# Mortimer Adler’s Three Pillars
## Revisited and Revised

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Column I</th>
<th>Column II</th>
<th>Column III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquisition of organized knowledge (10-15% of instructional class time)</td>
<td>Development of intellectual skills -- skills of learning; habit of learning (50-60% of instructional class time)</td>
<td>Expanded understanding of ideas, values, and meaning (30-35% of instructional class time)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Means | by means of Didactic instruction (teaching by telling), lectures and responses, textbooks and other aids utilized; fading in nature | by means of Mentoring, intellectual coaching, repeated guided instruction through exercises and supervised practice; more permanent in nature | by means of Maieutic or Socratic questioning and active participation of all students; more permanent in nature |

| Areas, Operations, and Activities | in the areas of subject matter; Language, Literature, and the Fine Arts Mathematics and Natural Science History, Geography, and Social Studies Stress on knowing what | in the operations of; Listening, speaking, reading, writing Calculating, problem-solving, observing, measuring, estimating Exercising reasoned judgment Stress on knowing how | in the habit of thinking, listening, and conversing; Discussion of books (not textbooks) and other works of art and involvement in artistic activities e.g., music, drama, visual arts; enlarges understanding; engagement with primary works connects the students in a comprehensive way Stress on knowing why |

| Classical Trivium | Grammar/Logic/Rhetoric | Grammar/Logic/Rhetoric | Grammar/Logic/Rhetoric |


Classical Education (This type of education is historically characterized by a high view of importance of human beings, logocentrism, commitment/respect to the Western intellectual/spiritual tradition, and a teaching approach that complements these convictions.)

- Christian Classicism

- Democratic Classicism

- Pragmatic Classicism

- Catholic Classicism

- Homeschooling Classicism


There is some convincing research that gives insight into how Adler’s Three Pillars when implemented effectively ameliorate standardized test scores, improve end-of-grade test performance, enrich reading and math skills, and provide a fuller understanding of the subject being studied. (Consult both *The Great Books Foundation* and the *National Paideia Center*.)
“All genuine learning is active, not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just the memory. It is a process of discovery, in which the student is the main agent, not the teacher.” (50, The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto.)

Column I Didactic Instruction

“Didactic instruction is either written or oral, addresses either to the eyes of readers or to the ears of listeners.” (48, The Paideia Program.)

“To make didactic teaching more effective, a fifty minute block should be divided into two phases; the first phase, running for thirty minutes, in which the teacher lectures; the second phase, running for twenty minutes in which the teacher engages in discussion with the students, getting them to ask questions or asking them questions about the meaning of the facts covered in the first phase.” (295, Reforming Education.)

Column II Academic Coaching

Seven Principles of Academic Coaching Gleaned from Writings of Mortimer Adler

1. The teacher must be very familiar with the student in order to coach effectively.
2. Students discover and develop understanding from a project or problem or concept in a meaningful manner.
3. Students are engaged from the very beginning to the conclusion in an increasingly important manner.
4. The parts and whole are understood by the students during the process of coaching as students demonstrate their understanding.
5. While academic coaching is often challenging, it is most open it great rewards.
6. Communication is at a premium in “the cooperative process” of academic coaching.
7. Civility, and patience are important virtues. Effective coaching takes considerable time and attention.

Column III The Socratic Seminar

Questioning students about something they have read so as to help them improve their understanding of basic ideas and values is a procedure that can appropriately be called Socratic. (16, The Paideia Program.)

These class sessions are, “conversations, conducted in an orderly manner by the teacher who acts as leader or moderator of the discussion.” (17, The Paideia Program.)

According to Adler, in order to be the most effective seminar leader “requires listening with the mind, not just with the ear. Great energy must be expended in asking good questions and then listening with penetration.” (24, 25, The Paideia Program.)

“The more the seminar is an experience of active learning for the students, the sooner they will become active learners and their reading of texts for future seminars and the sooner they will be able to engage in learning by themselves without the help of teachers, which is the ultimate desideratum of all teaching.” (308, Reforming Education.)