

Creating Classroom Culture

Giving Students What Lasts

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What is the point?

**“A classroom is something just less than sacred,
but it is something more than secular. The
teacher is wise to err on the side of the sacred.”**

Joshua Gibbs - Something They Will Not Forget

Curriculum v. Control

My choices had trained my students and my priorities had ordered our loves.



Shared Experience

Common Language

Embodied Values



Our students understand by our behaviors and attitudes what we value. Even if we haven't been proactive and strategic, we've still sent a message.

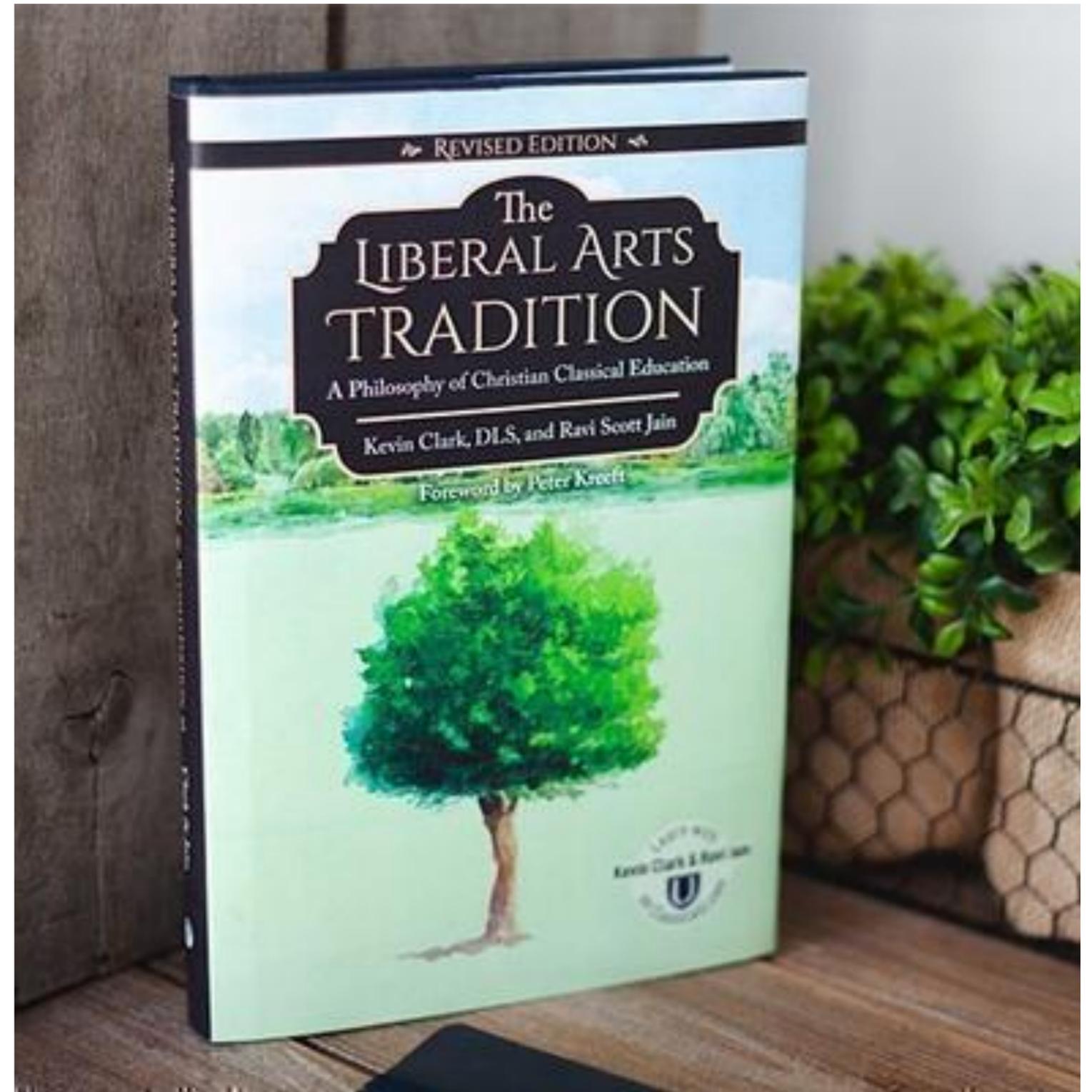
Creating Classroom Culture, Mandi Gerth 2021

“Students do not learn what the teacher tests on, they learn what he lavishes his minutes and hours on. If a teacher will not spend his own time on something, he should not expect his students to do so. The teacher is always modeling the use of time to his students.”

Joshua Gibbs, *Something they will not Forget*

- Is the culture of my classroom actually what I want it to be?
- Is it joyful?
- Is it beautiful?
- What does it communicate?
- Have I sent an unintended message?

“For the Greeks paideia meant something more like enculturation... Those who seek to renew the Christian classical education tradition must keep this full-orbed understanding of education in mind, understanding that transmitting culture is a central aspect of the educational task. In order to pass on a culture there must be something of substance to transmit...If the curriculum forms the trunk and branches of the tree, then the culture of the school—the multitude of intangible attitudes, relationships and habits which undergird the entire process—is the soil from which the curriculum draws its life. ”



Relationships
Attitudes
Habits



For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future
Jeremiah 29:11

Culture begins with relationship.

“There are only two sides: that of God and that of His enemies. Accordingly, all people are now—and will be eternally—separated by their relationship to God. When you are out in the world and the question of which side you are on comes up, what will your answer be? The question should not be answered by some grand philosophical investigation; it should be answered by your loyalties and loves. Do you love God and his Son? Do you love His word? His people?”

Douglas Wilson, *What I Learned in Narnia*

Shared Experience

Common Language

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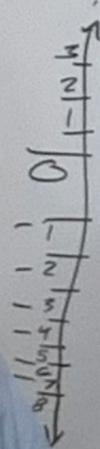
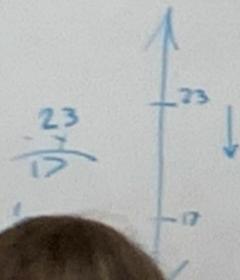


Shared Experience

August 12, 2021

Norwood

Common Language

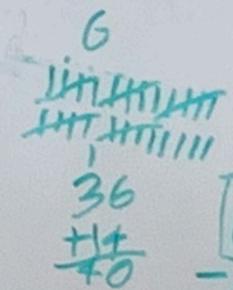


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$$\begin{array}{r} 36 \\ +14 \\ \hline 50 \\ Q= \end{array}$$

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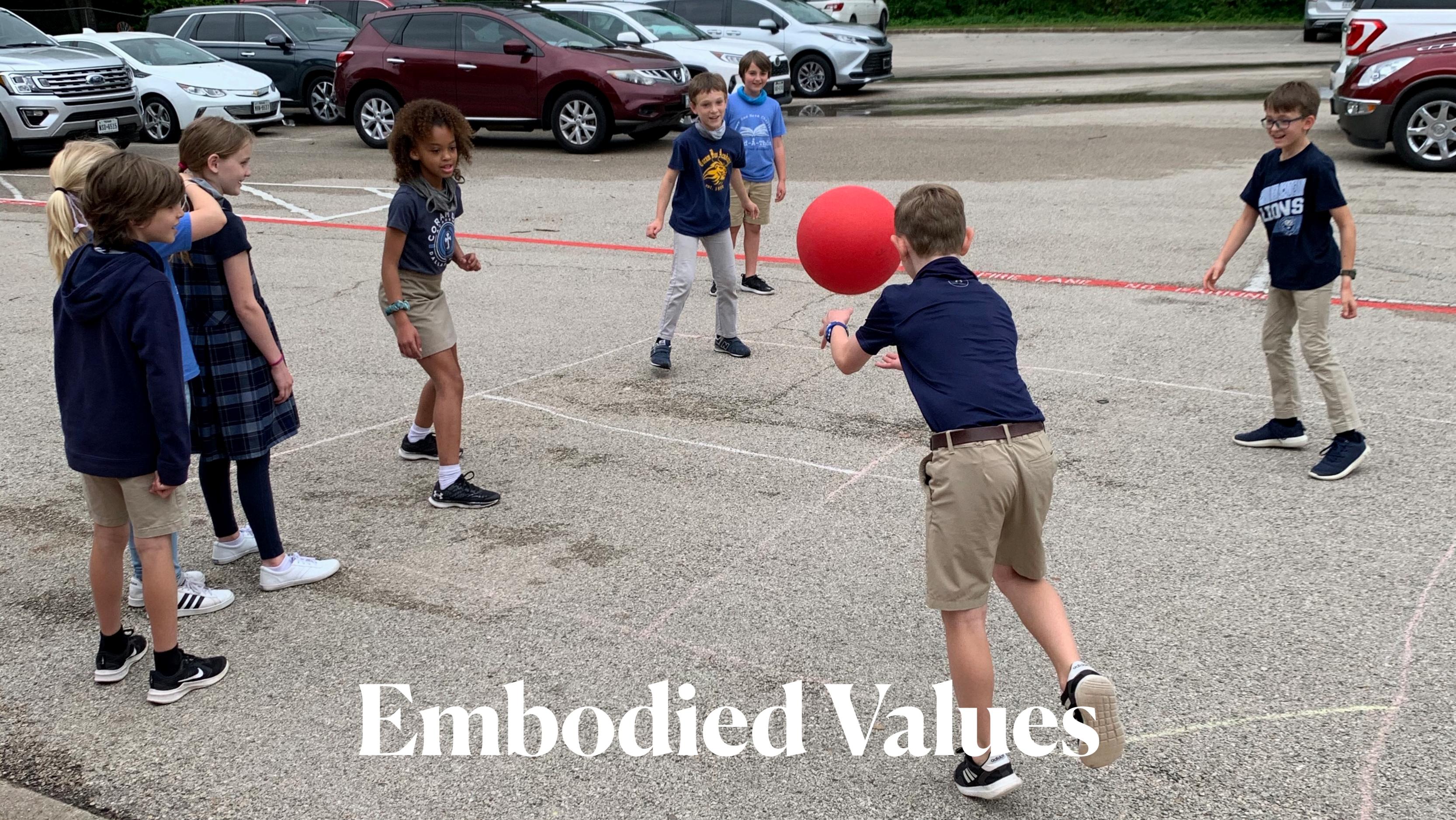
$$y = 6$$



$$Q = 40$$

$$3 \times 10 = 30$$

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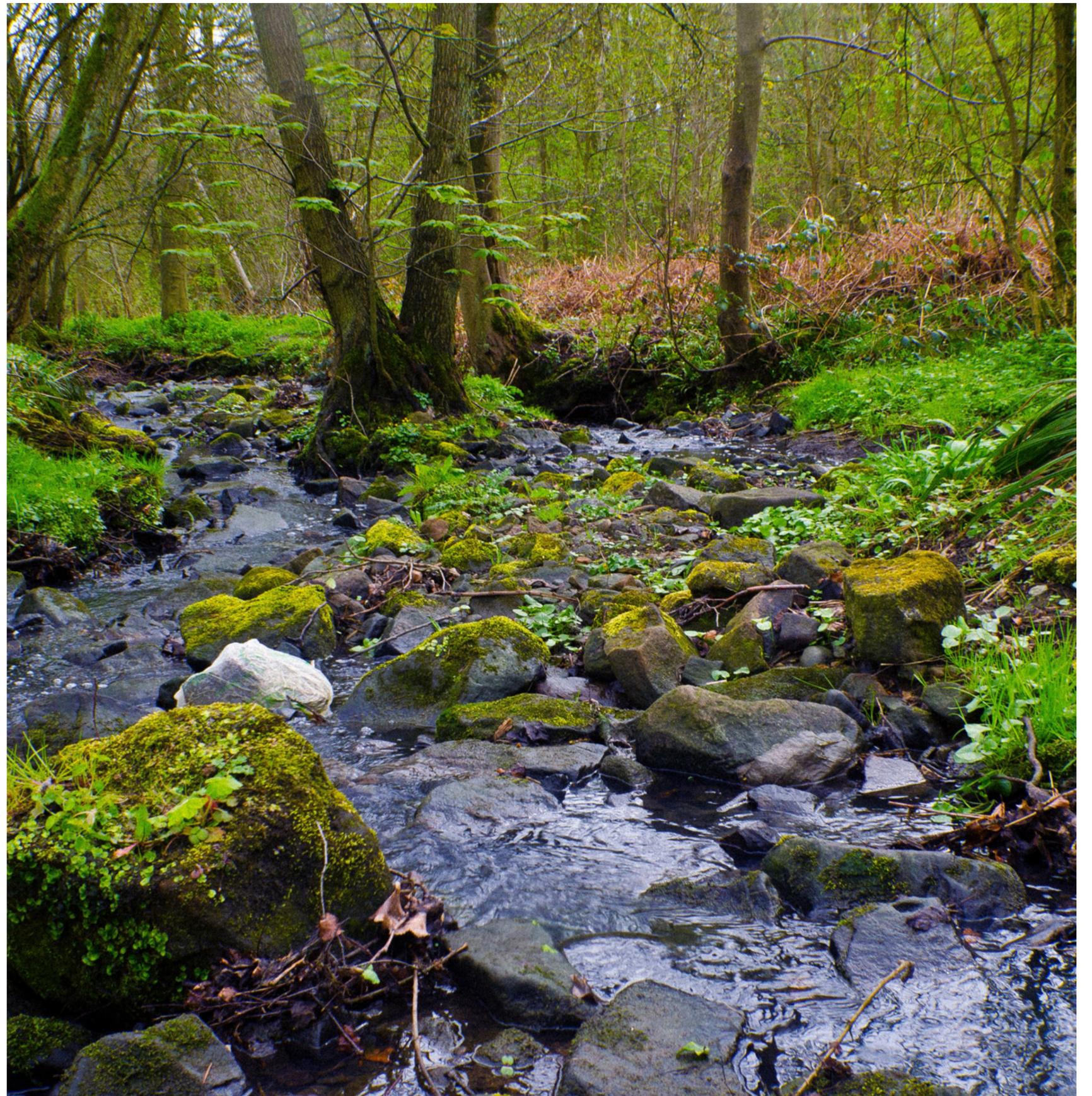


Embodied Values

Three Streams

- How am I spending our time in the classroom?
- What do we do together?
- What do I ask them to do alone?
- Is the language I use intentionally beautiful?
- Does it point to the Big Story of their lives? Would they recognize Aslan's growl if they heard it?
- What would my students say is most important to me? What am I known for?
- If they were to fill in the blank, what would they write? Mrs. Gerth always says: _____ or Fourth grade is all about: _____

Liturgy
Prayer
Song
Poetry
Reading Aloud
Catechism





Liturgy

It is a short hand term for those rituals that are loaded with an ultimate Story about who we are.

“When students can quote from canonical texts in class with the same kind of ease and familiarity with which they quote from songs and movies when talking to their friends —this is not just learning, this is paideia.”

Joshua Gibbs, *Something They Will Not Forget*

“Repetition isn’t insincere, because you’re not showing, you’re submitting. This is crucial because there is no formation without repetition. Virtue formation takes practice, and there is no practice that isn’t repetitive.”

James K.A. Smith, *You are What you Love*

“We need counter liturgies that recalibrate.”

James K.A. Smith, *You are What you Love*



Prayer

Memorized prayers train our students in the habit of talking to God.

Creator of all things,
true source of light and wisdom,
origin of all being,
graciously let a ray of your light penetrate
the darkness of my understanding.
Take from me the double darkness
in which I have been born,
an obscurity of sin and ignorance.
Give me a keen understanding,
a retentive memory, and
the ability to grasp things
correctly and fundamentally.
Grant me the talent
of being exact in my explanations
and the ability to express myself
with thoroughness and charm.
Point out the beginning,
direct the progress,
and help in the completion.
I ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

-Saint Thomas Aquinas

“Let me not be at my own disposal,
but rejoice that I am under the care of one
who is too wise to err,
too kind to injure,
too tender to crush.

May I scandalize none by my temper and conduct,
but recommend and endear Christ to all around,
bestow good on everyone as circumstances permit,
and decline no opportunity of usefulness.”

Taken from Valley of Vision



Song

**Because we are
classical educators,
we need to
demonstrate a
preference for the old
over the new.**

Image Source: Rollins.edu

“This is my Father’s world,
And to my list’ning ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.”

This is My Father’s World



Poetry

“Poetry delivers more power, more human meaning, more of the imagination, more sheer beauty, in a little space, than does any other art.” Anthony Esolen

“Poetry has a special appeal for youth. This is so chiefly because life is new, and the world's wonders are fresh and vivid when we are young. Poetry and youth are made for each other.”

Louis Untermeyer, *Doorways to Poetry*

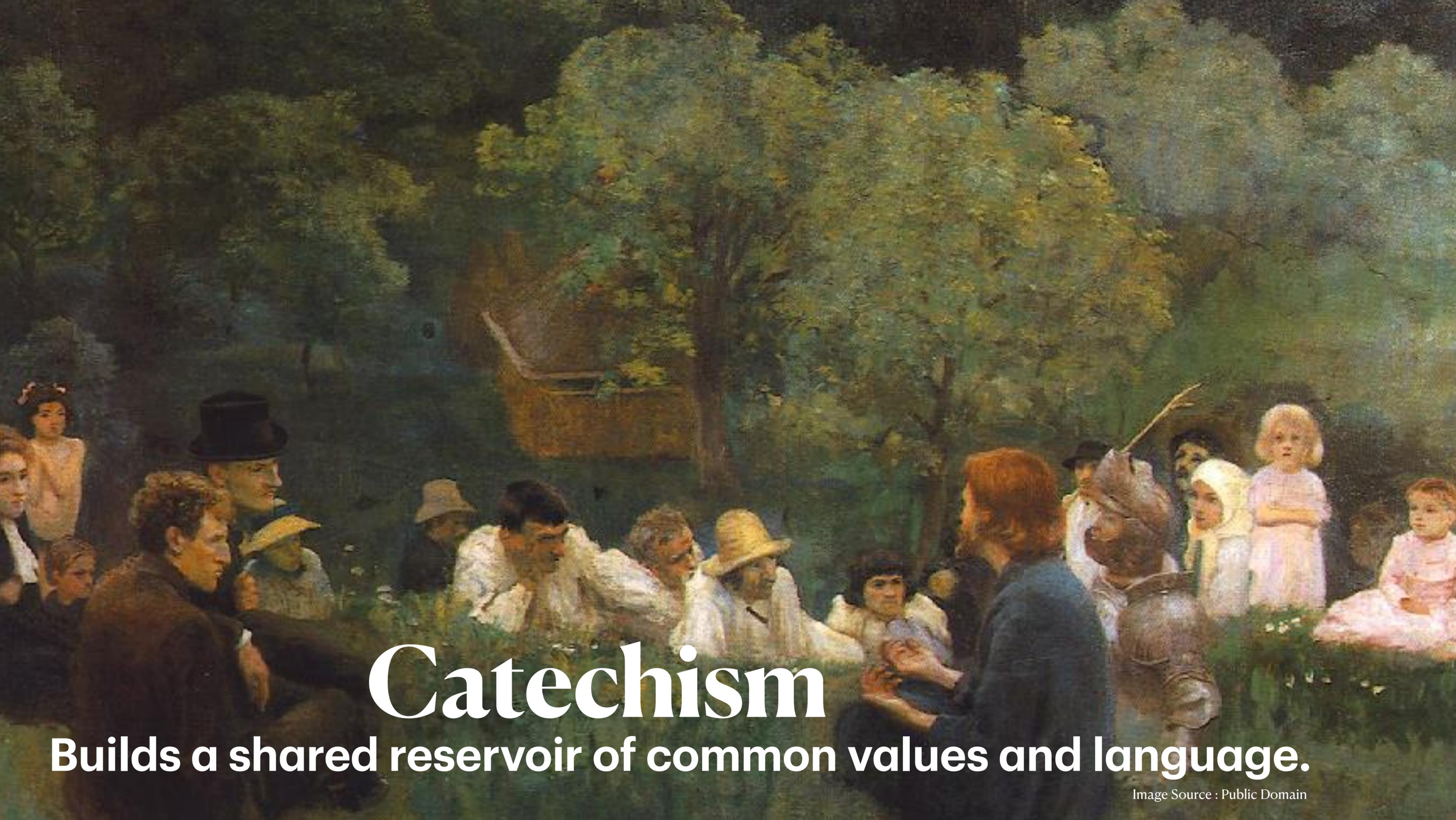
“Liberal arts are useful because they go beyond what is useful, because, to put it baldly, they are not useful. We don't read poetry so we can write better office memos later on. That gets things exactly backwards. We must never reduce human art to laboratory objects, or to tips for writing essays on standardized tests or in college courses, for extending the compulsions or feeding the cancer. We want instead fully realized human beings who will read poetry because it is beautiful and because it brings us knowledge of what is true, even if it is knowledge that can no more be used than a sunset or a kiss can be used.”

Anthony Esolen, *“Reclaiming Childhood Through Poetry”*



Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to your class is one of the most magical and effective ways to build class culture.



Catechism

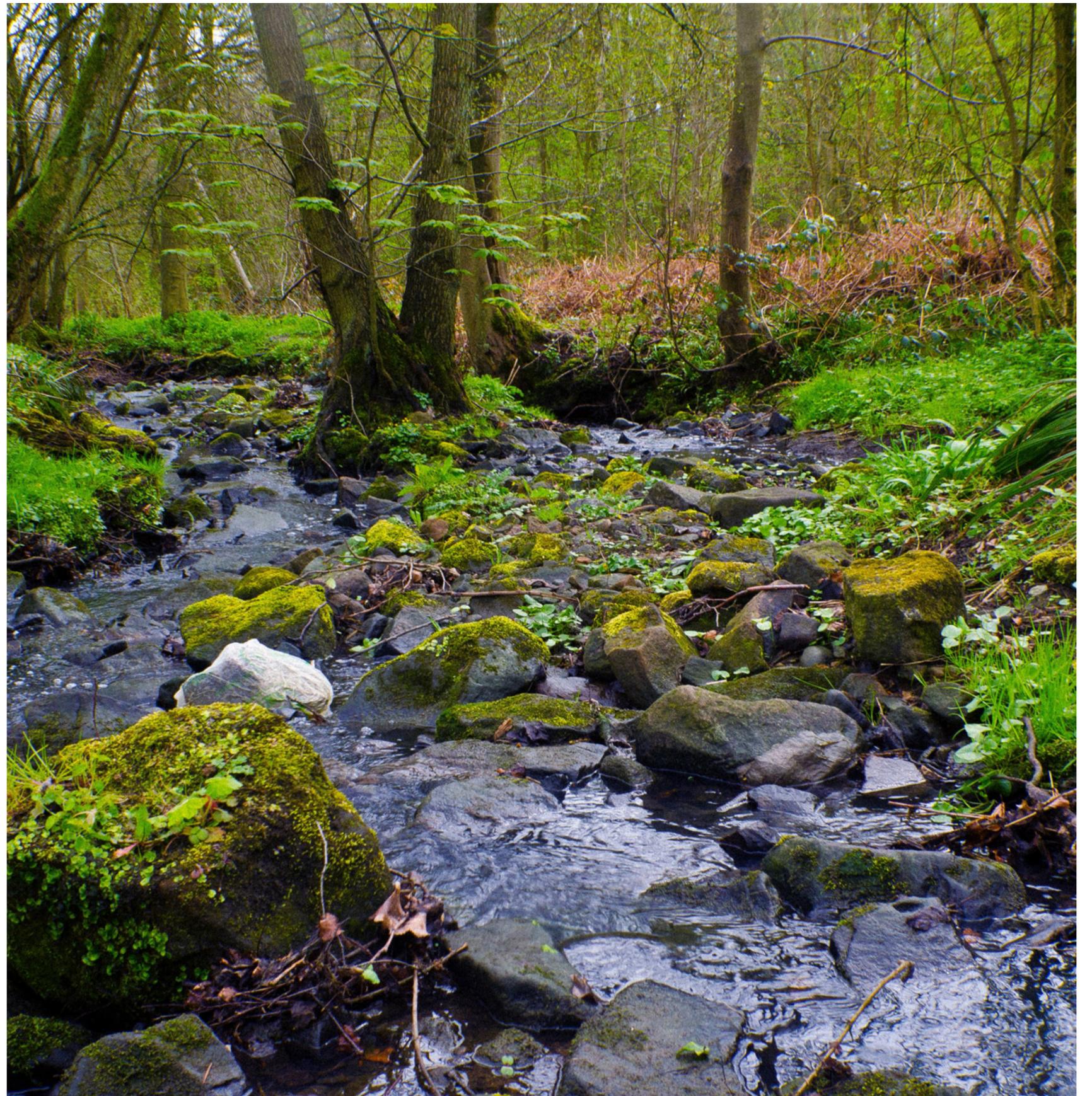
Builds a shared reservoir of common values and language.

Image Source : Public Domain

"Of course, one should also not discount the psychological and spiritual gravity which weighs on words said en masse. When a formula is pronounced by a particular kind of person, in a particular place, at a set time, on a daily basis, what you have is not really a recitation, but a ceremony. The work performed in a ceremony establishes the identity of the people involved because ceremony is neither for amusement nor edification; ceremony is a way of being, a way of besting the vanity of life under the sun."

Joshua Gibbs, *Something They Will Not Forget*

Liturgy
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Assignment

What is one thing you want to implement this fall to create culture?

Open your calendar and create an event for September 17 where you will spend 30 minutes evaluating your classroom culture. Is the culture of your classroom what you want it to be or have you sent an unintended message?

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