



ChildLight Schools Association

Founded in 1995

www.childlightschools.com

The purpose of the ChildLight Schools Association is to build unity through an intentional commitment to children as persons and imagebearers of Jesus Christ by fostering edifying relationships among schools and school educators who are committed to the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason as understood and applied from her writings. Member schools will desire to grow in the philosophy, principles and practices as described below. By their inclusion, members become fellow pilgrims that support one another in falling under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit in their quest.

I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY

A. The 20 Principles of Education (paraphrased)

- taken from the pamphlet entitled A Short Synopsis of the Educational Philosophy Advanced by the Founder of the Parents National Education Union

1. Children are born persons--they are not blank slates or undeveloped beings who only have the potential of becoming persons.
2. Although children are born with a sin nature, they should not be labeled all bad or all good. They remain image bearers of God.
3. The principles of authority and necessary obedience are natural and fundamental for society and for schooling, but...
4. This authority over children and their expected obedience is never a license to abuse them, to play upon their emotions or other desires, denying them an education, or give undue disrespect through fear, love, suggestion, or influence.
5. Therefore, the three primary educational instruments are the atmosphere of the environment, the discipline of habits, and the presentation of living ideas. The motto of the PNEU school was: "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life."
6. By "education is an atmosphere" we do not mean to place a child in an adapted environment on a childish level, but to take into account his or her natural home atmosphere and let the child live freely in proper authentic conditions.
7. By "education is a discipline" we do not refer to demanding a code of conduct, but to definitely and thoughtfully train the child in habits of mind, body, will, and spirit.

8. By "education is a life" we mean that the mind needs intellectual and moral sustenance just as the body needs healthy food. The mind feeds on ideas, and children should have a broad and varied curriculum and practice.

9. Thus, the child's mind is no mere sack stuffed with other's ideas, but a spiritual organism with an appetite to learn. With the proper diet with which it is prepared to deal, it can digest and assimilate ideas on its own.

10. The prevailing idea that the mind is a receptacle waiting to be filled with information puts responsibility totally on the teacher to prepare and deliver lessons, thinking "what the children learn rests totally on how I teach them." Children then receive much teaching and little learning.

11. Instead, we believe that children's minds are capable of dealing with real knowledge proper to them, needing a full and generous curriculum that takes care to not present facts or concepts without their informing ideas.

12. By "education is the science of relations" we mean that children have natural relations and connections with a vast number of things and thoughts; so we make sure the child has physical exercise, nature study, music, science, history, and art, knows how to make things, and reads many living books. Though we cannot teach children all about anything, we want to excite their personal interests as much as possible.

13. In devising a curriculum for all backgrounds and learning styles of children, we provide a vast amount of ideas to ensure that the mind is stimulated, knowledge about a variety of things to build curiosity, and teaching with high-quality literary language that supplies the child's natural interest in stories.

14. Since one doesn't really 'own' knowledge until it is reproduced, children are required to narrate, or tell back (or write down) after a single reading, all or part of what they are read or heard.

15. A single reading is insisted upon, because most children naturally have the power of attention, and allowing a second reading weakens their ability to pay attention the first time. Teachers summarizing and asking comprehension questions are other ways of unnecessarily giving children a second chance and making the need to focus the first time less urgent. By getting it the first time, less time is wasted on repeated readings, and more time is available during school hours for other learning. A child educated this way learns more than children using other methods, and this is true for all children regardless of their IQ or background.

16. Children have two guides to help them in their moral and intellectual self-control--'the way of the will,' and 'the way of reason.'

17. Children must learn the difference between 'I want,' and 'I will.' They must learn to divert their thoughts when tempted to do what they want but know is not best. Instead, they think of something else, or do something else interesting enough to occupy their mind. After a short diversion, their mind will be refreshed and able to will with renewed strength. The discipline of failure that children experience when they do what they want, rather than what they will or should, is as valuable as a reward for success.

18. Children must learn not to lean too confidently on their own reasoning and understanding. Reasoning is good for logically demonstrating mathematical truth or the initial logic of an idea, but sometimes unreliable because our reasoning will justify all kinds of erroneous ideas if we really want to believe them.

19. Knowing that reason is not to be trusted as the final authority in forming opinions, children must learn as persons that their greatest responsibility is choosing which ideas to accept or to reject. Teachers and parents must train habits of behavior and heart knowledge that will hopefully provide the discipline and experience to help them do this.

20. We teach children that all truths are God's truths, and that life does not consist of a separate secular life and a spiritual life. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit is our guide into all truth. He is the ruler over all areas of their interests and is always close to them both as a friend and a king. They are his children and He is their present Helper in all the duties, through the valleys, and joys of life.

--edited by Bobby Scott, March 4, 2019 from the paraphrase of Leslie Noelani, 2008.

B. The Cornerstone of the Philosophy

1. Children are born Persons
 - a. Made in the image of God and due the respect thereof
 - b. Bearers of a sinful nature and due the discipline thereof
 - c. Potential recipients of His redemption and due the love thereof
 - d. The crown of God's creation and due the expectations thereof
2. The Principles Of Authority Over Children Are Natural, Necessary And Fundamental:
 - a. Natural since children need boundaries and standards in order to learn and grow and adults are under authority as well
 - b. Necessary due to the sinful nature of mankind and the need for discipline
 - c. Fundamental because all earthly authority is under the rule of God and invested by Him
3. The Respect Due To Children Prevents The Encroachment Of Authority Upon Their Personhood By:
 - a. Manipulation by guilt, fear, or love of an individual
 - b. Deliberate control of thinking by strong suggestion or influence
 - c. Undue play upon any one natural desire
4. Therefore, We Confirm Four Basic Pillars Upon Which We Base Our Philosophy:
 - Education Is An Atmosphere

Not a "child's environment", but rather the formation of proper conditions that takes into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere, acknowledges his due respect as an imagebearer of God, and then expects him to think, learn, and act in accordance with that truth.

- Education Is A Discipline

The key to supplanting the weakness of will and forming character in children is the discipline of habits formed definitely and thoughtfully, both of mind and body. To a great degree education is the formation of habits, all the while trusting Divine grace.

- Education Is A Life

The mind of a child is not a sack to be stuffed full of information, but an organism that feasts on ideas from all of life; thus the child should have a full curriculum to fill his appetite for knowledge, keeping in mind what subjects, intervals, and recesses are necessary at his age to produce maximum growth.

- Education Is The Science Of Relations

The child has natural relations as a created being with a number of things, thoughts, and people; therefore, we must give him opportunity to build these relations to nature, handicrafts, science, art and many living books.

II. A THEOLOGICAL CREED OF THE ASSOCIATION

- We believe that the uncertain 'mystery of religion', which characterizes all philosophical and religious enquiry throughout history, finds its resolution in the 'mysterion' (Greek) of God, namely Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ-Messiah. God's mystery, which was previously hidden, has been revealed. Christ is the Light of the world.
- We believe that Jesus Christ perfectly reveals the Father. Not only is he God's Light in our darkness, he is God's Word which addresses our ignorance. His teaching and life define for all human teaching and life what the purpose of existence is, and thus how it is to be lived and enjoyed. Sin separates us from God and only in Jesus, the perfect sin-bearer, can the guilt of sin be removed. So too, for those who believe in Christ, only by taking up his cross and following him can 'the image of God' in man be restored : only by 'sharing in his sufferings' can 'the power of his resurrection' be made known.
- We believe that when sinners turn to God in repentance and faith they receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. He brings forth his fruit of goodness - joy and beauty, love and truth – with increasing measure in their lives . Similarly, it is the Holy Spirit alone who brings them true freedom.
- We believe that all human experience and knowledge is finite and limited. Nevertheless, God has given information about himself and ourselves, as of the world and history of which we are a part, which is both true and objective. Though not exhaustive it is entirely reliable and adequate and is found uniquely within the writings of the Old and New Testaments. It is this book, the Bible, which provides the sole definitive authority for all that is good and true in human experience as much as for all that is evil and false.
- We believe that the Kingdom of God comprises all that faithfully reflects his divine character and purpose. What conflicts with his goodness and truth must be rejected and

opposed, what expresses it affirmed and confirmed? The church with its principal treasure, the gospel, is the representation of God's Kingdom in the world; but it is not, for that reason, without fault. Nor is the world, which is ignorant of the truth of God's Word, for that reason without virtue. Only the gospel can effectively alter the affairs of mankind, limiting their propensity for evil and liberating them for all that is good and wholesome in human experience.

- Written by Ranald Macaulay in 2003

III. The Qualifications for ChildLight Schools Membership

A. Educational Training in ChildLight Schools is characterized by ...

1. Deliberate and continuing training of faculty and staff in applying the **four principles of education** (Atmosphere, Discipline, Life, and Relations) increasingly in all areas of school life.
2. A program of regular **training of local governing boards** (School Boards, Ministry Teams, Church Sessions, and Committees) in the understanding and living out of Mason principles through campus meetings, seminars, and other venues.
3. A program of regular **training of parents** in the understanding and living out of Mason principles through required reading, workshops, and other venues.
4. A practice of visionary leadership by the **head** of each school, supported by his or her local governing board, that brings each family into a greater commitment to the principles of that are inspired by Charlotte Mason.

B. Atmosphere/Life in ChildLight Schools consists of ...

1. An **aesthetically pleasing learning environment** containing attractive, authentic displays and tastefully mounted student work, within the limitations as imposed by the specific location of the school. Displays elucidate themes and topics studied, and take into account the visual learning of students.
2. A consistent attention to the **use of living books**, elimination of content "twaddle", and inclusion of primary sources as key components of curriculum.
3. A recognition of the value and necessary practice of **narration as a primary method** in acquiring and assessing knowledge.
4. A presence of several **Charlotte Mason practices** including Nature Study, Picture Study, Composer Study, Poetry Study, Shakespeare, Handwork, Book of Centuries, Transcription and Dictation, and Recitation.
5. A program of student assessments that includes **examinations of broad knowledge** rather than grasp of details only.
6. A frequent opportunity for **prayer, reflection and meditation** to be engaged in by students, teachers, staff, and school families.
7. An emphasis on giving one's full **attention**, putting forth one's best **effort**, doing careful and thorough work, and contributing to an atmosphere of simplicity that allows one to put self aside so that the focus can be on the **ideas** or **habits** at hand.

C. Relationships/Leadership in ChildLight school includes ...

1. A Head of School who has **a commitment to and an increasing knowledge of Mason writings**, and a passion to continually set goals that apply these to school life.
2. An incorporation of **varied relationships between students, parents, teachers and the community** to include regular conferences, assemblies, stewardship of school property, cooperative play and learning, and consistent community service.
3. A structure of **small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios** (preferably less than 20:1) in order to foster relational learning.
4. A focus on **the student's relationship to God and his parents as their primary motivation for learning and forming habits**, rather than the use of extrinsic rewards for such.
5. A willingness on the part of all association members to **share all documents, publications, and handbooks as freely as possible** with one another, only charging another association school for the actual cost of copying the materials as necessary.

D. The Cultivation of Discipline/Habits in ChildLight Schools look like...

1. A diligent effort and plan to immerse students in moral and intellectual **habit formation** in all of school life.
2. A similar effort to assist parents in **building habits at home**.
3. Ongoing **discussion to discern** whether or not practices, materials, and activities adopted from the culture impede or promote the building of good habits and thought and preserve the dignity of students as persons.

IV. The Organization of the ChildLight Schools Association

A. Association Characteristics

The association is not a legal entity or corporation in itself by design, in order not to produce problems with individual school structures. Therefore, the commitments to the Association guidelines are primarily "good faith" and "word of honor."

B. Leadership

The individual head/principal/administrator of each school will comprise the leadership team of the organization with the Director being chosen by the team by agreement. There will also be an agreed upon Secretary/Treasurer.

C. Membership Dues

Dues will be decided upon by the leadership team and assessed at the beginning of each school year. At present, Dues are \$5.00 per enrolled student at the beginning of the school year, with a maximum of \$1,000.00 per school. These dues are used for expenses approved by the leadership Team. At present they include some conference speaker expenses, web site costs, travel, and some group advertising as needed.

D. Accountability to Association Requirements

The level of adherence of each school to the standards of the association is primarily done by self-assessment, with leaders of individual schools using the leaders of the other schools to assist them in such. Each year, the leader of each school may be asked to report to the team describing the state of their school and its commitment level. The atmosphere of all assessments is that of encouragement and learning from one another.

E. Conferences and Retreats

1. The association leadership team will hold an annual retreat in January for the purpose of refreshment, renewal, encouragement and prayer. The present location is the Winshape Retreat Center in Rome, GA.
2. The association will conduct the **ChildLight Teachers Conference** normally on the first Thursday and Friday of October each year. The dates, details, and location of each conference will be decided by the leadership team, with attention to rotating the conference location by schools.

V. The Vision and Mission of the Association

It is our belief that the quality and vision of this organization will continue to expand as new schools join us in our venture. The purpose of assisting schools and school educators in their growth in Charlotte Mason education may be carried in some of the following ways:

- Creative ways to carry out additional teacher training by conferences and seminars geared to particular grade levels with different formats
- Inspirational and disciplinary training of school staff to enrich souls as well as illumine minds.
- Gatherings of CM educators from other parts of the USA to share ideas with association leadership
- School Board and other non-teaching staff training in CM philosophy and sharing good practical ideas to better serve families
- Exclusive access to ChildLight produced materials like the Eve Anderson videos, Story of Charlotte Mason books, CM Grammar Books, etc.
- Publication of curriculum pamphlets (like the old PNEU ones) that deal with specific CM issues in today's school (e.g. "how to use copy books in your class" or "nature study in the asphalt jungle")
- ChildLight led "field trips" to Ambleside, UK and other places of inspiration.
- Consulting visits from CM educators to provide ideas, encouragement, and relationships (as Eve Anderson did so effectively)