

Charlotte's teaching approach aims at reaching the heart of the child, quickening his curiosity, vitalizing his mind and imagination, satisfying his need for play and physical activity, and providing him with opportunities for character development and good deeds.

Without apology she eliminated from the schoolroom those things that were detrimental to her educational goals: 1) dry textbooks (which dull the mind); 2) lecturing (which produces lazy learners); 3) prizes and grades (which encourage students to perform for superficial rewards); and 4) homework and long school days (which leave no time for outdoor activity).

She replaced these with intellectually nourishing, "living books" by the best authors, narration (oral and written), short lessons, and short school days for the younger students.

Students learned good habits (to pay attention, to concentrate, to do their best) and their curiosity was encouraged and in time grew into a love of learning. Through discipline (provided by the good habits that became second nature) and knowledge (gleaned from the writings of the world's best writers and thinkers), they gained wisdom and developed magnanimity of character.

A young child learns the habit of attention by listening while his mother reads a good story. He develops concentration by narrating the story he has just heard. As he grows, and the habit of attention is established, more is required. He reads on his own, narrates from longer selections, and chooses special passages for his copybook. Always he is expected to do his best work. Through narration he acquires the ability to concentrate, recall, reason, analyze, and finally evaluate what he has read, what he has experienced, what he has heard and what he has observed. These narration skills naturally carry over to his writing.

Charlotte was careful to choose the very best books. Among them were classic children's stories, good histories and biographies, plays, poems, nature stories and observations, and novels for mature readers. Textbooks were used sparingly and readers full of excerpts were eschewed.

What will be the result of using Charlotte Mason's principles? Our children will acquire a taste for the best works our civilization (culture) has to offer, and they will have the discipline and will-power to rise to the moral and intellectual challenge the modern age presents to them. They will be well brought up and well educated, and, if we have done our jobs well, they will continue to pursue their own education for the rest of their lives.

It is well we should recognize that the business of education is with us all our lives, that we must always go on increasing our knowledge.

-Charlotte Mason

taken from Karen Andreola's book A Charlotte Mason Companion, pgs 377-379