

MISSION

It is the mission of the Ambleside administration and faculty to provide what Charlotte Mason called a “living education,” *where each student 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 person each student 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 he /she was created.*

In stating this mission, it must be recognized that the faculty and administration will intentionally seek to foster each student’s growth in this direction. It is our aim that every student who graduates from Ambleside will be characterized by the following:

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY

- a. A vibrant relationship with God characterized by an abiding faith, a deep prayer life and a consistent obedience.
- b. A vast capacity for deep friendship with others, based upon a shared appreciation of and service to the good, the true, and the beautiful. (In contrast to the absurdities and cheap thrills, which are the common, base ground of so many relationships among young adults.)
- c. The ability to manage self well; a consistent diligence in fulfilling responsibilities to God, family, school, work, and community, always maintaining a kind, gracious and reflective spirit, even in the face of great adversity.
- d. A heart which reflects the compassion of Jesus Christ for the struggling, the weak, the young, the elderly, the poor; and a life which reflects an active service to others rather than self-protection and self-indulgence.

2. MASTERY OF THE HABITS OF A SCHOLAR

- a. *Attentive* - an enhanced ability to perceive and to retain knowledge and ideas from a wide variety of books, things, persons, and the natural world.
- b. *Receptive* - a love for ideas and great appreciation for their influence upon the world; a deep respect for beauty, goodness, and truth.
- c. *Thoughtful* – an indispensable ability to ponder questions, to distinguish between opinion and ideas, to develop sound reasoning guided by conscience, and to produce thoughtful responses in both oral and written formats.
- d. *Responsible* – applied wisdom that takes seriously the duty of self-education both in and out of the classroom.

3. A VIEW OF ONE’S LIFE AS A GIFT, CONSISTENTLY MARKED BY PURPOSEFUL AND USEFUL ACTS

- a. An increased sense of his place in this world and relationship with one’s country.
- b. An appreciation of different cultures through the mastery of one foreign language and exposure to international life.

AN AMBLESIDE STUDENT IS...

An Ambleside student is not perfect. An Ambleside student is nowhere near perfect, nor do they hold in their hearts the belief they can be so. What sets an Ambleside student apart from the sea of schools and students outside our feeble-framed, red-walled, church of a school is that an Ambleside student strives to be perfect. There is a desire to better one’s self, a desire to improve and to learn. This is not a desire that can be instilled in a student’s heart by rules and institutions (although they are necessary for the process to occur), this is a desire- a yearning to learn- that is planted in the core of Ambleside students while they are young, and tended to like a germinating seed through the years until that glorious day when it opens its petals and blossoms. That glorious day a student picks up a copy of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, not because it is assigned on the chalkboard, but because they find something beautiful, something heartbreaking, in the way Shakespeare weaves words together with the simple twist of his feathered pen. That glorious day a student puts a copy of *Beethoven’s Fifth* on their record player, not because their music teacher told them to, but because the opening prelude, with its rhythmic, beating pulse and swelling strings, fills their eyes with tears and their hearts with joy. This is what sets an Ambleside student apart: not our uniforms, not our laptops, but our hearts.

What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. VICTOR FRANK

CURRICULUM CORNER

Mathematics

Mathematics is a language that uses quantitative terms to describe the world. And like any language, students gain mastery as they are given a context for understanding and practice the fundamentals. Beginning in kindergarten, students become familiar with the signs, symbols, pictures and words that tell about place value, addition, subtraction, time and geometric shapes. Each year this “vocabulary” increases as students add to their knowledge.

In the elementary years at Ambleside, the curriculum calls for a “mastery approach” rather than an “accelerated approach.” Professor Barrett states that an accelerated approach implies “youngsters are being forced to learn mathematics at a pace beyond their abilities. However, we are proponents of activating children’s natural ways of learning math. When this is done, they cannot avoid learning faster... it is natural learning.” In the accelerated approach students become acquainted with a wider variety of skills earlier, but often fail to gain a profound understanding of fundamentals.

Students at Ambleside are fully acquainted with elementary arithmetic by the end of fifth grade. The sixth grade provides practical opportunities for applying these principles. Seventh and eighth grade years are spent in Algebra I and Upper School begins with Geometry, followed by Algebra II, Trigonometry/Statistics and Functions, and Pre-Calculus or Calculus.

The purpose of the study of mathematics is to afford training “to the reasoning powers, and habits of insight, readiness, accuracy, and intellectual truthfulness (Charlotte Mason).” The student is doing mental calisthenics, growing stronger intellectually and becoming familiar with the beauty of absolutes.

It is an absolute must that, in the early years, students master the facts of addition/subtraction and multiplication/division and master the habit of careful, accurate execution. Such mastery empowers students to freely learn the principles of higher mathematics. It may be a pain-staking process, but it must be done.

As adults, we *must* provide the example. As Charlotte Mason states, “Must should be present with the children; our mistake is to act in such a way that they only seem to be law compelled while the elders do as they please.” Perhaps if mother says with a smile that she must balance her checkbook and Father must verify his assessment for tax purposes, the child will find it easier to say, “I must learn my three times tables (Gardner).”

Our curriculum cabinet in the Assembly Room displays copies of students’ work in mathematics, weekly assessments, and texts. Come and see “All Things that are Number.”

— MARYELLEN ST. CYR

TEACHER PROFILE

Leticia Adams

“This is how I’ve always felt it should be,” said Leticia Adams, Ambleside’s new fourth grade teacher, when asked what attracted her to Ambleside as a teacher. Adams, with approximately seven years of teaching experience under her belt, initially sought to learn enough about Ambleside to make a decision about whether to enroll her two girls. Her inquiries ultimately resulted in her being offered a job teaching at Ambleside. “It is clear this path was chosen for us by God,” said Leticia.

Adams and her husband Keith and daughters Sidney, 5th grade, and Molly, 4th grade, settled in Fredericksburg after her husband retired from professional bull riding. Though her husband was one of the top rodeo bull riders in the world, placing number three in the world in 1997, and named 1997 Rookie of the Year, he was willing to give that up to facilitate family togetherness. He took a job as a government trapper so he could be home each night. “We are a very close family,” said Adams, “We don’t like to be apart from each other.”

With a degree in history, postgraduate work in educational studies, several years of fulltime and substitute teaching, and a desire to keep her family together, it was not a hard decision to accept a teaching position at Ambleside.

Adams said one of the things she likes most about teaching is watching her students suddenly comprehend a fairly complex idea. “I was explaining thunder and lightning by referring to the static charge generated when you scrape your feet on a carpet on a cold day and then touch something metallic, like a door handle. It was wonderful to see the kids faces light up when they realized that thunder and lightning is just magnification of that static charge they had all experienced.”

When asked what makes Ambleside different, she responded that “the students get to really think at Ambleside, in a safe environment where deep thought is encouraged, and it shows in their responses to instruction.” Adams also is thrilled that “everyone here at Ambleside pulls together” to meet challenges and to make the school what it is.

— Curt Littman



Emma Hallford on Parent Observation Day