

Formed in 2001 by Chris Blunden, Evelyn Hoey, Phyllis Lee, Therese Racklyeft, and Bonnie Schow, the Charlotte Mason Association of Detroit (CMAD) began as a vision to offer rich educational opportunities based on the philosophy of Charlotte Mason to children of inner city Detroit. In 2002, CMAD founded Ambleside Community School (ACS) in direct response to a need expressed by local families for a quality educational experience for their children.

Evelyn Hoey and Therese Racklyeft first became aware of the teachings of Charlotte Mason while educating their children at home. After reading her six-volume work on education, Evelyn attended a worldwide conference in Ambleside, England, home to the Charlotte Mason Teaching College at the University of Lancashire. There she was encouraged to learn that, though on a small scale, Miss Mason's methods were being used successfully throughout the world. Later, three of the founders attended a short internship offered by the Charlotte Mason Schools International.

They were drawn to Miss Mason's philosophy for many reasons; among them were her beliefs that all children, the offspring of the wealthy as well as the poor, should have access to a rich curriculum, and that children should be encouraged to "dig" for knowledge - to be active seekers rather than passive learners. Through the grace of God, these CMAD pioneers started a K-6 school, which grew to become a K-8 school the following year.

Students, parents, and teachers enthusiastically worked together to make Ambleside a successful experience for all involved. Several distinctive characteristics that set Ambleside apart from most current models include low teacher-to-student ratio, individualized teaching that meets the need of every student, and the development of a child's natural exploratory instincts. Parents of students attending at that time best express the initial success of Ambleside Community School:

“Fairly soon after her enrollment in Ambleside, I noticed some major changes in Julia’s behavior...While having fun with drama, art, music and etc., she also learned about ancient civilizations, Greek word roots, and mathematical solutions.” –Dr. Shepherd.

“It was exciting to watch our children respond so favorably to the teachers, the classes, the other students as well as the special trips and events. In addition we could see that they were really learning.” –Mr. Weidman

As part of our three-pronged goal of educating students, parents and teachers, in 2009-2010, ACS welcomed its first intern. This certified teacher spent the year learning CM philosophy and methods, while teaching Spanish and remedial reading. The following year she returned as a part-time teacher.

At the beginning of the 2010 - 2011 school year, Ambleside Community School became Charlotte Mason Community School (CMCS). Charlotte Mason Community School continues to have a strong curriculum; a very dedicated, talented, and well-equipped staff; and an appreciative and enthusiastically supportive parent community.

In 2013, CMCS added another teaching intern and in March 2014, we hosted our first education conference. We are thankful to God for the opportunity to increase knowledge of this wonderful philosophy of education among educators.

In the fall of 2014, CMCS moved to 1419 West Warren Ave. Our new home is a school building owned by Citadel of Faith Covenant Church and located in the center of Detroit. This move will enable CMCS to serve an increasing number of Detroit’s children and to be a growing voice in the conversation on educational reform in this city.