

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Michael Pelofske

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Nova Classical Academy Upper School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1455 Victoria Way

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Saint Paul

State MN

Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55102-4213

County Ramsey County

Telephone (651) 209-6320

Fax (651) 209-6325

Web site/URL <https://www.novaclassical.org/>

E-mail tpaschall@novaclassical.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Brett Wedlund

E-

mail bwedlund@novaclassical.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Nova Classical Academy Charter School

Tel. (651) 209-6320

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Suzanne McInroy

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 2 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

☒ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	0
6	88
7	82
8	80
9	83
10	79
11	69
12 or higher	66
Total Students	547

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 13 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 61 % White
 - 9 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 3%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	527
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese Mandarin, Bengali, French, German, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Indonesian, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Sinhala, Amharic, Somali, Tigrinya, Yoruba, Serbian, and Teluga.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
20 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18 %
 Total number students who qualify: 101

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 7 %
Total number of students served 38

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>9</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>2</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>13</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 9 %
Total number of students served: 50

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 4

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	99%	97%	96%	98%	96%
High school graduation rate	93%	93%	94%	88%	91%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	64
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	84%
Enrolled in a community college	9%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	6%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	1%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

In a supportive community and through a systematic, accelerated college-preparatory education in the classical tradition, Nova Classical Academy challenges its students to develop intellect, to attain the habits of learning and mastery, and to live a virtuous life of duty and ideals.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

https://www.novaclassical.org/download/section-8-mandatory-policies/?wpdm=485&refresh=642deb504ec501680730960&ind=1664211106420&filename=1664211093wpdm_402%20Disability%20Nondiscrimination.pdf

18. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Nova Classical Academy is a free Minnesota public charter school, eligible for any interested student and family to enroll. Families complete a free application for the following school year, collected between the months of November through January. In February, applications are selected through a three-tiered lottery for openings and ordering of grade-level waitlists. Tiers of the lottery are based on 1) siblings of current students, 2) children of current staff, and 3) general applicants. Following the lottery, we do accept applications and provide offers of enrollment where space allows, as well as add applicants to waitlists in the order they were received.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Nova Classical Academy is a tuition free public charter school located in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Nova Classical system opened in Saint Paul in the fall of 2003, serving approximately 250 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The system grew quickly in both enrollment and grade levels served. The system eventually separated into a Lower School serving students in Kindergarten through fifth grade and an Upper School serving students in sixth through twelfth grade. Nova Classical's first class of seniors graduated in the spring of 2013. Nova Classical Academy's Upper School serves 527 students spanning seven different counties throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. As the enrollment of the school has grown, so too has the diversity of its student population. Over the past five years, the racial diversity in our student body has increased by 16% to 39%. During that timeframe we have also seen increases in the percentage of our students who are receiving Special Education and English Language Learner services.

Nova Classical was the first public school in Minnesota to engage a classical education structure where students learn to think and reason from a solid foundation of knowledge and skills, and where parents, staff, and students all share a unity of purpose. Nova Classical believes that an effective education must be systematic, comprehensive, and must have continuity from year to year. It is Nova Classical's job to equip each student with everything needed - knowledge, skills, and growth mindset - to become life-long learners. We empower students to be intellectually curious, to identify their personal strengths — and gain the knowledge, understanding and wisdom to make their world a better place. Classical education is a rigorous and formal method that teaches thought and expression of the mind and heart.

Classical education rests on the concept of the Trivium — grammar, logic, and rhetoric — not as subjects, although these subjects are studied, but as the structure of every subject and discipline. Grammar is the foundation of a subject—the collection of its parts and the mechanics of how they work. Logic is the organization of these parts into a whole and an understanding of the relationships among the parts. Rhetoric is the ability to apply the foundational knowledge and logical understanding of a subject purposefully and creatively to solve a problem, express an opinion with clarity, or create something new.

As they learn how to gain knowledge, Nova Classical Academy students gain exemplary study habits and time management skills that translate to self-discipline and accountability in academics and life. Nova Classical Academy students learn five Aristotelian virtues: justice, temperance, fortitude, wisdom, and prudence. The classical search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness and participation in the Great Conversation requires virtues, as well as the desire to serve and help humanity. Classical education develops confident, compassionate, and articulate graduates who are poised to engage as thoughtful global citizens.

Nova Classical Academy is separated into the Lower School (kindergarten to grade five) and Upper School (grades six to twelve). From here forward, “Nova Classical Academy” refers to the Upper School which is organized through two separate yet simultaneous programs, a program for Logic serving grades six through eight and a program for Rhetoric serving grades nine through twelve. The Logic program utilizes key curricular and instructional initiatives to develop students ability to reason across subject areas. A Study Skills program for sixth and seventh grade students guides practice with subject area content, vocabulary, and analogies that prepares them for their eighth grade formal Logic that employs Aristotelian teachings to analyze the Logic of language in its written and spoken form. Within the sixth-eighth curriculum, students engage in formal Latin instruction alongside core subject areas and a rotation of specialists that reflects the seven liberal arts.

There are several defining features of the rhetoric program (grades nine to twelve). The pedagogy introduces Socratic seminars which puts the students rhetoric skills into practice, and the program culminates with the students preparing a written thesis where they utilize the layers of the Trivium to analyze a solution to a problem facing the world. During these years students are able to enroll in high level courses such as Advanced Placement and College in the School offerings, and they can also complete up to seven years of instruction in Latin. Students in the Rhetoric program have the opportunity to participate in increasingly competitive extracurricular offerings. During the 2021-2022 school year, our school won state

championships in boys cross country and boys track and field, and many of our offerings (such as Mock Trial and Academic WorldQuest) rely heavily on the rhetoric skills which are the core of our curriculum.

While the curriculum for sixth through eighth grade and ninth through twelfth grade divisions have several key distinctions, the programs to support students are consistent through the Upper School. Data-driven instruction and reflective practice guides teachers to effectively determine the levels of students, the Response-to-Intervention program tailors support to meet students diverse and individual needs, and the “House” program provides developmentally appropriate check-ins and social-emotional learning opportunities aligned with Nova Classical’s virtues. The programs all align to develop well-rounded students throughout their school experience.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Nova Classical students grow strong as readers and writers through a focused repetition of habits and stories that robustly meet the goals of the Minnesota academic standards. Their daily work builds purposely toward generative thinking. Their skills are rooted in sustained meaningful conversation. The conversation grows from ongoing exposure to rich, time-tested common stories. This progression of learning frees them to return independently to the process they know for learning anything, including the next set of terms they want to understand. This progression prepares them for a senior thesis, the culmination of their Nova Classical education.

Literature courses at Nova Classical Academy meet Minnesota state academic standards through a map of common daily habits: at-home preparation, practice in class, cumulative review, and dialectical conversation. Both core and elective courses require regular reading and writing homework to foster the thoughtful insights enabled only by silent study. This homework prepares students to contribute to discussion from a posture of personal inquiry: whether offering questions or answers, they share a text and task in common with classmates and teacher. Daily recitations as class begins to foster a sense of common purpose but also model the scalable habits of long-term learning. Formative quizzes, announced and unannounced, join cumulative review processes that keep information in front of students over weeks, months, and years. Lectures are limited but purposeful in presenting interpretive frameworks; they generally offer context from history, art, or philosophy that introduce the terminology that will help students talk with precision about their ideas from the stories. Most importantly, students engage in daily classroom conversation with groups small and large that stretch their understanding of the text, their classmates, and themselves as only great stories can do. Nova Classical students understand, apply, and analyze ideas every day in literature courses.

From these practices, Nova Classical Academy students reach the crucial larger goals of ELA standards: nuanced comparison, synthesis of perspectives, and competent presentation of their ideas. Nova Classical students write. Persuasive writing instruction builds from grades six to ten with common expectations, language, and progressions. Students write essays both in class and at home, building from small-scale practice of all standardized writing expectations. Grades eleven and twelve build from rhetorical training in terms and small-scale inquiry begun in grade nine to add creative and research writing skills that culminate in independent research written and then also orally presented. Best of all, Nova Classical students value complexity. They understand that practicing with basic thoughts enables them to learn a pattern, but they also know that the pattern exists to enable fluent communication of the deepest thoughts possible. Regular in-class writing workshops based on teacher-directed peer-editing help students realize incremental gains in writing skill.

Nova Classical Academy students also speak publicly and often. In our rhetoric curriculum, students apply the terminology presented by crafting and presenting speeches on an average of twice a month. Topics range from personal narrative to rhetorical analysis to synthesis of academic research. While the literature courses offer common classic texts, the rhetoric curriculum surveys modern speeches and short stories representing a diversity of voices.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Nova Classical Academy's mathematics curriculum utilizes and builds upon Saxon math for grades six through eight, and progresses through a traditional mathematics sequence for grades nine through twelve that includes algebra, geometry, advanced algebra, pre-calculus, as well as college level coursework in calculus, statistics, advanced calculus, and math theory. The Saxon curriculum strategically introduces new concepts, skills, and applications while reviewing foundational knowledge and skills throughout the sequence. This review of content mirrors how the curriculum is systematically spiraled on a three-year cycle

in every subject area, providing the students the opportunity to build on prior knowledge through increasingly complex applications in later years. Our course alignment affords students the opportunity to access mathematical content at the level most appropriate for their individual strengths and challenges, including intervention support for those currently below grade level, as well as opportunities to engage with honors and college level coursework for students seeking new and challenging means to grow.

Mathematical instruction exemplifies the systematic structure of classical pedagogy, guiding students through each of three developmental stages of the Trivium within each concept and skill throughout the curriculum. Consistent intentional practice helps students not only retain important details and skills, but provides the basis for them to critically analyze and solve more complex problems and scenarios. Students at all levels are practiced in presenting and defending their problem-solving approaches to their fellow students, utilizing their evaluative thinking as well as rhetorical presentation skills to illustrate their preferred, and often most eloquent, solutions. Throughout all levels of mathematical instruction, frequent checks for understanding and systematic approaches for students to show and defend their thinking guide them to be diligent and thoughtful mathematicians, and employ the virtue of fortitude throughout their learning. Every student individually engages and demonstrates their understanding, and using dialectic questioning throughout every grade level and course in the mathematics sequence, every student participates, engages, and supports one another in the learning process.

Nova Classical's mathematics teachers employ a variety of measures to assess comprehension, analytical skills, and overall understanding. In the early grades, students complete a department-constructed placement screener as well as utilizing nationally normed assessment data to accurately place students in the course that best aligns with their current skills and abilities, rather than only relying on their grade level or prior math experience. This affords students the opportunity to engage at the right level of "agon" or challenge: to help them meaningfully grow and develop at the pace appropriate for them as an individual. Within each class, a deliberate emphasis on homework is key to building consistent and intentional practice with the concepts and skills from current and prior lessons. Frequent low-stakes quizzes and daily checks for understanding such as exit tickets and demonstration problems provide key data for teachers to assess and reteach the most challenging concepts in ways to move towards mastery. Moreover, teachers develop authentic assessments and relevant connections between the material and students' lived experiences in ways that keep them engaged and pursuing excellence.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The science curriculum at Nova Classical Academy emphasizes critical thinking and historical context when students are learning about the natural world and human efforts to study and shape it. It is vital to not only develop a deep and wide-ranging understanding of how populations of living things, ecosystems, resources, and natural events shape the history and environments of our planet, but to learn that human civilization has developed scientific thinking and engineering throughout history and into today's world. The curriculum in grades six and seven follows an integrated science model, where students delve into a range of topics each year that span Physical, Life, and Earth science while building on core scientific understanding through designing hands-on experiments in the scientific method, data and graphical analysis, measurement and safe lab practices while conducting experiments, along with the use of claim-evidence-reasoning to support hypotheses and tested conclusions.

Nova Classical's science curriculum is accelerated beginning with physical science in grade eight, pre-Advanced Placement biology in grade nine, and pre-Advanced Placement chemistry in grade ten, along with AP level courses in chemistry and physics and an honors level offering for genetics. In addition to the rigorous learning experiences these courses afford our students, we provide a range of science elective courses such as anatomy and physiology, comparative anatomy, and astrophysics, that prepare our students for a multitude of careers and experiences in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematic (STEM) related fields within a pedagogy that is classical in its structure.

Nova Classical Academy's science teachers utilize a strategic blend of dialectic questioning, hands-on experiments, research and data analysis, and formal instruction to lead students through scientific inquiry as they study and engage with the world around them. From the smallest atoms, to diverse ecosystems, to the

largest galaxies, the team of science teachers continually utilize Socratic questioning to help students unravel the mysteries of the world while continuing to develop and nurture the students' inherent curiosity of the natural world.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Nova Classical Academy's social studies curriculum focuses heavily on the chronological study of history, from the earliest known civilizations to the modern period. The history curriculum is broken into modules which are based on four time periods, which are repeated with increasing levels of complexity throughout the middle and high school levels. The first time period is ancient history through the classical period, the second is late antiquity throughout the medieval period, the third is the European (Italian and Northern) Renaissance and the early modern period, and lastly the fourth is the modern period, including current events, civics, and economics, and historiography. In addition to history as a discipline and sequence, students in grades nine to twelve take specific courses in United States history, civics, and economics, as well as opportunities for electives in Advanced Placement economics and human geography.

For each chronological unit of study, there is a body of basic knowledge that must be absorbed, integrated, memorized, and retained in order to analyze documents, do research, and engage in historical thinking skills. To that end, our students are taught, and are trained to retain, factual information relating to key dates; biographical information; technical vocabulary; geographical information; important art and artifacts; key philosophical, artistic, political, and social movements; and pivotal moments of change. This information is primarily taught directly through lecture and the reading of primary and secondary sources. Students memorize information through a formal method of flashcard study, a formal process for retaining information through studying notes, and calibration practices allowing students to continually increase the accuracy and speed of their factual recall.

Once new information is memorized, absorbed, and integrated with previous information, students analyze the information using themes and historical thinking processes. For all units of study, Nova Classical students can discuss themes of politics and warfare; economics; philosophy, religion, and culture; and technology. Students are trained to have facility with reasoning, speaking, and writing about topics of study across multiple themes, and with interdisciplinary focus.

Assessments in the history department take varied forms. Students certainly take both formative and summative assessments in the form of quizzes and tests, but written and oral assessments in the form of speeches, essays, writings related to the close observation and analysis of art (ekphrasis), formal and informal questioning (dialectic), and participation in Socratic seminar are also used across grade levels beginning in 6th grade and ending in the senior year.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

At Nova Classical Academy, we believe it is our job to equip each student with everything needed – knowledge, skills, and growth mindset – to become life-long learners. From Harvard to the University of Minnesota and Inver Hills Community College, our confident, compassionate, and articulate graduates are poised to engage as thoughtful citizens.

Nova Classical students access lessons, resources, and grade-level activities that guide them in career and college exploration, skill and interest inventories, and other activities focused on college and career preparation. Students also received annual coaching focused on their schedule registrations and path towards graduation. Nova Classical Academy provides nearly 20 Advanced Placement (AP) and College In the Schools (CIS) offerings across all our core content areas, where students can engage in college level coursework and earn college credits throughout their high school experience. Our extensive Latin and Greek program affords students the opportunity to graduate high school with an amount of college language credits nearly equivalent to a Classics minor from many university programs.

Eleventh grade students participate in individual meetings with the counselor to create individualized post-secondary plans. Students' twelfth grade year includes the unique component of a college-level Senior

Thesis. The Senior Thesis serves as a culminating achievement of their high school experience, and indicative of their capability to pursue independent research, writing, and learning at the college level and beyond. Whether through creating artwork, statistical analysis, scientific research, or literary analysis, all students engage in producing a written thesis paper and defending their work to a panel of advisors and faculty. Examples of topics students chose to research in their theses during the 2021-2022 school year include “Design of a Therapeutic Device for Rock-Climbers with A2, A3, or A4 Flexor Pulley Ruptures” and “Optimal Structure Protections Under Extreme Wildfire Conditions in the Mixed Laurentian Forest.”

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Nova Classical’s Music program has been structured to highlight choral music. Students in sixth through eighth grade study music history that correlates to the time period studied in their history classes: medieval and renaissance in grade six, baroque and classical in grade seven, and romantic and modern in grade eight. In addition to music history, grades six through eight students learn to read music and perform in two concerts during the year. In grades nine through twelve, students in music are able to choose between performance choir and guitar to satisfy their graduation requirement.

For visual arts, students at Nova Classical Academy follow the same historical correlation as music: medieval and renaissance in grade six, baroque and classical in grade seven, and romantic and modern in grade eight. Along with learning about these historical time periods through visual works of art, students in grades six through eight also learn the basics of art elements and principles, which students will use and expand upon throughout the art curriculum at Nova Classical. In grades nine through twelve, students will take comparative art, and have the elective options of drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, and Advanced Placement 2D and 3D Art.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Students in sixth through eighth grade have Physical Education as one of their rotating specialist classes. Embedded in the Physical Education class in sixth through eighth grades are several health education units each year which align with Minnesota's academic standards for Health: diseases; nutrition, including food groups, reading food labels and body image; and alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Physical Education and Health are courses which are required to meet our school’s graduation requirements. High School Physical Education covers physical activity. In the Physical Education course, students learn about the four components of exercise, assess their personal fitness level and create a fitness plan, see the relationship between exercise/diet and body image, and participate in a wide variety of activities. High School Health Education is a comprehensive course covering the topics of emotional and mental health, violence and injury prevention, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug prevention, reproductive health and pregnancy prevention, abstinence, and HIV and STI prevention.

Students who have an interest in Health and Physical Education can also register to take additional electives such as Team Sports, Anatomy and Physiology, and Comparative Anatomy. Both Anatomy and Physiology and Comparative Anatomy allow our students to deepen their core Health knowledge of diseases, drug use, and nutrition.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

At Nova Classical Academy, we consider the study of Latin as an essential component of the classical model, and all students will take Latin at some time during their Upper School experience. Students in ninth

through twelfth grade have the option to take College in the Schools (CIS) programs in Latin and Ancient Greek. Nova Classical partners with the University of Minnesota's College in the Schools program so that students earn college credit in these courses at no cost to the student. Students also have the option to choose Spanish after they have completed their Latin requirement. Spanish offerings are first year (Spanish I) through Advanced Placement (Spanish IV).

Language courses emphasize verb conjugation and translation skills; vocabulary, reading and communication levels in Spanish, and basic grammatical points of case usage in Latin and Greek. In all Language courses, State and National learning standards are measured in part through the Data-Driven Instruction and analysis both by individual teachers and within the department. For the CIS concurrent-enrollment courses, assessments are supplied in part by the University of Minnesota. Department-wide formative assessments include low-stakes daily practice; regular checks on new grammar and vocabulary. Summative assessments for larger units of study include traditional tests, generative composition, open-book sight translations.

2d. Technology/library/media

Nova Classical Academy's model of education relies on time-honored curriculum and pedagogy which does not look for ways to implement the most recent trend in educational philosophy and practice. Because of this, we limit our use of technology to those digital tools which support our existing pedagogical practices. For example, classrooms have projectors to aid in the delivery of direct instruction, and laptop carts and a computer lab are available to aid students during the research and writing process in all grades.

Our classical model is based heavily on the Great Books, so access to quality literature, primary documents, and written material is a necessity for our students. However, because of the funding and facilities limitations placed on charter schools in the state of Minnesota, Nova Classical does not have a physical library on site. To alleviate the impact of this, we have partnered with the Ramsey County library system to ensure our students enjoy guaranteed access to their community libraries. Through this program, students can obtain up to ten physical items at a time, and they are provided with access to multiple research databases.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

Nova Classical Academy students study formal and material Aristotelian logic for an entire year in eighth grade. This course of formal and material logic focuses on the logic of language in its written and spoken form. Formal logic focuses student attention on building arguments that are not only fact-based, but structured in such a way that, if the antecedent is true, the conclusion follows logically and must also be true. Material logic helps students to identify situations where there are mistakes in content, rather than form, or where distractions are used to shift focus away from weak (or even non-existent) arguments. Nova Classical's logic curriculum is practical, rather than abstract in nature, in order to prepare our students for the next step of rhetoric study in ninth grade .

Rhetoric study in ninth through twelfth grade consists of the history, theory, and practice of Rhetoric. In it, students learn the fundamental tools needed for life: close reading, thinking deeply, and arguing effectively. Our students are taught to listen to speeches and read essays to parse the argument for validity and truth in real time, and if necessary, form a sound counter-argument. Nova Classical students are taught to identify their cognitive biases, and those of others. Logic teaches students to avoid making rash decisions based upon these cognitive biases, and rhetoric teaches them to eloquently persuade others to do the same.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Our model emphasizes that it is important to deliver rigorous curriculum and instruction to all students, however, we also are aware that what is rigorous for one individual student may be at an inaccessible level to another. For this reason, we have built a system of assessing student academic needs and providing

interventions when needed so that all students interact with content at a level of rigor that is appropriate to them.

Nova Classical has built a system of Data-Driven Instruction (DDI) based on the work of Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. This system has several key components. First, our staff identify which standards and key skills are vital for all students to master. Second, measures are designed to assess students' progress towards these essential learning benchmarks. Finally, teachers administer the assessments and performance tasks and analyze each individual student's results to determine which students have not reached the desired performance on each essential learning. Based on this analysis, teachers are able to reteach essential material to individual students, small groups or the whole cohort as needed.

In addition to our DDI system, we utilize a nationally normed assessment to determine students' math and reading skill level. Based partially on these assessments, students may be placed into intervention courses which focus on key skills, move at a slower pace, and have smaller class sizes which allow for more individual instruction and the delivery of content at an appropriate level of rigor.

In addition to the measures identified above, Nova Classical utilizes a Response to Intervention (RtI) system. The RtI program brings together a wide range of professionals including classroom teachers, school counselors, special education teachers, our special education coordinator, and other professionals as needed. On a referral basis, this group works to tailor intervention to students who are not experiencing academic growth and who have not already been identified for additional support.

One of our subgroups with the largest achievement gaps was students who qualify to receive free and reduced lunch. We quickly recognized that restrictions on sharing the identities of students in this subgroup with staff was an obstacle that needed to be overcome before interventions could be provided. Our solution to this obstacle was to implement the interventions identified above with fidelity for all students in our system as this was the only way to ensure that the students in the most needed subgroups would have access to these supports.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Because of our classical education model and emphasis on delivering a rigorous curriculum, a large portion of our student population is performing above grade level. Providing students with further opportunities to delve deeper into the content of their course work and providing advanced course offerings are our primary methods for supporting students who are performing above grade level.

In the past, Nova Classical offered separate “Honors” sections of many of our core course offerings. However, this is a practice that we have altered in recent years as we determined that due to the school’s master schedule, students were being forced to choose between participating in an Honors track for all of their courses or not participating in the Honors section of any of their classes. To make the Honors program accessible to all students, we moved from having specific Honors sections to having Honors projects embedded into all sections of the courses. Doing this has allowed all students who take these courses to determine whether they want to complete the additional learning and work that is needed to receive the Honors designation.

With the move away from Honors sections, Nova Classical uses three methods to build a more rigorous course load for students. We offer a wide range of Advanced Placement (AP) courses which are widely accessed by our student body. Our students see great success in AP courses with 84% of our students receiving a three or higher on all AP exams that they take. Students may also register to take college courses within our school through College in the School (CIS) programming or on college campuses through Minnesota’s Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Program. Between these two programs, 72% of Nova Classical tenth through twelfth grade students are accessing at least one college level course.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Nova Classical Academy offers special education services for students with a range of supports and services for a variety of disability areas. We use small group instruction, one-on-one service, indirect, and direct service. When appropriate, Nova Classical Academy contracts with related service providers for instruction in the following areas: Speech and Language Services, Occupational Therapy Services, Physical Therapy, Audiological Services, Vision Services, School Psychology Services, Early Childhood Specialist, Traumatic Brain Injury Specialist, Physical/Health Disabilities Instructor, Developmental Adaptive Physical Education, and Social Work Services.

In our planning and execution of special education services at Nova Classical Academy, we continue to utilize the best practices of classical education in order to provide access to our instruction and curriculum for all students. In the Trivium approach of classical education, teachers lay the foundation for deep learning by instructing students in the essential components of any subject. This approach is especially effective with our special education students: our special education teachers guide students in learning core skills in literacy and mathematics, scaffold their writing and provide them with adaptive technology to support their writing if necessary, and use manipulatives for mathematics when kinetic learning is appropriate for student needs.

Nova Classical's special education students are also provided equal access to our high quality curriculum. For example, our ninth grade general education students read Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, texts that may be inaccessible to some students with disabilities. Lest those students miss out on these core texts of our school's curriculum, we utilize adapted versions of the Iliad and the Odyssey where students can engage in the epic poems through visual art and essential plot points.

For students who do not qualify for special education services but have a disability that is a barrier for learning, Nova Classical Academy's Section 504 Team determines which accommodations and modifications reasonably remove barriers to access for the student given their disability.

3d. English Language Learners:

Nova Classical conducts its English Language Learner (ELL) program in accordance with the Minnesota Department of Education guidelines. Parents are notified of student placement in ELL services within 10 days of enrollment. Phone or face-to-face conversation, translated if necessary, from the ELL or classroom teacher is the initial form of contact. ELL programming and support services are explained, and teachers are able to answer questions and receive parental input. A follow-up letter from the ELL instructor states the reasons for identification, student proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading and writing, the amount of time and type of EL services, exit requirements, and graduation rate of ELL students in the district. Parents retain the right to refuse service. EL services support the student in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the following five areas: Social & Instructional Language, Language of Language Arts, Language of Mathematics, Language of Science, and Language of Social Studies.

Ongoing assessments determine continued ELL services: statewide English language proficiency assessments (ACCESS), Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Reading and Mathematics (MCAs), nationally-normed assessments, as well as classroom assessments in English language development, reading, math, science and social studies. All student data is reviewed yearly by a licensed ELL instructor. Content-based English language development instructional programs at Nova Classical strives to simultaneously promote students' English-language proficiency and mastery of grade-level academic content in an English setting.

Nova Classical ELL and classroom teachers collaborate to teach language, create accommodations, and differentiate based on the needs of the students in their classrooms. In the area of language acquisition, the goal of the ELL Program is to provide students with the opportunity to develop communication skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, thereby enabling the students to be successful within the academic mainstream classroom. Students are encouraged to share their cultural backgrounds and realize the importance of their role in a multicultural society.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our ability to engage students in their learning experience begins with establishing a schoolwide culture that values and nurtures learning in every available opportunity. When we refer to rigor at Nova Classical Academy, it is both the high-quality curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the cultural rigor of the school: forming exemplary habits to develop self-discipline and accountability in academics and in life. High-quality curriculum and pedagogy affords our students the opportunity to investigate and connect to topics and experiences across every subject area. Personal connections and individualized support our faculty and staff develop with every student fosters the engagement and drive to learn in our classrooms every day.

In order to enrich this learning culture, every student engages in an advisory program called “House,” modeled on the house structure found in medieval universities that created a “school within a school” and a sense of community within a much larger institution. Each teacher serves as a grade level guide and mentor, building individual relationships with students as they help them navigate their academic successes and challenges, while also providing a forum for students to intentionally discuss and build social-emotional skills and experiences through seminar and other guided activities.

Nova Classical also encourages involvement in extracurricular athletics, activities, and service learning within the community. Over 60% of students are involved in one or more extra-curricular opportunities, developing a broad range of knowledge and skills within each activity and learning the importance and value of time management, teamwork, sportsmanship, and helping one another strive for excellence. This level of participation speaks to the connectedness within the student population, the drive to learn and develop as individuals, and the value of shared experiences among their peers in our school community.

Our student body continually grows in exercising student voice and being involved in the events of the school. A key opportunity for student leadership is seen in our Student Senates, elected student representatives in sixth through twelfth grades. Student Senators take a principal role in crafting many of the events, traditions, and experiences through the school year, while also directing the feedback and concerns of the student body with school leadership. Listening sessions and student forums have helped school leadership and faculty craft more responsive approaches to meeting student academic and mental health needs throughout the recent pandemic and return to in-person learning, as well as building more equitable and culturally responsive classrooms and schoolwide experiences for a continually more diverse student body.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

From its founding in 2003, Nova Classical Academy has prioritized a strong school to family partnership that reinforces the mission and vision for the school, and the goals for achievement within the student body. This has taken a variety of forms over the years, growing and developing just as the size and diversity of the student body and our community has over time.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Nova Classical conducted a communications audit to evaluate the effectiveness of our interactions with families. Based on the findings of the audit, a new communications plan was adopted in the winter of 2022 outlining practices which will be implemented to ensure that we are effective in creating an inclusive community where people feel welcome. Some examples of strategies included in the communications plan are producing communications which are at no more than an eighth grade reading level, developing a more consistent cadence for communication, and conducting annual community feedback surveys.

One common thread has been the importance of communication from the school to families, sharing the work and achievements of the students along with detailed information and explanations of how the classical model is being lived and experienced in the classrooms. Nova Classical Academy now utilizes a regular cycle of electronic newsletters: “The Herald”, which highlights the achievements and upcoming activities

for Nova Classical students, as well as “The Torch,” which provides insight for how classical education is taking place in classrooms and throughout the school, are all examples of how we share the lived experience of our student body with our families and community.

Nova Classical Academy also emphasizes the value of gathering families, students, and friends in meaningful ways. Our annual “Great Gatherings” provides a venue for community members and staff to host a variety of social events and experiences while also serving to raise funds for the school at large. These gatherings provide opportunities for our families to more deeply connect and share their experiences within the school. These events, coupled with a series of informational nights about our practices within the school, Honors symposia where students showcase their work and achievements in their classes, as well as opportunities for parent voice such as Parent Advisory and School Climate committees, serve to reinforce our value of creating a whole person with well-rounded experiences throughout our community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Nova Classical Academy strives to hire and develop teachers and staff that are not only knowledgeable and skilled in their subject area, but also share the value of learning in collaboration with their fellow educators. Every new teacher completes classical education pedagogy training throughout their first year at Nova Classical, which is also aligned with a mentor teacher within their grade level or content area. By explicitly modeling what our school’s approach to classical education looks and feels like, how it is instructed in the classroom, and how we collaboratively support one another towards improving our practice, our faculty have a more meaningful understanding of the mission and vision of the school and how their work serves to reach these ends.

After the initial year of classical education training, professional development in classical pedagogy continues to build on fundamental elements of the classical tradition: foundational literature of the classical world (Beauty), how classical education is embedded in our daily practice with students in the classroom (Goodness), and investigating diversity in the classical world and equity in the classical classroom (Truth). Each teacher’s pedagogy training is tailored to their individual abilities and experiences, and scheduled with colleagues across all grades and subject areas at a similar level of professional practice and development. This strategic alignment helps reinforce the collegial atmosphere among the faculty within the school, that every teacher is moving towards further refining their practice in a shared experience with their fellow educators.

Nova Classical Academy’s Upper School also provides a variety of teacher leadership opportunities that serve the diverse needs and initiatives of the school and its students. Teachers can become department heads, equity coordinators, student senate advisors, data-driven instructional leads, new teacher mentors, pedagogical leads, curricular leads, and House programming leads. Each teacher leadership position builds on the knowledge and experience of faculty members in partnership with school leadership as we collaboratively work to address the growing and diverse challenges of the school and its student body.

The faculty of Nova Classical Academy are intentionally provided a meaningful autonomy in how they shape and instruct their lessons with students throughout the year. Teachers continually develop and exhibit mastery of classical pedagogy and practices, utilizing these skills to shape authentic learning experiences in their classroom for their students. By continually coaching and honoring the work of our faculty, they have the opportunity to utilize their strengths and experience to creatively and strategically develop connections between students and their content and the classical tradition.

4. School Leadership:

Nova Classical’s organizational structure, much like the classical pedagogy that is embedded throughout the school, is very intentional in its alignment to best utilize the strengths and resources of its faculty, staff, and leadership team. A collaborative and interconnected school leadership structure builds, relies upon, and utilizes the trust and shared vision of the teachers and staff towards meeting the needs of our students in a rigorous academic environment. A network of professional learning communities are targeted to address specific areas of focus throughout the school, and by utilizing mixtures of teachers, educational assistants,

support staff, and administration, are better able to see first hand how their efforts and practice impact those around them and throughout the school. New initiatives and adjustments to existing programs are able to be developed and implemented in a timely and responsive manner thanks to layers of distributed leadership throughout the school.

Nova Classical Academy has one principal, who serves as an instructional guidepost for how classical pedagogy is instructed and experienced in the classroom. They model the high standard of expectations for students, teachers, and staff alike, and provide guidance for the professional learning communities that take place throughout the school. The Academic Director develops and implements the curriculum across all grade levels and subject areas, directs student assessments and targeted supports, as well as communicates the classical model and vision of the school to the community as a whole. Leadership within the faculty takes several forms, including Department Chairs who not only oversee their individual subject area teams, but coordinate school programs and events including student-parent information nights and school improvement efforts. Subject area departments and grade level teams focus on discipline specific instructional practices and overall pacing of academic content, as well as classroom routines and procedures to responsively serve all students effectively. Data-Driven Instructional leads review interim assessment data to build reflective practices as well as subject area and schoolwide trends in student results. Response-To-Intervention teams review student results to implement schoolwide and targeted supports for students at all ability levels, and adapt interventions as necessary.

These teams continually analyze and reflect on student data, instructional practices, and schoolwide procedures to refine our methods in the ways that best serve the needs of the school and its increasingly more diverse student body.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Since 2016, Nova Classical Academy has prioritized culturally responsive teaching and learning. Our school started this initiative by holding teacher-led racial equity trainings for our faculty, opening up conversational foundations of racial and educational justice. The challenge with this approach was that our school faculty and staff did not have a shared understanding of terminology and concepts such as equality, equity, and inclusion.

Our school leadership decided to restructure the training and implementation of culturally responsive teaching and learning through commitment to our school's methodology of classical education: defining key terms such as equity and giving historical background of diversity in the classical world (grammar stage), using the Seven Steps in Equity Literary Case Analysis from Gorski and Pothini's 2018 "Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education" to synthesize this knowledge and apply it to our classrooms (logic stage), and yearly ongoing discussion of case studies from Gorski and Pothini during our Staff Development Days (rhetoric stage). All Nova Classical Staff, from teachers to leadership to support staff, are expected to engage in this important work in order to continuously improve our efforts and understanding of the diverse needs and backgrounds of our students, families, and staff.

In addition to high-quality, job-embedded professional development for all of our staff, Nova Classical Academy has implemented additional support for students and families. We created and implemented an Equity Team, composed of Nova Classical parents, students, teachers, and chaired by two teacher Equity Coordinators. The purpose of the Equity Team is to support students' personal, social, and academic achievement through targeted guidance, outreach, consultation, and education service for students, families, and staff. Equity Team work for this purpose so far has been a proposed Nova Classical Academy Equity Statement or Policy, a restructuring of our Student Parent Handbook for greater community access, an equity audit of our website, and a Multicultural Night which highlighted the diverse backgrounds and traditions of our school families.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

When we meet with prospective students and parents for the first time, they often ask about what makes us successful and sets us apart from all of the other school options that they may be considering. In these conversations we share that our success is largely based on our strong commitment to providing a rigorous classical education for our students. You can often see disappointment on the faces of these families as if they were hoping to hear about some new theory or model of education which was a secret for anyone not keeping up with the latest in educational research but that just does not align with our reality. At Nova Classical, we have committed to the classical education model which has a long history of helping students grow, and the fact that we use this model as the foundation upon which all decisions are made is the most instrumental component of our school's success.

Using the classical model of education, our students are exposed to a multitude of facts on the topics that they student, they are then able to use those to make meaning and ultimately make decisions and take action. At Nova Classical, we rarely look to change or add curriculum to our system, however, we constantly look at our existing curriculum and look for more effective ways to deliver that content. Our pedagogy is directly aligned with our curriculum and is based on instructional strategies specific to the grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages of learning. Our staff participates in professional development which focuses exclusively on the model that our school has adopted and in which we believe. Our system for teaching students character, and upon which our behavior systems are based, is based on the concept of Aristotelian virtues.

The one thing that is most instrumental to our schools success is our unwavering commitment to the classical education model, however, to us that commitment is not only the most important thing, it is everything. All of our work, initiatives and programs align to this focus, and because of this all of our efforts are working in the same direction. We do not implement new programs or initiatives that work against this model. There are now components of our system that are working contrary to this focus, and that efficiency and shared common vision is what drives the success of Nova Classical.