

Ambleside

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A diet of ideas

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True, Good, and Beautiful.

Life should be all living,
and not merely a tedious passing of time;
not all doing or all feeling or all thinking—
the strain would be too great—
but, all living; that is to say,
we should be in touch wherever we go,
whatever we hear, whatever we see,
with some manner of vital interest.

The question is not—
how much does the youth know
when he has finished his education—
but how much does he care?

— CHARLOTTE M. MASON —



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Dear Friends of Ambleside,

Welcome to Ambleside Magazine!

In this issue, you will find an anthology of testimonial articles sharing how each aspect of our mission is realized and celebrated by teachers, students, parents, leadership, and alumni.

Our Mission

Ambleside Schools International inspires, trains, and equips a global community of member schools and educators to provide and promote *a living education* as described by Charlotte Mason for the renewal of Christian education. That's our mission and our vision.

A living education empowers students to author lives that are full and free — rich in relationship to God, self, others, ideas, work, and the created world. It provides the tools needed to live well in all aspects of life — personal and professional, present and future.

Children who receive *a living education* grow in relationship with the knowledge of God, humankind, and the universe. They become people who give back to society, care for their families, love their neighbors, and cultivate Christian character and a rich intellectual and spiritual life.

If you have received this copy of Ambleside Magazine through a Member School, you are welcome to subscribe to our mailing list in order to receive future editions directly. You can also share the magazine through the digital edition found online at AmblesideSchools.org/Magazine.

The Ambleside movement is spreading across the globe. Thank you for joining us through your readership and being a part of the greater Ambleside community and allowing us all to continue providing *a living education*.



Dean Peterson
DEAN PETERSON
Executive Director



A publication of Ambleside Schools International

Dean Peterson | Executive Director
Maryellen St. Cyr | Founder, Director of Curriculum
Bill St. Cyr | Founder, Director of Training

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A LIVING EDUCATION

CHARLOTTE MASON TALKS ABOUT “SEEING EYES” —
TRULY LOOKING AND OBSERVING DEEPLY THE
WORLD AND GOD’S CREATION IN FRONT OF US.

| by Pam Szczech

Flora. Fauna. Fairies.



Flower Fairies of the Winter, a collection of poems uniquely organized around the seasons and the flora and fauna found therein, was the focus of our Poetry lesson. The students were eagerly sharing what they knew. Each plant represented has its own imaginary fairy tasked with caring for their plant. When Miss Barker began her illustrations, she modeled the fairies after children attending her sister’s kindergarten school.

The students delighted in knowing that the fictional fairy faces looking back at them are actual children, about their own age, which builds a sense of relationship between student and text. Through the intricate, botanically accurate illustrations, Cicely Mary Barker instructs her readers about the various flora and fauna.

As is done so often, we were reading a poem we enjoyed previously, “The Song of the Winter Aconite Fairy.” Aconite is

like little sunshines beckoning Spring, and I dug some specimens from my garden for the children to examine while we read the poem. They were captivated!



As we read the poem and studied aspects of Miss Barker’s paintings, the students became more attuned to intricate details. The question, “What is

Cicely Mary Barker teaching you about the plant through her painting?” was met with the students looking at both more intently. A student pondered aloud about whether flowers have veins like leaves and stems. Charlotte Mason has taught me through the idea of masterly inactivity that in these moments, it is the children’s voices that are key.

If I had taken the lead in the wonderings, the voices adding comments such as “Oh! I wonder!” and “We’ll have to look at that!” would have been squelched. Ideas were alive in their discussion. The students were taking hold of their learning – posing questions and seeking answers. These students were exemplifying Miss Mason’s quote, “The mind can know nothing but what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put to the mind itself.” (*School Education*, p.181).

The students then pulled the plants out of the dirt to examine the root systems and stems with magnifying glasses. Comparisons between the Aconite’s tuberous root system and bulbs emerged, as did close investigation into the veins in the plant and how food would be transported to the various parts of the plant. Great attention was given to the lobed nature of its leaves, and the students took great care to create accurate depictions in their nature study journals.

As the students were completing their drawings, we returned to the text. “What do you see in Cicely Mary Barker’s work after examining the specimens yourself?” was posed, and the students



eagerly delved deeper into examining and comparing. Miss Mason speaks of “seeing eyes” and of being people who truly look and observe, with awe and wonder, God’s handiwork in creation. It is a special privilege to marvel at the beauty of nature through the eyes of children. 🐦

PAM SZCZECZ

Teacher | The Augustine Academy (TAA)

Pam has a Bachelor of Science in Education from Louisiana State University and began her career teaching First Grade in Alief, Texas. She moved to Milwaukee and taught in both public and private schools. Pam homeschooled for five years prior to coming to TAA. Pam is a graduate of the Ambleside Master Teacher Training Program.



The Ambleside Seed program helps Ambleside Schools International (ASI) in its mission as it inspires, trains, and equips a global community of Member Schools and educators to provide and promote *A Living Education* as described by Charlotte Mason for the renewal of Christian education.

To sustain this mission, ASI derives 10% of our revenue from training and curriculum fees and another 57% from Member School and homeschool dues. We depend upon generous contributions for the rest of our operating funds — fully one third of our annual revenues. In addition to assisting with operations, donated funds also go to support the three key initiatives of the Ambleside Seed program.

SEED MONEY

Initial funding for new Ambleside Schools for underserved populations who encounter barriers to accessing Christian education due to economic, cultural, or linguistic obstacles.

SEED STARTER

Providing financial assistance to those who cannot afford Ambleside's training and curriculum.

SEED CAPITAL

A funding program for supporting the capital campaigns of Ambleside Member Schools.

We are blessed to see the investment in the Ambleside Seed program return in such abundance as seen through the testimonies of the families and Member Schools we share here. This type of growth takes a group of Ambassadors who are also called to the renewal of Christian education and support that initiative prayerfully and financially.

Join the movement and sign up today for our Ambleside Ambassador communications and programming to learn more about how you can come alongside in planting the future through Ambleside.



Or go online to
AmblesideSchools.org/Ambassadors
 And read the following full stories



Seeds to grow.

For as the soil makes the sprout come up
 and a garden causes seeds to grow,
 so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
 and praise spring up before all nations.

ISAIAH 61:11

SEED MONEY

Students, families, and schools need different types of seeds that give them the best chance of successfully reproducing and growing.

At Ambleside Schools International, we believe that an Ambleside education — *A Living Education* — is a seed that can flourish, change lives, and renew Christian education.

Through our Ambleside Seed initiative, we are sowing previously unimagined opportunities for students and families across the world.

We believe this effort is a key component of our mission.

“Ambleside Schools International provided us with regular mentoring, access to the same online curriculum and resources that all Ambleside schools have.”



Seeds to sow.

It is like a mustard seed
that someone took and sowed in the garden.
It grew and became a tree,
and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.

LUKE 13:1

SEED STARTER

Through our 25 Ambleside Member Schools and our Ambleside Homeschooling Program, we are continually inspired by how providing *A Living Education* for students also sows vital seeds in the lives of families and parents.

Daily, circumstances arise that allow our leadership, teachers, and school administrators the opportunity to come alongside like “a tender, understanding gardener discerning” the hardships of those we serve.

Charlotte Mason once asked a new teacher what purpose she had in being trained by her. The teacher said, “I have come to learn to teach.” To that she replied, “My dear, you have come here to learn how to live.”

It’s because of you and your generous gifts that our Ambleside Seed program is able to assist those who cannot afford the Ambleside curriculum and training.

“They supported us like a tender, understanding gardener discerning our needs.”



Seeds to flourish.

May the Lord cause you to flourish,
both you and your children.

PSALM 115:14

SEED CAPITAL

Ambleside Schools International (ASI) has always been dedicated to inspiring, training, and equipping students, teachers, administrators, and leaders within its network of schools, in order that they may flourish.

Since 2000, ASI has flourished and now has 25 schools throughout the world. A remarkable accomplishment resulting from the blending of the Charlotte Mason philosophy, the Ambleside Method of Education developed by Maryellen and Bill St. Cyr, and the firm foundation of Biblical truth.

It has also been our goal to increase the number of schools within the Ambleside network to 100 Member Schools. Ambitious perhaps, but we know that *a living education* provided through each Ambleside School stays with students for a lifetime and can change the world.

In Charlotte Mason’s words, “We feel that the country and indeed the world should have the benefit of [these] educational discoveries which act powerfully as a moral lever.”

“Ambleside Schools International [ASI] has invested generously in our School . . . and professionally, spiritually, and relationally in me.”

CHARLOTTE MASON UNDERSTOOD THE POTENTIAL OF THE LITTLEST OF US AND THEN MADE IT HER DUTY TO CULTIVATE A WAY OF EDUCATION THAT RESPECTS OUR CHILDREN AS PERSONS; WORTHY TO BE GIVEN THE BEST IDEAS TO NOURISH THEIR MINDS UPON.

| by *Erica Schaefer*

What it means to be known.

I explain the impact of the Master Teacher Training Program (MTTP) and the experiences I have had in the education of Charlotte Mason as a journey. This journey, like so much of life, has not been linear. To understand why this philosophy of education matters so much to me, you must understand some of the “what, how, and why” of my life that brought me to the starting point of this journey.

My parents divorced when I was a young child, and I lived with my mom. She was basically a child herself, and most of our time was spent with the women of our family who were all either widowed or divorced. One particular memory is about my “Little Grammy” (she was my great grandmother). We would enjoy tea parties and special snacks on a Saturday night together. This was in preparation for the Sunday that she and I would spend together at her church. I have no recollection of the words spoken in the church, but I do remember admiring the beauty and reverence of these moments together. As I grew, these times became infrequent and eventually God had been relegated to the two holidays we would spend dressed up and celebrating for celebration’s sake, rather than for any real meaning.

The Lord brought my husband Tyler into my life at the young age of 15, and I was finally brought into a place where my soul felt like it had found a home. I began to have my own children, and I was determined to do things differently. Here, however, is when the real challenges began. I had been



blessed with everything a person could ask for, yet I found myself unsettled and discontented. My soul was crying out for something that, at the time, I had no words for. Later, I read Charlotte Mason quoting Maurice explaining, “It is a King that our Spirits cry for”... In desperation, I called out to a God I hadn’t ever really known, but that I believed had always been there. The Lord was so faithful and kind to me as I cried out to Him. He began to slowly bring people into my life who would gently share their own growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and I couldn’t get enough of Him.

It was around this time that God made it clear to Tyler and I that our children needed to change schools. We decided to trust in the Lord to help us provide a way to enroll our three children in a private Christian education. At the same time, God opened a path for me to go back into teaching after taking eight years off to stay at home with my children. The Executive Director at



the school invited me and two other teachers from our school to attend the week-long Ambleside Summer Institute. The Institute was mind-blowing! It was wonderful getting to know and grow in a relationship with people who had dedicated their lives to cultivating a method of education based on Charlotte Mason's philosophy. I was forever changed by that experience and liken it to Paul's experience of having scales falling from his eyes.

I have only been affirmed in my belief that Charlotte Mason was Divinely inspired as she wrote about children. She understood the potential of the littlest of us and then made it her duty to cultivate a way of education that respects our children as persons; worthy to be given the best ideas to nourish their minds upon.

I hope and pray that I have gently sown seeds in my children's and students' hearts about the love of our Heavenly Father. I also hope that they have experienced what it means to be known and to come into a life-sustaining

relationship with true knowledge and understanding through this education. 🕊

| Photos by Ruxandra Photography

ERICA SCHAEFER
Administrator and
Teacher | Rocky Mountain
Christian Academy

Erica has been a part of an Ambleside member school for 10 years. She is currently an Administrator and 4th grade teacher at Rocky Mountain Christian Academy in Niwot, Colorado. She formerly shared her time as the Director of Instruction and Kindergarten teacher at RMCA. Mrs. Schaefer graduated with her Bachelor of Psychology and Master of Education with an emphasis in Literacy from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is a graduate of the Ambleside Master Teacher Training Program.

Train

KNOWLEDGE AND THE MIND OF MAN ARE TO EACH OTHER AS ARE AIR AND THE LUNGS. THE MIND LIVES BY KNOWLEDGE; IT STAGNATES, FAINTS, PERISHES, IF DEPRIVED OF THIS NECESSARY ATMOSPHERE.

| by Maryellen St. Cyr

Knowledge—A diet of ideas.

Charlotte Mason speaks about knowledge in a personal way. It is not mere information; nor is it to be confused with learning. It is conveyed by Spirit to minds prepared to receive it. It is mysterious, but it is the way one grows and becomes more of a person. Growth is what God intends for us. Yet, growth does not occur if mind does not encounter, and receive, knowledge.

A while ago, I was reading with fourth graders about description. Working through a paragraph by George Eliot, we came across the phrase *happy irregularity*, describing the growth of

lichen on a brick wall. Eliot personified what she saw, and these young readers received knowledge of lichen, description, and the beauty (and proper use) of language.

This encounter conveyed meaning to the students and was added to their lives in the form of knowledge. What do they have to show for the time spent with this paragraph, for their mind's encounter with knowledge? They give attention to words, to meaning, to lichen. They have become more of what it means to be a person; they have grown.

Feasting on intellectual food every day.

Just as the body needs physical nourishment, so the mind needs its nutriment. It is hungry not only on special “feast days,” but every day of our lives. Charlotte Mason exhorted us to “eat” ideas so we might live every day.

Many questions come to mind: What does my everyday living look like? What nutriment did I take in throughout the day? What was the nature of this food? Was it hearty and plentiful, or processed and meager?

A friend of mine noticed a change in her teenage daughter's behavior. The daughter had not been “living every day.” She was passing time, irritable and distant. Upon reflection, the mother asked, “What have you been reading lately?”

The daughter first explained why and then answered vaguely she was reading “some books a friend gave” her. She brought the books out; they consisted of



the usual tabloid books for young people — sensational plots and self-absorbed characters. After a healthy exchange of questions and discussion between mother and daughter, they decided that the classic literature, not just any book, would be her daily sustenance. It is no surprise to note that the vitality of the young woman changed in no time at all.

Are we what we eat, intellectually? Does it make a difference in the life of our minds if we spend the evening surfing the Internet, browsing Facebook, scanning tabloids of the famous and infamous, or sitting with a rich text on history or theology, reading on art or nature, or enjoying a well-written novel?

Are there any ideas in your children's books?

When Charlotte Mason discussed the spiritual life in relationship to ideas, she identified spiritual life as the life of thought, of feeling, of the soul, of that which is not physical. This very human life needs food, and “this life is sustained upon only one manner of diet: the diet of ideas — the living progeny of living minds.”

She uses this framework — the spiritual life is sustained only by a diet of ideas — to answer the perennial question, “What manner of schoolbooks should our boys and girls use?”

In the early 21st century, students only infrequently mention books; they now focus on letter and number grades, AP and honors classes, and all their homework. The conversation has changed. They seldom encounter or discuss the ideas in history, mathematics, science, or literature because “order is of things to an end,” says Aquinas. And the end is no longer knowledge but information.

However, books written about the ideas present in history, mathematics, science, and literature reach a broad readership. Page after page, ideas stir readers' hearts and minds with the beauty of language, the wonder of humanity, the description of laws

and principles, the awe of God, and questions of humankind.

The reader of such books reads more and more. His mind and heart are satiated. Long after the class ends or the light grows dim, he thinks, dreams, wonders, believes. He lives.

Charlotte Mason spoke of a vast inheritance offered to all. We are offered the possibility of knowledge in all its varied dimensions; not knowing as mere information, but the knowing which implies relationship. Let us bring our students back to the wide room — read of the life cycle of the frog, observe the vibrant purple of the American Beauty, digest the nature of exponents, and wrestle to understand why a blind girl sees more than we. 📖



MARYELLEN ST. CYR

**Founder | Director
of Curriculum,
Member | Board
of Directors**

Maryellen is co-founder and currently serves as Director of Curriculum for Ambleside Schools International and leads the Ambleside Schools Master Teacher Training Program with her husband, Bill St. Cyr. She has been a professional educator for more than 40 years, holding a M.Ed. in Curriculum Development.

Equity

Member Schools



United States

Ambleside School of Ashland

Grades: K–8

AmblesideAshland.org

Ambleside School of Boerne

Grades: Pre K–8

AmblesideBoerne.com

Calvary Schools of Holland

Grades: K–12

CalvarySchoolsHolland.org

Charlotte Mason Community School

Grades: K–8

CharlotteMasonCS.org

Ambleside School of Colorado

Grades: K–12

AmblesideColorado.com

Ambleside Concho Valley

Grades: Pre K–12

AmblesideConchoValley.org

Ambleside School of Fredericksburg

Grades: Pre K–12

AmblesideFredericksburg.com

Ambleside School of Marion

Grades: Pre K–6

AmblesideMarion.com

Ambleside School in McLean

Grades: K–8

Ambleside.org

Ambleside School of Ocala

Grades: Pre K–12

AmblesideOcala.com

Ambleside School of the Rio Grande

Coming Fall 2024

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Grades: K–12

RivertreeSchool.org

Rocky Mountain Christian Academy

Grades: Pre K–8

RMCAonline.org

The Augustine Academy

Grades: Pre K–12

AugustineAcademy.com

Ambleside School of Waco

Coming Fall 2024

AmblesideWaco.org



**Ambleside School
of the Willamette Valley**
Grades: K–12
AmblesideWillametteValley.org

Europe/Austria
Ambleside School of Linz
Grades: 1–8
DieLerche.at

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The Calcutta Emmanuel School
Grades: Preschool–2
TheCES.weebly.com

Mozambique
Beira United Christian Academy
Grades: 1–7
BeiraUnida.com

Nigeria
Bethel Academy
Grades: K–5
Israel@BethelAcademy.org.ng

South Africa
Ambleside School of Durban
Grades: Preschool–5
AmblesideDurban.com

**Ambleside School
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Grades: Preschool–12
AmblesideSchool.co.za

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Three Peaks Primary School
Grades: Preschool–5
ThreePeaks.org.za

The Vine School
Grades: Preschool–7
TheVineSchool.org.za

Observation and Delight

The distinguishing part of a Charlotte Mason education — it becomes a lifestyle and not just something limited to the classroom | by *Thania Wiechers*

Born in South Africa, Thania and her husband came to the United States in January 2000. Both their children were born here. Thania was unfamiliar with homeschooling, but when her oldest daughter was about three, she was introduced to homeschooling and eventually found out more about a Charlotte Mason education and Ambleside Schools International. Thania and her children joined two other families and began the Ambleside Homeschooling Mentor Program. Together, the three families delighted in learning more about the Charlotte Mason method of teaching. The children thrived while enjoying rich texts and an atmosphere that fostered learning.

Thania described a Charlotte Mason education as rich, inspiring, and life-changing. Not only did it change the way she viewed learning as a homeschool mother, but it truly instilled a joy of learning and the desire to become lifelong learners in herself and in her children.

Thania attended an internship training at ASI and received regular guidance from her mentor, Shannon Seiberlich, and the other two mothers in their group. She was struck by the difference in her past public school and university education experience and the Charlotte Mason method of teaching.

While teaching a Composition class, Thania was impressed by the effectiveness of the teaching method — after reading through a challenging essay, the children narrated the content, their eyes lighting up with wonder and delight as they discovered the rich ideas from the text. The children loved the lesson and did not want to stop. It inspired them and ignited a desire to start writing their own essays. In a regular learning environment, students would get lost in the ideas and the difficult text, but when the teacher takes the time to tell the story or explain any difficult vocabulary, the ideas come to life.



Shakespeare plays were another highlight for all the children and parents in the group. Together the children would read and narrate the text and then memorize their individual lines to put on a play at the end of the school year. Their performances reflected that they truly had an understanding and love of the text.

The homeschool group also did many nature studies together. Exploring the local creeks and beaches, discovering plants, trees, insects, and animals together was a phenomenal experience. The children became more observant, noticing intricate details and nuances that would otherwise go unnoticed. More importantly, they would truly see how wonderful creation is and how marvelously our Creator designed it.

Thania's oldest daughter is now in university and often tells her mother how well ASI and the Charlotte Mason philosophy of education has prepared her. Her daughter mentioned how well the habit of attention has especially benefited her. She is able to remember many details without having to cram or memorize fervently for exams.



Her daughter states: “I regularly observe children around me – hungry for truth and rich ideas – and I wish they could have been educated the way I was.”

The relationships between different subjects, between students and books or with nature, make a Charlotte Mason education all the richer. These inspire growth in both the teacher and student. Thania’s daughter also wrote the following about her education: “As I was educated in a welcoming environment that fostered growth and joy, I developed habits that still benefit me today. My mind grew accustomed to thinking deeply and forming relationships with various areas of knowledge. Recently, I read about John Wycliffe, who was known as ‘The Morning Star of the Reformation.’ While reading, I recalled observing Venus, colloquially called ‘The Morning Star,’ through a telescope for Astronomy around sixth grade. As I contemplated the contrast between the brightness of the morning star and the darkness before dawn, I remembered observing Rembrandt’s painting technique, chiaroscuro, in Picture Study. At the same time, echoing in my mind was the tune of Handel’s Chandos Anthem No. 10, ‘The Lord is my Light,’ that I heard during Composer Study several years ago.”

Thania emphasized how much you grow as a teacher and mother as well when using Charlotte Mason’s method. It requires a lot of preparation in order to facilitate classes effectively, but this

promotes growth in the teacher to enable them to guide the students. In Thania’s words: “It’s not something you do just out of duty, you do it because the children love it. One truly becomes a lifelong learner as a parent - and it is lovely. It opened up a whole new world for our family and we will forever be grateful for it. It has been life changing to be part of Ambleside.” 🌿



THANIA WIECHERS
Homeschooler

Forming the whole child, not just the mind. | by Ben Sytsma

It's a truly Christian model of education.

I think schools often focus on information as the outcome of what they're trying to do. Test results. What makes a "living education" is that we focus on the work of formation. It's not just passing the test. We're trying to form the child for every aspect of their future life.

I often tell parents, "We care just as much about your child when they're 25 and what they're going to choose to do in their free time, as we do about what they're going to choose to do for their occupation." It's all part of a flourishing life. It's a way of living. And with the Charlotte Mason philosophy and Ambleside Method, you have a way of doing life that you learn through being a member school.

Students are learning a way to live that's True and Good and Beautiful. So much of what we do is forming the whole child, not just the mind. We are forming their hearts and desires and training their affections.

I think you see the results of this over time. A lot of formation isn't going to happen in two weeks. From my seat now as principal, I can think of one student who, when he entered the school, had a pretty poor relationship with learning . . . not really making eye contact with teachers. But through years of working with

that student and trying to reform some of those habits, you'd see a completely different person today. He looked me in the eyes when I opened the door for him at the beginning of school. I was greeting a different student. He waited and turned back and made sure that he greeted me before walking in. You see the change in the long term.

One of my favorite stories is from when we took our high school students to DC this past spring. I could see very clearly a *living education* while we were there. When we went to the Holocaust Museum, we prepped our students to go in thinking of this personally. Know that God has something to share with you as you're walking through this museum. You're going to see lots of hard things. We actually encouraged them to not talk at all and just to go through on their own, quietly.

The hour and a half discussion we had with our students afterwards was pretty



incredible. You can tell it wasn't the normal high school student experience going through a museum. They were bringing up consistencies they had seen and fears they have of our current world. They considered the thoughts they have about the way they engage with something that is difficult. It was like talking to 30-year-olds. They have this maturity about them already at high school.

One of the thoughts that I remember them talking about was how difficult and how sad it would've been to be a child during that time in Germany. You have these camps that are promoting Nazism and Nazi





ideas, and that's just the norm. They were thinking how awful for the children of that country at that time and how much propaganda these children were being fed. But that's all they knew for 10 to 20 years. Our students found that very saddening.

There was one point in the museum where they had listed all the names of people who helped people during the Holocaust. Lots of students were realizing they were Dutch and we're from a Dutch community in West Michigan. They even saw names they knew or their own last name. The students took the time to notice things that other schools going through the museum were missing.

Charlotte Mason says in her writing that "life is sustained by ideas." And I think what she means by *a living education* is that we're piquing students' interests in many different things, and we're filling their mind with ideas. Similarly, in the same way the body needs

food and digests food to function, our mind functions on ideas. Our way of education is presenting to students many good ideas that they can think about and ponder and talk about for the rest of their life.

I received my undergraduate and graduate degree from a Christian college, and I think highly of my experience there in many ways. But even there, my philosophy of education class presented me two main options: behaviorism or constructivism. Behaviorism at its core is manipulating behaviors through extrinsic rewards, using pain and pleasure to control behavior. Constructivism gives all choice to the child. They're the ones finding their own knowledge and forming their own truth. I was mostly taught to choose one of those methods and was told to try to add Christianity to it. This seems to be the norm at most education programs across the United States.

Charlotte Mason created a philosophy and method that's

truly Christian. It's not taking something that's secular and trying to switch it or mold it. She came up with a base foundation of principles that allow you to teach in a Christian way and actually help you disciple students. This is what should draw teachers to Ambleside. It's a truly Christian model of education. 🐦

BEN SYTSMA Principal | Calvary Schools of Holland

Ben has been a part of an Ambleside member school for 10 years. He formerly taught 5th grade at Calvary and also held the role of Assistant Principal of the elementary campus. Mr. Sytsma completed his Bachelor of Education and Master of School Leadership at Dordt University. He is a graduate of the Ambleside Master Teacher Training Program.

CHARLOTTE MASON THE EARLY YEARS

| by Kathryn Twelvetree

Charlotte Mason was an intensely private person, and some aspects of her life have only come to light over the last ten years. Here are some lesser-known facts about Charlotte.

Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) has inspired many parents, teachers, and children with her philosophy of *a living education*. She founded her House of Education in Ambleside, Cumbria, in 1892, and today her archive is kept at The Armit Museum near the site of the college.

Charlotte's family were Quakers with Cumbrian roots.

Charlotte Mason's family has Cumbrian roots dating back to the early eighteenth century. Her great-grandfather, John Gough, was born in Kendal, England, around 1720. John and his family were part of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers. They also taught in Quaker schools – education was in Charlotte's blood!

She began teaching while she was still very young.

Charlotte's father Joshua was deeply invested in his own children's education, and Charlotte was educated in day schools and at home. She first became a

pupil-teacher when she was 12 years old, at the Holy Trinity School, Birkenhead, in 1854.

During her pupil-teaching apprenticeship, her mother, Margaret Mason died in September 1858, followed by Joshua in March 1859, which must have been devastating for Charlotte. Despite this terrible hardship, Charlotte completed her apprenticeship nine months after her father's death and won a scholarship to train at the Home and Colonial Training College (also known as the 'Ho and Co') in London. College officers found her a new teaching position at the Davison Memorial Infant School in Worthing, Sussex.

Charlotte first saw Ambleside when she was 22 years old.

Charlotte first saw Ambleside in 1864, while she was still teaching in Worthing. She visited a friend from her college days, Selina Healey, who worked in a school at Loughrigg



View, Ambleside. Charlotte spent several holidays at Loughrigg View, teaching alongside Selina.

Charlotte returned 27 years later in 1891, and a lot had changed: she had taught in several schools around England; published seven books, including *Home Education* in 1886; and founded

the Parents' National Educational Union (PNEU) in Bradford, alongside the journal *Parents' Review* (1890). Charlotte stayed with Selina, now married to local architect John Fleming, and set up the *Parents' Review School* (PRS) in 1891, followed by the *House of Education* training college. 🐦

KATHRYN
TWELVETREE

Museum Assistant & Marketing

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*At Ambleside we learn to cultivate
a taste for the transcendentals –
True, Good, and Beautiful.*

TRANSCENDENTALS

True, Good, and Beautiful.

Transcendentals are the properties of being beyond the ordinary, everyday experiences. Properties that aren't measurable yet declare the importance of each person's soul. Properties captured in this student's work.

We consider these in the atmosphere we foster in the classroom and in how we're living. Beauty is all around us, but we must learn to notice and recognize it. We begin in the classroom with beautiful music, art on the walls, wooden furniture. These all play a part in developing the aesthetic sense in a child while at the same time valuing the child as a person who has great capacity. The children learn from the adults around them and respond to what is in the Atmosphere. As educators, we realize our part in setting an example as seekers of truth, goodness, and beauty.



| Ambleside Southern Africa – Student Grade 2

A LIVING EDUCATION

From Here to There

Ambleside steeps you in an environment of learning and appreciation of beauty that never leaves you.

— BY SAM LORDEN —



SAM LORDEN

Alumnus

Student alumnus of Ambleside Colorado.



Before Ambleside, I attended traditional Christian schools. In third grade, I was depressed, acting out, behind in math, trailing in reading, and I hated school. I was deeply convinced that I was stupid. My parents were fearful for my future, questioning if I would even graduate high school.

When I came to Ambleside, I was treated as a whole person. While “children” cannot be trusted or depended on, “persons” can be expected to grow.

Andrew Hayes, teaching math, sat me down and said that “you can do hard.”

There are two parts to this: the power of the message, and the relationship with the teacher. I knew that he was for me and cared too much to let me continue living any other way but as my best self. Messages you speak over students stay with them.

When I was at college, I heard about this program that would allow honors students to be an Oxford student for a term. The only problem was that I had the wrong major and the wrong GPA. I added a history minor, got my GPA up, wrote essays, found references, and applied. It took about a year and a half to make it in. That was just to get there. They don’t have classes at Oxford. Instead, you meet with a professor one-on-one for an hour each week. Between meetings there is a reading list and a ten-page paper. These reading lists were twenty books long, with ten academic articles. I was taking two tutorials. I was reading forty books and twenty articles and writing two ten-page papers every week. It was also the first semester in my life that I got all A’s. Not bad for a kid who couldn’t read.

The second thing that Ambleside does is steeps you in an environment of learning and appreciation of beauty that never leaves you. Let me take you back to Oxford. Not only did Ambleside prepare me to succeed in this environment, but it also allowed me to find so much joy in learning and beauty. I would walk down the street and see a plaque that Hopkins was buried in the church. I had read his poems! Shakespeare’s favorite Oxford pub? I’ve acted out his plays. C.S. Lewis’ house? I’ve read his books. The light post from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*? I rode my bike past it every day!

This doesn’t just apply to Oxford. Last month, I was working as a ranch hand and the family I was working for had guests over. I came in for dinner covered in dust and looking quite the part and started talking to one of the guests about his experience as an artist. I asked who his main inspiration was, and he said Van Gogh. I said, “I love Van Gogh,” and pulled out my phone and showed him my screen saver, Van Gogh’s irises. He was a little confused by the cowboy with the love for Van Gogh. You see, Ambleside follows you wherever you go.

I want to take you back now to that kid in third grade who hated every moment he was at a desk. What I don’t want you to hear is that I can read widely, think deeply, and overcome challenges. What I want you to hear is that I was placed in an environment that taught me I could read widely, think deeply, overcome challenges, and find beauty. Sam without Ambleside would be a very different man.

My transformation at Ambleside was not an immediate process. I did eighth grade twice; a bit of a victory lap. A student’s mind is like the field a farmer plows, tills, rakes, and harrows. He plants seeds months before even seeing the first seedling. Then, after months of looking like nothing is happening, it yields a crop thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold.

We are buying land. We are staking territory for light, hope, growth, and love in a broken world. Some of this land is rocky. Some of this land is costly but is very fertile. We are saying now that the land is too good to lie fallow. Too good for thorns and thistles.

We are going to plant Van Gogh’s sunflowers, Renoir’s roses, Monet’s water lilies, Pissarro’s flowering orchards, and Wordsworth’s daffodils. There will be music and poetry for every season: Keats’ “To Autumn,” Robert Frost’s walks on snowy evenings, and Shakespeare’s eternal summer that shall never fade. We will nourish it with the word of God, organize it with mathematics, discipline it with transcription, and irrigate it with watercolors. We are extending our property lines, and we will watch the land burst into bloom. 🌿





A mind-to-mind meeting.

ALL EDUCATION IN THE TRUE, GOOD, AND BEAUTIFUL IS A GIFT OF COMMON GRACE. AND YET TO BE WISELY OFFERED, SUCH AN EDUCATION INVOLVES A SET OF DEFINITE PRACTICES.

| by Bill St. Cyr

Every educational philosophy is based upon an anthropology (an understanding of the nature of persons) and an epistemology (an understanding of the nature of knowledge).

At Ambleside, children are seen as complete persons, bearers of God's image, who are created for fullness of living. Education is understood as the means of fostering this fullness of living. Children do not naturally live well. To live well, they must be "brought up," in other words, educated.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD

John 1:1

The nature of knowledge.

The above quote is the first verse of John's gospel. Consider. What if it is true? What if all things came to be through the eternal Word, the Logos? What if the

world is not just a data set, or just a set of atoms following the laws of physics? What if behind all creation lies the Logos, the Divine Mind? And what if we are made to know that Mind? Even more, what if we are also made to know all that He has created, and all that other persons have created. What if it is all part of being created in the Divine image?

With this understanding of both the Word and of what it means to be persons created in the image of the Word, education is seen in a new light. We recognize the perpetual invitation to learn and to grow. Because we are profoundly social, we also recognize the need to be in relationship with others who are with us and for us. We need to be in a community that is not trying to manage us but is seeking to bring us up, in a place where we smile and are smiled upon. We need teachers who do not

merely download discrete data sets into the alleged blank slates of our minds but who offer an invitation to feed on that which is True, Good, and Beautiful.

Facilitating engagement.

We need teachers who come beside us and facilitate our engagement with the great minds of literature, art, music, poetry; with the mind of God as revealed through the sciences; and with the mind of God as revealed through Scripture, prayer, and community. Such convictions suggest a vastly different view of what education is and can be. To adopt these convictions is to reject much of the educational system under which most of us have grown up.

For most of us, education meant the mastery of data sets and of certain algorithms; for example, how to solve a quadratic equation. The role of the teacher was to ensure student mastery. Mastery was assessed by



| Creation of Adam, Michelangelo

the scantron test, multiple choice, fill in the blank . . . all easily gradable and easily quantifiable testing.

Such an approach puts students in the position of striving for mastery of data rather than delighting in knowledge. Some students do it better than others. They are deemed superior, having mastered in a superior way. This sets up a destructive dynamic between students and the world. Students find themselves engaged in a vain competition for supremacy. Rather than joyful allies, they become anxious adversaries.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reacting to the dehumanizing effects of such an education, there arose constructivist philosophies of education which were deemed more respectful of persons as persons. Proponents understand education, primarily, as a means for self-actualization. In constructivist pedagogies, the role of the teacher is to provide opportunities for students to self-discover and self-express, to construct their own knowledge. This is a recipe for narcissism. Giving expression to what I think, feel, and want becomes the goal. Lost is the delightful experience of submitting to and learning from a greater mind.

In a universe where there is no God, the behaviorism of traditional American education and the constructivism of progressive education are perhaps the only two options. But if there is a God and His act of creation was an act of communication in love and if He created beings made to receive that communication, then “coming to know” is something very different. For Ambleside, “coming to know” is to come to know a mind that stands behind the particular data points.

When reading a novel by Charles Dickens or contemplating a painting by Rembrandt, we are given the delightful privilege of meeting mind to mind with a great observer of the human condition. In like manner, when we consider a blade of grass, we engage with the mind of the Creator. Real education occurs through a mind-to-mind meeting between student and a mind bigger than the student’s own.

Education is fundamentally an act of submission, not an act of mastery.

This view of education cultivates a fundamental orientation to the world — not mastery and not self-expression but a joyful submission to all that is True,

Good, and Beautiful; submission to the eternal Logos, which is the source of the True, Good, and Beautiful; submission to the mind of God, in whom we live and move and have our being.

At Ambleside, we seek a renewal of Christian education. Ours is a radically different way of seeing and therefore of educating. Our philosophy makes no sense if the Christian God is not there. But we would argue that He is there, and we at Ambleside practice a method of education that takes His presence seriously. 🐦

BILL ST. CYR
Founder | Director
of Training,
Member | Board
of Directors

Bill is co-founder and currently serves as Director of Training for Ambleside Schools International. He holds a B.A. in political philosophy from Louisiana State University, a M.A. in theology from Catholic University of America, and a M.S./Ph.D. in pastoral counseling from Loyola University Maryland.

Ambleside's Skylark in Song and Spirit

In 1903 it had been suggested by a home-schoolroom pupil, Eric Bishop, that the P.U.S. should have a badge. He wrote to Charlotte Mason to ask if this could be arranged and sent her a design of a lark soaring towards heaven, encircled by a wreath of daisies. It was not until 1910 that a decision was reached on the design of the badge.¹ Charlotte Mason and the former students from the House of Education decided that the badge should be in the form of a brooch, consisting of a circle bearing the motto around the edge and the lark in the center.

The colors brown and white represented the lark, while the blue denoted the sky. In 1915, Dorothea Steinthal designed a badge incorporating these ideas. She added a wreath of daisies around the circlet. At first the badges were made by various firms, but as the bird frequently bore no resemblance to a lark, in 1930 Dorothea Steinthal suggested she should draw a simpler design which could be patented.

1 This was done, and the new badge bears the soaring lark, its head thrown back in song, its beak open. Around the circle is inscribed the motto and the name of the school.

The motto, 'I am, I can, I ought, I will,' is simple and positive. It provides inspiration for all children, whether they are in the preparatory class, Form I or Form VI.²

2 In the beginning years of Ambleside School of Fredericksburg, when Founder Maryellen St. Cyr was the principal, she spoke at a Chapel and introduced the first logo of Ambleside Schools International (ASI) with the image of the skylark soaring from the letter "I".

3 As she shared with the students about Charlotte Mason and her philosophy of education and the significance of the skylark to represent our schools, a friend of the school, Mark Hierholzer, was sitting and listening in the chapel. He was so moved and inspired by Maryellen's words, that as a gift to the new school, he returned within a few days with the musical score to Shelley's poem "Ode to a Skylark." This beautiful song and its original music became the school song in 2004.

In his poem, "Ode to a Skylark," Shelley was inspired by the exhilarating sight and sound of the lark's aerial flight — a swift skyward dart followed by a long, steady, graceful descent

of the singing bird. This easy field character has made the renowned Skylark the best-known member of the lark family about which many great poets have been inspired to write.

The song continues to be the official school song and is used widely in Ambleside Member Schools.

4 In 2021, leadership of ASI engaged in a brand refresh and the Skylark mark and logo were updated. The new Ambleside Skylark was designed in two formats: An iconic graphic image and an illustrative icon.

5 The full brand logo was redesigned to present the promise of an Ambleside education and depicting the Skylark propelled into the heavens. The new logo was also designed to allow for easy localization and usage by Ambleside Member Schools.

The blue and brown colors of the logo were retained to communicate the legacy, unique spirit, and experience gained through the Charlotte Mason philosophy and the Ambleside method of education.

6 The brand mark was also designed to present the ASI tagline representing the promise of "a living education."

¹The first badge design showed a soaring skylark, with its great ability to rise to great heights, surrounded by a circle of daisies, symbolic of childhood. Later in the 1930's, the badge was simplified, and the daisies were omitted. The final badge, patented in the 1930's, looked like the one shown here. It is still used to this day by PNEU schools in Britain.

²Parent's Review, Volume 74, no.9, October 1963, 213-216.

1



2

Ambleside[®]
SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

3

School Song, Ambleside School, Fredericksburg, TX
Ode To A Skylark
 for Unison (Optional Two-part) Voices with Keyboard Accompaniment

Percy Bysshe Shelley Mark Herbolzer

Andante

Hail to thee, blithe spi-rit! Bird thou nev-er wast, That from heav'n's or near it
 Pours-out thy full heart in po-etry strains of un-pre-need-+ in-sol-ent.

High-er still and high-er, From the earth thou spring-est,

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4



5

Ambleside

6

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Ambleside Schools International Register Today for our 2024 Training Events

Ambleside Schools International (ASI) trains teachers, parents, and educational leaders in the Ambleside Method, a comprehensive philosophy and practice of education based on the teachings of British educator Charlotte Mason.

ASI's educational training accomplishes two goals: it provides vision of what education can be, and it equips participants with the knowledge and tools that allow them to make Charlotte Mason's vision a reality in their schools and homes.

Three-Day Internships and Summer Institute training events are venues for both teachers and parents. Since 2000, our staff has trained thousands of teachers and parents from North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Three-Day Internship



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Fredericksburg, TX

April 8 – 10, 2024
Newberg, OR

April 24 – 26, 2024
Holland, MI

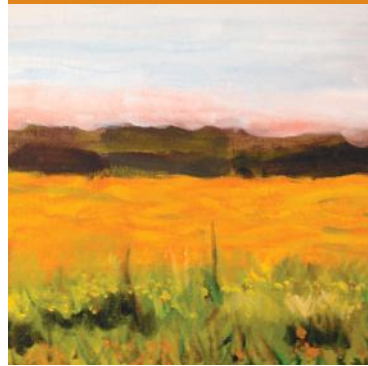
Three-Day Internship



March 12 – 14, 2024
Cape Town, ZA

August 20 – 22, 2024
Johannesburg, ZA

Summer Institute



July 30 – August 6, 2024
Crystal, MN



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