



Pastor's Resource Guide:
STEP BY STEP GUIDE
TO STARTING YOUR
OWN MICROSCHOOL

Pastors,

Are you ready to take a more active role in providing quality school choice options to your congregation and community? Do you recognize that parents are increasingly dissatisfied with schools and concerned about the values being taught there? Would you like a simple, affordable, plug-and-play solution for these families?

It's time to start a Microschool!

What is a Microschool?

Microschools are small K-12 schools that serve anywhere from 5-150 students. These schools tend to be more personalized towards the needs of students and families within a particular community. Microschools gained popularity in recent years as parents became more aware of and dissatisfied with traditional public and private school options. Many have sought an academic program more aligned with their values where parents' input and involvement are welcomed.

What are the benefits of starting a Microschool?

Starting a Microschool has never been easier, **powered by OptimaEd's** free and low-cost curriculum, teachers, and support.

- Students receive more individualized attention
- Low maintenance
- Low cost
- Minimal time to open
- Customizable towards your community's needs
- Ability to teach your values
- Reconnects students to their community

As a school management organization, we understand that many leaders want to start a charter or private school, but don't have the time or resources for such a large endeavor.

Compare the startups of a charter school versus a Microschool:

Charter:

- Start-up funding of \$1 million or more
- 2-year process to open (assuming district approval)
- Need many more students to be viable
- Strict compliance/government bureaucracy

Microschool powered by OptimaEd

- Start up as low as \$50,000
- Open immediately
- Can begin with just a few students
- Minimal red tape

Who is OptimaEd?

- OptimaEd is an accredited and approved Virtual Instruction Provider in Florida. We offer a high-quality classical education curriculum, live-instruction 4 days a week, professional development, virtual reality headsets and management, and much more.
- Your Microschool students can access our excellent standards-based online curriculum and live teachers for free!

Partner with Us!

- A partnership with OptimaEd looks like this. You will have the ability to name your school however you like, Powered by OptimaEd.

OptimaEd provides:

- High-quality accredited classical education curriculum for grades K-9
- Teaching of moral character and civic virtue
- Live instruction from excellent teachers 4 days/week
- Ongoing support for Microschool sponsors and facilitators
- Low-cost startup
- Tuition-free curriculum and instruction in the State of Florida
- Backed by research and experience
- Professional development offered
- Marketing and Fundraising templates
- VR headsets included, along with headset management provided
- Assistance with seeking education-focused donations and sponsorships





So, You Want to Start a Microschool? Step-by-step Process

1

Gather a committee

- Microschool Coordinator/Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Facilities Coordinator

2

Fundraise

- On average, a Microschool can cost between \$45,000-\$75,000 per year for the facilitator and facilities costs, assuming 20 students or less.
- OptimaEd offers fundraising and marketing templates

3

Secure a Facility

- (Or identify a set of classrooms within an existing facility)
- Best Case Scenario:
Unused church facilities
 - Parks & Recreation
 - Homes

4

Select a Curriculum

- Partner with OptimaEd for FREE curriculum and teachers!

5

Create a budget

- Optima will provide a budget template
- Fundraising support also offered

6

Advertise to families

- Enroll students

7

Hire a Facilitator

- Acts as a learning guide to assist students as needed in addition to the remote teachers

8

Experience freedom!

Where to go from here...Join the monthly webinar if you haven't already and take steps towards education freedom!

Learn About a Few of Our Rockstar Teachers!



Dr. Jonathan Olson

Jonathan Olson is the Chair of the History Department at Optima Classical Academy. In addition to teaching 7th and 8th grade history classes, he works to create engaging VR history curriculum for all grade levels. His objective is to provide students with powerful educational experiences that go far beyond what is possible in the traditional “brick and mortar” classroom, and experiences where history comes alive in ways that are both deeply memorable and profoundly enriching.

Jonathan graduated from Evangel University with a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Biblical Languages. After receiving a grant from the Lilly Foundation, he spent time working alongside archaeologists at Israel’s Bar Ilan University, where he participated in multiple excavations, as well as helped reconstruct and analyze ancient artifacts. Once back in the States, he earned Master of Arts in Religious Studies at Missouri State University and went on to complete a Ph.D. at Florida State University in the field of American religious history. While finishing his doctorate, Jonathan taught a number of courses at FSU, including American religious history and larger seminars on World Religions. Seeking a new challenge, he left higher education and transitioned into the world of independent schools, where he taught for eight years at Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa, FL. During his time at Berkeley, he taught a variety of courses ranging from philosophy to U.S. history to AP economics and played a key role in the development of the school’s social science curriculum.

In his free time, Jonathan enjoys the great outdoors and can often be found on the weekends carrying a backpack and hiking down a trail. He also enjoys going on runs, kayaking, fishing, tending to his vegetable garden, and most importantly, playing in the backyard with his four amazing children.



Dr. John Rosenbaum

Dr. Rosenbaum hails from California, spent time in Washington, and is now settled in Texas with his wife. Rosenbaum has worked positions as varied as Christian missions, inventory control, department management, being a purchaser, and doing small-business and personal tax accounting. However, his life’s mission is to help others think better so as to live better. Dr. Rosenbaum enrolled at Baylor University (TX) to earn a PhD in Analytic Philosophy. His specializations include philosophy of language (“phil language”), phil fiction, and metaphysics; though he is competent in phil science, phil religion, and the history of philosophy. Rosenbaum was also a funded fellow for research-level training in Empirical Linguistics.

While classical education is multifaceted, the Western liberal arts tradition is at its core philosophical. So as a philosopher Dr. Rosenbaum has the knowledge of, skillset for, and the ability to teach core material in a classical education. And he is passionate about doing so. For a classical education unifies human knowledge, teaches people how to think, and equips them to be virtuous and to take responsibility for their own lives. The prospect of classical education in virtual reality through Optima excites Rosenbaum in placing him at the cutting edge of a genius use of a new, soon-to-be-everywhere medium.



Dr. Tara Bonds

Tara Bonds is one of three Latin teachers at Optima Classical Academy, and the Chair of the World Languages department. She is also a part of the curriculum committee for OCA. Tara teaches the 5th and 6th grade Latin courses, beginning the study of the Latin language through the Wheelock texts.

Tara graduated from University of South Florida with Bachelor’s degrees in History and Classics. She continued her studies at Florida State University, acquiring a Masters degree in Classics, and her PhD in Humanities with specialties in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval periods. She has taught Pre-History to Late Antiquity, Antiquity through Enlightenment, Multicultural Film, East-West Mythology and Classical mythology on the college level. Additionally, she has taught Latin on the high school and middle school levels.

Tara is very excited to bring her love of the Latin language to Optima Classical Academy. She finds constant exhilaration in learning every day and strives to share this enthusiasm with her students.

What do parents have to say about school in virtual reality?

“My son travels to unique places or things every day to learn via Metaverse! We are in week three, and so far, the excitement hasn’t worn off.”

“Oh, the opportunity! We are all very excited about having this unreal opportunity... School, in VR + classical education!?! Our son is already having an epic 1st day!”

“First week of virtual reality school and loving it!”

“This is definitely the school of the future & the kids were so excited to be the first to get to try it! Can’t wait to see how the rest of the year goes!”



FAQs

Can Microschools provide religious instruction?

Absolutely. A Microschool is not required to be secular as compared to a charter school or traditional public school. A Microschool can enroll students in OptimaEd (tuition-free) courses for free but may add supplemental religious curriculum.

Where can I find religious instruction resources?

Optima can assist with identifying supplemental religious curricula to align with the church's denomination, values, or mission.

What resources do the students get in an OptimaEd Microschool?

Students will receive live instruction 4 days per week, full online curricula and will participate in a virtual classroom that operates very much like a traditional school. Their teachers in the online space will provide daily guidance for in-class and homework assignments and will be available as needed for additional assistance. Students will participate with peers in small groups, on projects, and in recreational time. Optima is unable to offer special services (ESE) to Microschool students at this time.

Do Microschool students have to take standardized tests?

No. If the students are enrolled as homeschool students, using OptimaEd, they are not required to take standardized tests. Instead, they can take the Classical Learning Test (CLT) which is aligned to a classical curriculum and provides a reliable measure of student achievement in a classical learning environment.

Will students K-2 use a VR headset?

No. Students in grades K-2 require more traditional instruction due to their age and development. These students will be provided with curriculum and online teachers through OptimaEd, but will also need an in-person paraprofessional teacher to assist with their lessons. Students in grades 3-9 will not require an in-person paraprofessional. Instead, we recommend a facilitator to ensure that students are safe, focused, and well-behaved. Students in grades 3-8 will use the VR headset and laptop throughout the day.

Does OptimaEd provide curriculum for high school students?

OptimaEd will offer 9th grade courses in the school year 2023-24 and plans to expand to grades 10-12 in 2024-25.





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