers who love the classics, or figure out a way to fall in love with the classics, who read good books aloud to their kids 2-3 times a week, and who help their children and youth build confidence and envision an important life purpose, naturally and powerfully help each child come face-to-face with greatness.

This is the starting point of great education.

But there is another level of coming face-to-face with greatness.

This occurs when two kinds of greatness combine and work together, specifically the inner genius and greatness found in each and every child, and the greatness found in the classics.

Put them together, and the resulting chemical reaction and synergy will naturally lead to miracles.

Your children are in your home, and each of them has greatness inside. Now mix their greatness with the greatness found in the classics, and then watch what happens. This is the blueprint for truly great education. Parents who know this are able to make better choices for their children's future.

People rob banks because "that's where the money is." Likewise, if you want great learning and wisdom in your family, read the classics—and teach your kids to do the same. Because that's where the greatness is.

*"A ship in harbor is safe,  
but that is not what ships are built for."  
—John Augustus Shedd*

### ***3 Roles For Dads***

*Build Confidence in Each Child*

*Read Aloud to Them From the Classics*

*Fall in Love with the Classics  
(To Create a Family Culture of Greatness)*

## **But How Do I Do This, Starting Right Now?**

- I. If you're not already doing it, start reading a good book to your family 2-3 nights a week for 10-20 minutes each time. This brings life-changing results.
- II. Enroll in [Mentoring in the Classics](#) and fall in love with the classics yourself. It's a lot of fun!
- III. Take the Confidence Challenge! This means to give no criticism to your kids or wife for 1 week, and to find a way every day to build each person's confidence. After 1 week, consider doing it for another week.

These three things will drastically improve your leadership as a dad in your home, and your whole family will greatly benefit.

# Appendix

Every Dad Should Read This!

- I. The Best Math Curriculum**
- II. 5 Things Effective TJEders Never Say**
- III. TJEder and Riding a Bike**

## **I. The Best Math Curriculum**

*By Oliver DeMille*

Few things cause more concern for many homeschoolers than how to teach math. If your kids are in a public or private school, this is still often a real worry. Indeed, for many parents, this is a real concern.

Some American Indian tribes teach that when something in your life repeats itself three or four times, you need to pay attention.

A few years ago one of my students called such a pattern a “theme unit”: a thought, idea or experience that presents itself repeatedly in different ways to make you take notice and learn some important lesson.

This week I was reminded of “the best math curriculum.” In fact, there were three reminders, and when the third one came it finally made me pause and take notice.

## Lesson #1

The first reminder happened when my son requested help on writing a resume for scouts. This evoked a memory of an occasion when his older brother did the same requirement nine years ago.

At the time, I was spending a lot of days on the road across North America speaking about the **7 Keys of Great Teaching**, and I found myself frustrated with the language of the scouting requirement.

I wrote about this experience years ago, but the short version is that I discouraged my son from writing a resume. “After all,” I reasoned, “we teach too much ‘employee-ship’ rather than entrepreneurial values in our society.” He nodded his head mildly and let me ramble.

The result of this little interchange was that I had him write up a full business plan instead of a simple resume.

With the luxury of the fact that we home schooled him, he spent a lot of time on this and ended up with a three-month plan to make more money than any boss would pay an 11-year-old employee.

He learned to use a spreadsheet and outline projected income, expenses, investments, debts, interest and payroll costs. Just to be sure he met the scout requirement, he included a resume in the business plan and “hired” himself to manage the project – a dumpster management service, as I recall.

He was pretty excited about his business proposal, but I didn’t let him submit it as a mere plan. I told him he needed to make a better case than just a bunch of numbers on paper. So he implemented the plan in our neighborhood, and only then went and met with his merit badge counselor.

I confess I was a little disappointed when the counselor simply gave a cursory glance at the business plan and moved on to other requirements; but my son did learn how to use spreadsheets and do basic business planning.

And now this week another son is repeating the process.

Perhaps the years have mellowed me some, for I'm less zealous about it all now; and yet I still think business planning and using spreadsheets is a great basic math lesson.

## **Lesson #2**

The second “ding, ding, ding” in my mind about “the best math curriculum” came when our eight-year-old daughter told my wife Rachel one home school morning at 10 a.m. that she “hates math” (this following a session of sitting through an explanation intended for her 15-year-old sister, which she found tedious) and then informed her at 3 p.m. that “math is so fun—I just love it.”

She followed with, “Can we spend more time on math tomorrow?”

This transformation occurred because my wife’s response to the 10 a.m. declaration of hate was to spend the school day showing the little girl (and her younger sister) as many exciting and fun things about math as time would allow.

She went to the white board and they spent some time introducing the language and symbols of math with stories of pizzas, necklaces, fruit salad and the like, diagramming and discussing mathematical symbols, numbers, equations, shapes and problems, and also smiling, questioning, laughing and hugging.

Then they pulled out math manipulatives (pinto beans, actually) and made a hands-on game of it all.

It was a fun home school day for mom and both girls, and the next couple of days were spent the same way.

I'm not sure if it will continue tomorrow, but I know that two little girls have fundamentally different views of math than they did at the beginning of the week.

## Lesson #3

Then, just today, a third thing happened that reminded me of "the best math curriculum." Again, I've taught about this for years, but when it came up again this afternoon in the immediate aftermath of the scouting and homeschooling events, I realized, "this is a pattern."

So now I'm paying attention.

This third reminder was pretty direct. I was reading in the excellent book *Unschooling Rules* by Clark Aldrich and I came to a chapter heading that summed up "the best math curriculum" as well as I've ever seen it:

"One computer + one spreadsheet software program = math curricula."

That's the lesson. And it's right on.

Aldrich wrote:

*"Math must be part of a critical core curriculum. It is one of the few subjects, along with reading and writing, worth making mandatory. Given that, what math should be taught?"*

*"Most math curricula have been hopelessly tangled up in a quagmire of precedent, prestige and capriciousness. Obviously, there are people who are passionate about math, and some of them go on to be...math or engineering majors. For them, calculus is required."*

*"However, there remains a perfect tool and context for math for the many people who do not share that passion. And that is a good"*



*spreadsheet, which can be created with Microsoft Excel, which many people have on their computers.”*

I agree with Aldrich about most of this, mainly that spreadsheet math is extremely useful in our modern world and also a fun way to learn math—as my son found out in scouting.

I have long taught that business planning is the greatest math project of all: organizing something out of nothing, and then outlining the details of the plan to implement it and put it into action, both in prose and numerical languages.

Such a curriculum is excellent for mathematical and leadership thinking – whether you home school or not – and it combines numerous skills into one project.

I do question Aldrich’s view that certain advanced mathematical principles are just for those few who are passionate about math or engineering, but I understand where he’s coming from—in the conveyor-belt model of education, love of math is often forced out of all but a passionate few.

In my experience, “the best math curriculum” nearly always engages more than “the few” to a lifetime interest in math.

So what is “the best math curriculum?”

It is really six simple steps.

## **Step 1: The young person must fall in love with numbers.**

Let me restate this for emphasis, since this concept is not widely understood in our modern society.

The first step is to fall in love with *numbers*—not math, not arithmetic, not addition or subtraction, and certainly not getting good grades, pleasing adults or being at the head of the class.

A person who falls in love with numbers is on the road to being passionate about math, and this applies to pretty much everyone—not just the mathematical few.

## **Step 2: The person must fall in love with shapes and comparisons.**

This is really just a continuation of loving numbers. The best way I've ever seen for a young person fall in love with numbers, shapes and comparisons is to spend a few hours with an adult who 1) is in love with numbers this way and 2) knows how to share this passion in a fun and inspiring way.

If all of math is simply a continuation of one's love of numbers, shapes and comparisons, the likelihood of continuing passion for math is drastically increased for nearly all people.

Where the conveyor-belt approach of forcing math on the young in rote and highly-pressured and competitive ways results in a few of the class getting passionate about math, the leadership approach of helping the young fall in love with numbers, shapes and comparisons engages the interest of nearly all.

I have witnessed the differences between these two approaches over and over—always with similar results. Most likely, so have you.

If teachers or parents aren't themselves passionately in love with numbers, shapes and comparisons, or if they don't quite know how to effectively transfer this passion in fun ways to youth, a few great books can help.

I highly recommend what I consider literally the very best book for falling in love with numbers and shapes: ***A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the***

*Universe*, by Michael S. Schneider. The adults can read it first, and then share it with the youth.

[For an expanded list of how to approach your own math-hate detox for a renewed love of math, and for tips and tools to inspire math learning in young people, see our [Math Resources](#) page, and “[What About Math](#)” by Rachel DeMille.]

### **Step 3: Fall in love with the mathematicians, & Step 4: Fall in love with the ideas of math.**

Once a young person is deeply interested in numbers, shapes and comparisons, the next step is to fall in love with the mathematicians who made their lives loving and pursuing math.

Start with *[Mathematicians are People, Too](#)* by Luetta and Wilbert Reimer, and then go on to biographies of great mathematicians.

Along with biography, reading the original writings of great mathematicians—rather than math textbooks—helps the young learner fall more deeply in love with increasingly complex mathematical concepts and ideas.

**Indeed, loving the ideas of math is the fourth step.**

Great starting books are *[On Numbers](#)* by Isaac Asimov and *[An Introduction to Mathematics](#)* by Alfred North Whitehead.

Two more fun books for this step are Euclid’s first book of *[Elements](#)* and *[Archimedes and the Door of Science](#)* by Jeanne Bendick.

### **Step 5: Move on to traditional book learning**

Once the first four steps are accomplished, it is time for a traditional book and lecture approach to learning arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and so on. This process is even more effective if it occurs simultaneously with step six.

## **Step 6: Learn spreadsheets and practice business planning.**

It is okay to make a number of plans that aren't implemented into actual business, but each student should establish at least a few of their plans into real businesses that turn a profit.

There is something about the physical and real impact of such math that brings a sense of magic to a love of numbers.

The irony of this is that step six is seldom taught in most schools but it is by far the most useful to nearly all adults after they are out of school. Indeed, if you have to choose just one of the steps, do number six. And whatever other steps you do, be sure not to leave out six. Finally, if you are going to do step five, you'll see a lot more success for a lot more students if you do steps 1-4 first.

This is "the best math curriculum" because it will work for almost everyone, and by "work" I mean it will turn us all into lifelong lovers of math.

### **To summarize, here is The Best Math Curriculum in a nutshell:**

1. Fall in love with numbers
2. Fall in love with shapes and comparisons
3. Fall in love with biographies of mathematicians—their lives, challenges, discoveries and achievements
4. Fall in love with mathematical ideas
5. Study math the traditional way, and at the same time 6-learn, practice, and implement spreadsheets and business planning

The key to success is simply to follow the steps in order: one before two, then two before three, and so on until the first four steps are complete.

Once the student loves numbers, shapes, comparisons, reading math biographies, and thinking about math ideas, the traditional textbook study of math combined with the study of spreadsheets will make math interesting and fun for nearly everyone.

So whether this is the third, second or even the first time the idea of upgrading your math program has come up recently, pay attention. “The best math curriculum” can take your home school math program to a whole new level! It works.

And it’s also a lot of fun.



## II. Five Things Effective TJEders Never Say

*By Oliver & Rachel DeMille*

***Warning: Straight talk ahead. Proceed with caution.***

Over the years we have found that each January there is a surge of new interest in TJEd as some parents are rethinking their kids' educational options. After a couple of quarters of disappointment with whatever was happening since September, they're ready to make some changes.

Whether you're just pulling your kids out of public school or reconsidering your approach to your homeschool, just finding your way back to TJEd with a New Year's Resolution, or simply a TJEder happily on the path of Leadership Education, we hope that this month's topic is timely.

It is a little bit sensitive, as it doesn't pull any punches, and this topic is the intersection of a couple of hot-buttons that are very personal for all of us: our kids and our habits.

So sit right down with a hot cup of chamomile tea and some relaxing music, and read on...

### **Time for a Change**

The fact is, getting better results than you got before means change. You changing. And although we're not perfect either, you signed up for our newsletter, so we're going to do our best with this month's issue to suggest how change might bring you better results. So feel the love here, thank us in

advance for our honesty and know that we shine the light on this subject with the very best of intentions.

We've been teaching the **principles of Leadership Education** for nearly two decades now, and we still notice two types of people who learn about TJEEd. One type flourishes, the other struggles and sometimes even quits—unless they find out and implement what is working for the first type.

When we first started teaching the principles of TJEEd, we thought everyone would just naturally resonate with the **7 Keys of Great Teaching** and leap to apply them. After our initial period of discovering them, this was our personal experience; so we weren't surprised when many people did the same. But we were a little surprised when a few people kept asking...

***“But how do you actually do this?”***

For several years we offered special trainings and materials for those who asked this type of question. Eventually, after working with many thousands of people attempting to apply the timeless principles of Leadership Education, we began to notice an interesting pattern.

This led us to begin asking certain questions anytime someone seemed to struggle with TJEEd. The first, most obvious question, was:

***Have you actually read the TJEEd books?***

We found that many people were inspired to look into TJEEd because of the example of a family that was excelling using the TJEEd principles, and yet sometimes the investigator never really paid the price to fill their own bucket and were not successful in “winging it.”

The bottom line is, getting off the conveyor belt is challenging under the best of circumstances; but trying to follow the path of Leadership Education without actually owning your role as the leader of the expedition (by immersing yourself in the principles through study and practice) is a good way to end up wandering aimlessly, and taking your family down a path of frustration.

Happily, most people do get past this first hurdle. The next questions were:

***“What is the last great classic you have read?”***

and

***“What are the top 5 classics you’ve read this year?”***

When someone said, “TJEd is great for literature and history, but what about science and math?”, we learned to ask, “What are the top 5 math classics you’ve read in the last few months?”

The answers to these questions have been extremely instructive, because for a family without extreme or unusual circumstances, they are the easiest way to separate those who are effectively applying TJEd and those who struggle. This led to a general rule about Leadership Education:

***“Those who do, teach. Those who don’t, can’t.”***

Just this week, a friend of ours lamented that she was doing really poorly in inspiring math. She is a brilliant and intuitive educator, and yet she found herself falling back into assigning and requiring where math was concerned.

Rachel asked her, “Do you like math?” She admitted that she really didn’t. ‘

Rachel then asked, “What fun books about math have you read?” You can probably guess what her answer to this question was.

This makes sense, after all. If you are reading the math or science classics, **you are going to be able to mentor them** better than if you aren’t studying them. And if you’re not, you probably don’t even know that there actually are **some really fun math books** out there.

So, after years of watching tens of thousands learn about and try to apply the principles of Leadership Education, here are the 5 things we’ve learned that...



## Effective TJEders don't say:

- "The TJE system is strong on educational philosophy, but it doesn't really help with application."
- "TJE is good for literature and history, but not math or science."
- "TJE seems great, but how do you actually do it?"
- "If I don't force and require my child to study, won't he just do nothing?"
- "I read classics in high school and college, so right now I want to just focus on the kids' education."

We've used the Socratic Method to respond to many thousands of people, and success in Leadership Education boils down to one thing. Really. Here are some examples of our conversations:

*Struggler: "TJE is good educational philosophy, but what about application?"*

**Response: "What are the 10 top classics you've read in the last year?"**

*Struggler: "TJE is good for literature and history, but not math and science."*

**Response: "What are the top 5 math and science classics you've read in the last six months?"**

*Struggler: "TJE seems good, but how do you actually do it?"*

**Response: "What are the last four great classics you've read?"**

*Struggler: "If I don't force my daughter to study, won't she just stop studying altogether?"*

**Response: "What are the top 5 great classics you've read aloud to your daughter in the past five months?"**

*Struggler: "I already have my education, so why should I read classics when the kids' education is the focus?"*

**Response: "What are the top 5 classics you've read recently with your 14-year-old son in mind as you read?"**

Those who have read 10 classics in the last year, 5 great math and science classics, 4 classics aloud with the kids, and 7 classics with a specific mentee in mind, etc., rarely ask such questions—because they don't typically have these problems or concerns.

If you've read 10 classics in the last year, TJEEd is more practical than philosophical to you. If not, it's a bunch of philosophy.

If you've read and closely studied a pile of great math classics this year, you don't wonder if TJEEd is good for math. You know it is—and you dive into showing what you've learned from the math classics in age-appropriate ways with your students.

If you're **reading great classics aloud with the kids**, you don't worry about forcing their education because they beg you to read even more—and they frequently ask for help finding additional things to study on their own.

If you've read 4 classics with your 15-year-old daughter specifically in mind, you have so much to share with her that you've had to restructure your life just to find enough time to talk with, listen to, and discuss things with her. Let's break it down:

- TJEEd works ***when we do TJEEd***.
- TJEEd works when we—as parents and teachers—read classics and share what we learn.
- TJEEd works when we are studying the classics, and then passionately passing on what we've studied.
- If we don't actually *do* TJEEd, it doesn't really work that well.

TJEEd, or Leadership Education, is not just about helping your kids live up to their leadership potential. It's about YOU leading out in that process, and inviting them along.

Until you really find for yourself the genius of “You, not Them,” you will forever feel insecure about leading out, and you will struggle to instill in them the value of self-education. That means you’ll get caught in the trap of assigning and requiring. And you’ll wonder why TJEEd doesn’t work.

But that’s not what’s going to happen for you.

As you come face-to-face with greatness, you will approach and expand your potential as the expert on your own home, your children will follow your lead with confidence and zeal, and you’ll be a light to others looking for answers – not only in the realm of family education, but also in the area of your personal mission.

*Isn’t that exciting?*

## **Face to Face with Greatness**

In truth, we’ve pretty much all been in that place where questions rage in our minds, where doubts and concerns make us worry if the 7 Keys will really work. But that was before we were making a daily study of the classics.

Once we’re doing our part, the excellence and energy of the great classics take away almost all of our insecurities. As we come face-to-face with greatness in the classics, it rubs off.

But if we never fully take on a personal study of the classics, we’ll always struggle with the principles of Leadership Education.

We’ll think it’s just philosophical, or not good at math, or one of the other things people think when they don’t study the classics along with the concepts of TJEEd.

**Even those who have learned to study the classics can lapse** if they stop making classics part of their current life.

Over time, if we let the demands of life push away our study time for weeks or months, the fears and anxieties naturally return. When we aren't being daily inspired by the great classics, it's hard to keep inspiring others.

But in such cases, those who have experienced the power of the classics know that the blame isn't in the principles, but in our own neglect of the greats. Great mentoring means great inspiration, and that must be renewed often—daily if possible—from the great works.

So, if you ever find yourself struggling to apply the principles of Leadership Education, ask yourself the really important questions:

- **“What are the top 10 classics I’ve read in the last year?”**
- **“What are the top 5 math and science classics I’ve read in the last six months?”**
- **“What are the top 3 great classics I’ve read aloud to my daughter in the past five months?”**
- **“What are the top 5 classics I’ve read recently with my 14-year-old son in mind as I read?”**

Most of us can do better at all of this. And when we apply the principles, we see increased success—without fail.

The principles of success are real, and they are powerful. If we ever find ourselves struggling to make TJEEd work, the first step toward success is to ask if we are doing our part.

When we read and apply the classics, we become truly effective mentors and inspirational leaders. When we don't, our struggles will tend to increase.

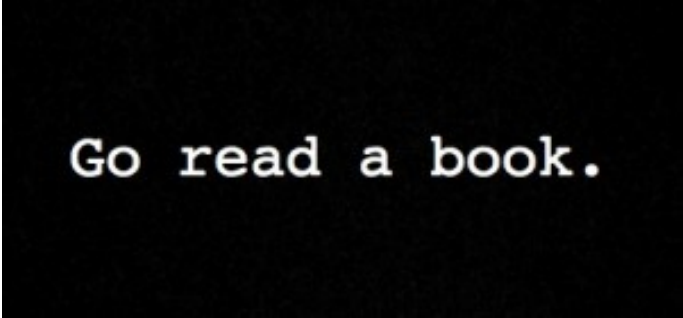
Fortunately, the great classics are on the shelves! We only have to pick them up and go to work...

That feeling of “secure, not stressed,” that makes us feel like our education is flourishing—because it is—is just 20 minutes away. And it is so *fun*.

So grab a classic, find a couch, and get that feeling of success flowing!

TJEd works when we do TJEd, which means to open the classics and keep reading.

And, as we have so often done in our seminars, let us end with this: If you needed someone to give you permission to take time on your own education, to stop the world and read a book, then let us volunteer to be the ones.



Go read a book.

**You have permission to read a book.**

A deposit into your own education is not a withdrawal from your children's. It's just the opposite! Except it pays back not in tomorrow's inflated dollars, but on a gold standard. It's an investment that grows in value as the years go on.



### III. TJEd and Riding a Bike

*by Oliver & Rachel DeMille*

***Roses are red, violets are blue; getting a great education is fun for you.***

It... tastes like chicken.

It...fill in your favorite cliché here...

But seriously, some areas of success hinge on one set of skills or knowledge, while others require *multiple* abilities and consistent multi-tasking.

TJEd: It's fun and easy when you're pushing both pedals.

TJEd is one of those arenas that is literally like riding a bike, meaning that you have to push both pedals and pump with both legs in order to get the best results.

What are we talking about? Simple. You can try riding a bike by just pushing one pedal. Seriously – try it sometime. Sit on your bike, push off, and then only use your right foot to pedal. Just ignore your left foot and do all the work with the right foot.

This can work if you are going down hill and mostly coasting. It might even work for a while on level ground. It's a little awkward, and it's hard to gain any momentum.

But try to go up hill, or attempt to go really fast, and **you're going to wish you were pumping the pedals with both legs.**

## Both Pedals

Likewise, TJEEd works best when two skill sets are both being used at the same time.

First, the TJEEd books, audios and online classes teach us how to *deliver* great education.

Second, the great classics *are* the great education. Together, these provide an excellent program to get the best education possible.

But just try to do this by only using one pedal. For example, just read TJEEd books but never pick up a classic—and your education will suffer.

Likewise, read a bunch of classics but never study how to mentor others and you'll miss out on so much, from discussions to family reading, from Family Executive Councils to the Phases of Learning, from the 55 ingredients to the 7 Keys—and so much more.

Recently a woman contacted us and asked which she should do first, the [7 Keys Certification](#) or the [Mentoring in the Classics](#) subscription? Rachel suggested that, based on her situation, the combination of the two would be by far the best approach.

This combination will help anyone ride the great education bicycle while using both pedals at once.

Ask yourself this: how balanced is your approach? The best way to help your students get a truly superb education is to simultaneously learn from the greatest classics and also learn how to apply the most effective principles of great teaching, learning, and education.

Doing both is so much more effective than trying to do one or the other.

So pull up two pedals and get to work: 1) the TJEEd materials, and 2) the great classics! Together these are a great vehicle to great education.

## Pick one, or both!

*Remember, an investment in your education is not a withdrawal from your kids'. It will pay dividends on a gold standard for generations to come!*

