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Last week, I wrote about middle-schoolers' developmental need to question and analyze. The classical education approach teaches logic to provide a framework and a method to question authority in an acceptable way. We do not want our children to leave home unable to question authority. Adulthood will bring people into their lives with some very "off-the-chart" philosophies. They need to know how to evaluate what they hear.

Questioning commonly held beliefs and opinions of persons in authority can be very irritating to the adults who must deal with middle-schoolers. For that reason, guidelines need to be established.

The study of formal logic might actually be a good idea for the parent of a middle-schooler. There are standard rules for debating or presenting an opposing viewpoint. Requiring a child to follow certain guidelines when presenting an "argument" brings the discussion to the next plane. It teaches the child to use higher-level thinking skills. It also relieves the parents of having a constant battle with an annoyingly argumentative child.

For example, the Latin phrase, "*argumentum ad nauseam*," refers to repeating the same argument over and over with no new information. How many of us have listened to a child "argue to the point of nausea"? If a family follows the rules of formal logic, this tactic renders the argument invalid.

Another Latin phrase, "*argumentum ad populum*," (appeal to the people) describes what generations of young people have used to try to persuade their parents. We know it by the common phrase, "Everyone else is doing it." This is always a flawed premise which invalidates the entire argument.

Even if you do not choose to teach your child to present his viewpoints by formal logic, it is still a good idea to set your own guidelines for how he can be respectful and reasonable while questioning what he is being taught by both you and his teachers.

Next week, I will write more about using the rules of logic with a middle-schooler.