

Charter of Ambleside School of the Adirondacks*

1. We believe in and proclaim both the mystery that is God, whom we partly know and partly do not know, and the human need to worship.
2. We believe in and proclaim the person of Jesus Christ who distinctively reveals the nature of God and the meaning and purpose of life, and who calls us to follow Him through the death of the cross to the place of the Resurrection.
3. We trust in the Holy Spirit who prompts liberty, beauty, truth, love, and joy against the waywardness of human nature.
4. We are committed to using the Bible in a way that takes account of all truth and relates it to the real experiences, both good and bad, that people have of life.
5. We are committed to exploring the meaning of the Kingdom of God and to making connections between what we profess and the way in which we live and work.
6. We acknowledge the destructive power of human sinfulness, and we welcome gratefully the forgiveness that God offers to those who are prepared to turn to the truth.
7. We are committed to taking all people seriously wherever they might be at their particular point of understanding, while at the same time sharing with them whatever insights may have been gained by our relationship with God.
8. We are committed to identifying and affirming what is good and identifying and opposing what is evil, and living as best we can in the mess in the middle.

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Guiding Principles

Mission

It is the mission of the Ambleside administration and faculty to provide what Charlotte Mason called a “living education,” where each child is guided and empowered to author a full and free life, a life rich in relationship to God, self, others, ideas, and all of creation. Thus, our primary concern is the kind of student each child is becoming, not the mastery of particular data or technique, for we are confident that the student who masters the art of learning will attain his full potential for mastering data and technique. The student who masters the art of relating well to God, self, others, ideas, and creation will attain the fullness of life for which she was created. Our mission is fulfilled through a consistent application of our Fundamental Convictions as applied to education.

Our Faith

We begin with the conviction that the fullness of God’s plan for humanity is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. He is both the example and the source of living a full and free life. The commandments to love God and to love one another are fundamental in the outworking of a fully human life. This conviction is given expression in the Ambleside Charter.

Fundamental Convictions

1. A Non-Competitive, Stimulating Atmosphere

In an atmosphere of sincerity and truth, students are free to learn for the pleasure of learning. Students do not compete with their peers for rank, grades or prizes. Learning is the focus, not besting a classmate. Real life is placed before the students to study and discuss. Students are stimulated to observe, explore, and understand.

2. The Discipline of Habit

At Ambleside, we consider the process of student work to be as important as the end product. Rather than developing persons who are able to study well for the next exam, we are interested in helping students develop a life of study. We ask the questions: Did she attend? Did he put forth effort? And was she thorough? We believe school is not just an institution to get through, but rather a place to develop habits that will serve children the rest of their lives.

3. Education as Vital, Dynamic, Living

Real learning occurs when the learner wonders, asks why and how, in an atmosphere that stimulates thought, and is rich with ideas. Our objective is to place the very best books before our students, books that are rich in content and ideas, putting them into relationship with the finest authors. Through the use of

“living books” students interact with scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, historians, artists, poets, and explorers.

4. The Infinite Dignity and Potential of Each Child

Because children are born in God’s image, they are therefore born with great potential for a fruitful and full life filled with interests and relationships. At Ambleside, children are not identified or limited by their strengths or weaknesses. All children participate in a broad, rigorous curriculum—all children calculate, solve, attend, explore, ponder, recite, paint and sing. The expectation that prevails within the school is that all students will learn and grow to their full potential as persons and attain their vast inheritance.

5. The Priority of the Relational Life

Children live in relationship with God, self, others, creation, and the world of ideas. These relationships are cultivated in the educational process through a broad, challenging curriculum and a faculty that seeks to relate to students, parents, and one another in accordance with the principles of Jesus Christ.

6. The Importance of Delight and of Struggle

Children will naturally delight in the feast of great ideas set before them. They will savor them and grow in the ability to enjoy and celebrate their relations with persons, ideas, and creation. But they will also at times struggle. We consider the struggle to be as essential to the learning process as the delight. Children must learn to labor with problems not yet grasped, to remain on task when uncertain of the outcome, to struggle to completion when mind and hand are tired, to experience the rewards and negative consequences of their actions. There will be no growth in character without the struggle. Foremost among the enemies of the delight and the struggle necessary for the cultivation of a learner are entertainment and indulgence. In the classroom, entertainment and indulgence both encourage passivity. To grow, a student must be strenuously engaged in the work of learning. Thus, Ambleside teachers, while often creative in their presentations, make no effort to entertain their students. Ambleside teachers, while being loving, will not be indulgent.
