



AMBLESIDE SCHOOL OF FREDERICKSBURG

Report of Growth | January 2024



Ambleside School seeks to bring students, parents, and teachers to the truths of Christ as they exist in the created world, in a highly relational atmosphere, through a rich and vigorous curriculum, where students are free to learn and inspired to grow. To fulfill this mission, Ambleside will apply the educational principles and philosophy of Charlotte Mason.

EDUCATION IS AN ATMOSPHERE, A DISCIPLINE, A LIFE.

Charlotte Mason



We are glad you are here.

As we continue through these winter months, it is a great time to look back on 2023, and all that has gone on at Ambleside. For the first time in the history of our school, the Board of Directors has assembled this annual report highlighting those things that have happened throughout 2023. Although our fiscal year runs from August 1 to July 31, we wanted to present the community with a Board Report in January to wrap up the calendar year. As you will see below, many things were accomplished this past year by Ambleside faculty, staff, administration, and students, while at the same time, the Board has been diligently working through our roles and responsibilities. It has been a goal of the Board of Directors to make this education available for anyone interested, whether or not they have the financial means. Because of this, a major portion of our operating budget is offset by annual donations so that 34% of students can attend, with the help of financial assistance. We have been blessed with a community of generous benefactors who have continually provided for the needs of our school. Thank you all for your commitment to Ambleside, for your support of our students and administration, and for your trust in the Board, so that so many students can spend their days on our campus.

SCOTT EILERS

AMBLESIDE BOARD CHAIR



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NEW INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

Our main area of focus in 2023 was enhancing our organizational processes to better focus on the tasks and opportunities before us. We have worked to clarify and specify roles and to structure tasks and responsibilities. We have not made major policy changes, nor has our vision changed. We believe that this restructuring helps our faculty, staff, and Board to be organized, diligent, and attentive to living more fully into our mission.

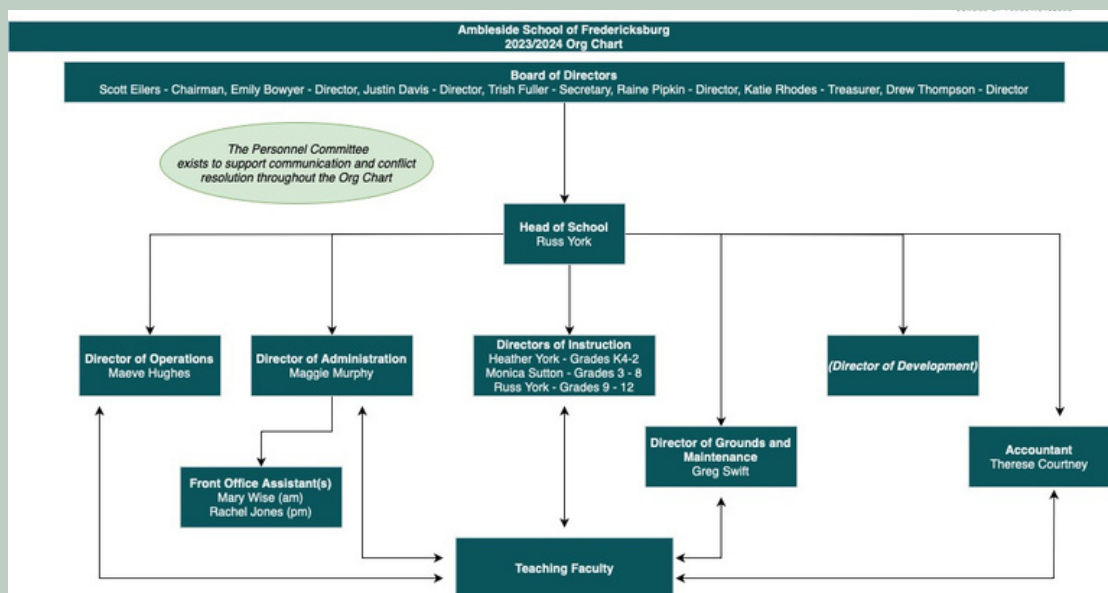
On the Board, we formed Committees to steward the various areas of school life so that we can be effective and focused, using our skills and expertise wisely. Also, the Committees are avenues by which we benefit from the experience and talents of community members. On staff, we deepened the engagement of the three Directors of Instruction: Heather York (K-2), Monica Sutton (3-8), and Russ York (9-12). The Directors of Instruction are tremendous resources for support, education, and guidance—both to the classroom teachers and to parents.

At the beginning of this school year, Maeve Hughes shifted from her role as High School Administrator to the schoolwide Director of Operations. As such, she has done tremendous work in engaging with, organizing, and improving the day-to-day logistics and activities of our school. While much of her work is behind the scenes, the procedures that she has put in place help us move through the days and seasons with greater discipline, clarity, and freedom. With Mrs. Hughes' leadership in Operations, Director of Administration, Maggie Murphy, is able to devote greater attention to a clear, organized, and hospitable Admissions process. Additionally, Ms. Murphy continues to build a system of robust, community-wide communication.

Other areas of growth are found throughout the school: Ambleside community members are engaged with three book studies (Men's Morning Prayer, Women's Morning Prayer, and Charlotte Mason Book Group). The Living Library, guided by Lacie Peterson and Amber Baumann and overseen by the Education Committee, is adding new volumes and initiating new cataloging systems. The broader Fredericksburg community was welcomed on campus with the Go Outside 5k in October. The Leadership Team has guided our community through a variety of thoughtfully planned safety drills. The Safety and Security Committee held a community meeting around safeguarding our campus, raised the needed funding, and is overseeing ongoing improvements. We hosted our annual Veteran's Day Chapel service on campus for the first time. Faculty member, David Sanchez, has launched a Robotics Club for fifth- and sixth-grade students. Mr. York and the Personnel Committee have instituted a tri-annual Professional Review process whereby faculty and staff have opportunities to celebrate areas of strength and discuss areas of growth. — RP

'23/24 ORG CHART

At the annual Board Retreat in August, we saw the fruition of several years of conversation in an Org Chart to depict our institution. We shared this chart with the community and staff in October and continue to use it as we move through life together and plan for '24/25.



FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAKE

Words from Russ York, Head of School



I hope you find this report to be helpful in learning new ways to be proud of the work we all do together, and also feel informed of areas where we need help to become the school we desire to be. I'm so proud of the community you all have made and continue to shape as we press into life together, both in times when relationships are easy and when they are hard. The latter state is where real living happens anyway, so I remain grateful for the struggle when it comes, or even when it never seems to cease. In all circumstances, may we be the kind of people who unflinchingly stand with each other in defense of children, for their good and the greater glory of God, who demands that we "let the little children come to [Him], and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

Our community is built upon this teaching of Jesus. Everything we do and think about is in consideration of what it means to hinder not a child from coming to the arms of Christ for intercession, which is what those children were coming to him for. The fact that this continues to be the greatest and most influential force in our school is, I believe, the greatest accomplishment we could achieve. Yes, the installation of security measures, the continuous improvement of teacher training and curriculum development, meeting the fundraising needs that keep us in business, and developing increasingly streamlined means of governance are all very important to the life of our community, but all of that is for naught if we lose sight of the call to create and proliferate an educational model that seeks to unite children with their Maker, that they may count themselves blessed.

I look forward to continuing with you all on this grand adventure, and as always, my door is open if you would like celebrate the moments of delight or find gratitude in the struggle. — RY



Anatomy of Ambleside

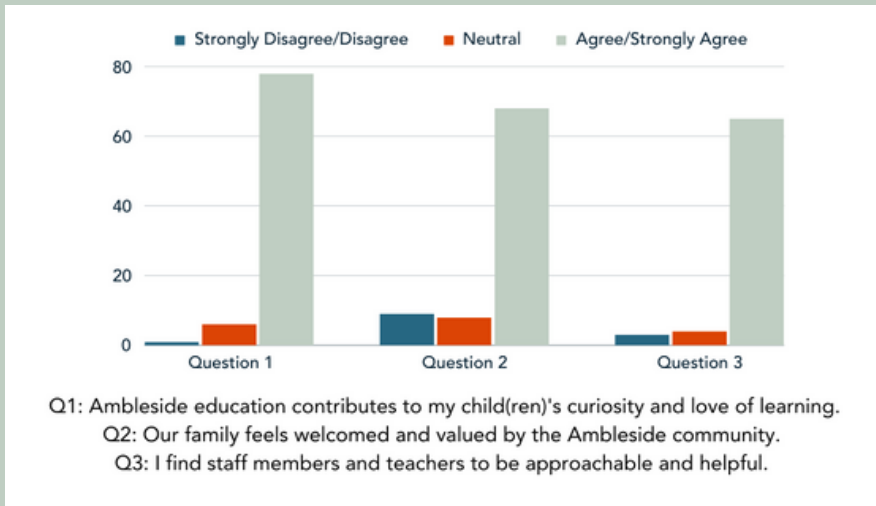
143 STUDENTS
28 NEW STUDENTS

83 FAMILIES
16 NEW FAMILIES

15 FULL TIME FACULTY AND STAFF
13 PART TIME FACULTY AND STAFF

Survey Findings

We received 85 responses (representing a 59% response rate) and many thoughtful comments. The request was made at the beginning of the year for our community members to “influence” the school and its leadership, and we want to provide clear avenues for doing so. This is only a start! Here is what we discovered:



“My child was speaking Shakespeare at the end of First Grade! The whole sonnet! Incredible. The weekly updates read like some kind of amazing fever dream in terms of what they are taught, how they are taught, and the love in which they are taught.”

We are encouraged that such a majority of our parents observe a love of learning in their children, with a flourishing curiosity that is supported by the education being offered at Ambleside. One parent wrote: “My child comes home excited to come and share what she has learned.” Additionally, it delights us that so many families feel welcome and valued here. “The school is amazing. The administration and teachers are caring, attentive, encouraging, and incredibly helpful. The atmosphere is extremely enjoyable, positive, and peaceful.”

Our faculty and staff dedicate themselves faithfully to uphold the mission and vision of this school as they engage with students and families alike. Their kindness and approachability is felt by many. Additionally, a number of our faculty and staff, who are also parents, responded that they intentionally strive to find a balance between their work and home life. As one parent observed, we are surrounded by “a lovely group of selfless and passionate educators.”

Nonetheless, some general concerns emerged which point to areas for growth. While we celebrate that a majority of our students are flourishing, we must continue to balance academic inspiration and challenge with a realistic understanding of student stamina and fatigue. Likewise, we want our classrooms to maintain a robust, joyous, Charlotte Mason atmosphere equally across all grade levels.

Additionally, while many feel “at home” with other Ambleside families, this is not the case for all. One person expressed a viewpoint that encapsulated about a dozen others: “It’s tough being new anywhere but I especially felt like an outsider at Ambleside.” Some families who have been at Ambleside for a number of years noted that it has been harder to find opportunities for connection with new parents and families. Together, we will cultivate a community marked by gracious welcome and warm hospitality. Our upcoming Chili Cookoff (February 8) is a school-wide event where we can all introduce ourselves to someone new and share a table together! We’ve outlined more ideas about how to address this need below. With regard to interactions with faculty and staff, we will continue to build a culture of approachability and kindness, and work towards a healthy balance for our teachers and directors as they manage their teaching load with the needs of their families.

We are doing many things well, and we embrace the challenge to grow in areas of weakness. We will continue to seek your comments and thoughts, because the experience of every single child and family in our school truly matters. — EB

Areas of Growth and Attention

As an institution, Ambleside is always seeking to improve. Areas that we are most attentive to in this season of institutional life are hospitality, communication, and parent involvement.

Hospitality—Our mission is predicated on a highly relational atmosphere. Our desire is to make welcome, come to know, and grow in care for any individual (of any age!) who comes into our midst. What a lofty bar! While relationships are largely built one-on-one, we see several new programs that are helping to cultivate a relational atmosphere: The Board has actively pursued connection with faculty and staff by hosting a happy hour, throwing a Christmas party and making regular visits to staff meetings. The classroom teachers are sending out weekly update emails to include parents in that which their children are coming to know. Three book groups are meeting to pray, discuss ideas, and build relationships.

Communication—In the course of 2023, we have enjoyed consistent and informative weekly emails sent at the same time each Tuesday. The Board circulates a Monthly Report following each meeting. We are proud of our recent survey and it's strong response!

Our REMIND text message system has an established logistical procedure that has been practiced and utilized. We continue to refine communication strategies even as we celebrate the strides that we have made.

Parent Involvement—We are so grateful for the many parents and community members who generously invest their time in serving Ambleside, be it in the Library, the classroom, serving our faculty, or working towards events. Even so, we want to continue to cultivate a culture of involvement. Clearly articulating needs, coordinating efforts, fulfilling commitments, and appreciating contributions are areas of growth that we see for our community.

Will you join us in prayer as we strive to grow together? Please, come and be present in our midst and share your insights. Engage with your class parents (or become a class parent), volunteer for Starry Night, or make sure you are on the PVA email list. Come to Chapel (Wednesdays at 8:30am) or join a class for lunch. If you are looking for a place to become involved, please reach out via email board@amblesidefredericksburg.com and we will direct your inquiry. — RP & TF

MASTER TEACHERS

All of our teachers engage in lifelong learning and professional development throughout the year. Of particular note, **Brynn Bowyer**, **Stan Hicks**, and **Monica Sutton** have all completed a three-year intensive Master Teacher Training Program through Ambleside Schools International. Our school is blessed by all of our exceptional educators.

DECADES OF DEDICATION

The following faculty have taught at Ambleside for ten years (or more!):

CRISTINA BERBER-ERICHOT
BRYNN BOWYER
TRICIA EILERS
STAN HICKS
RIC MCCORMICK
MARY WISE
HEATHER YORK
RUSS YORK

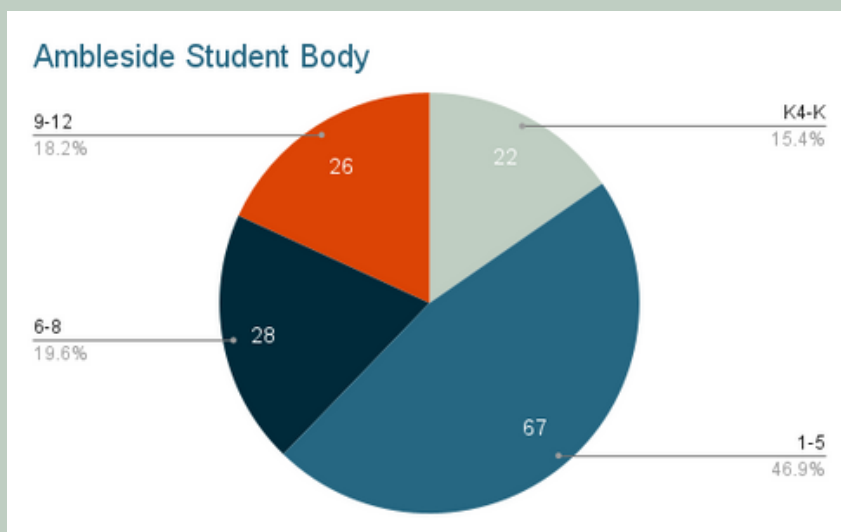
IT IS GOOD TO BE ME, HERE WITH YOU.

Shaping a culture of presence and participation

How do you feel when you walk on campus? One overarching goal of our school is foster a culture of which people want to be part. There are so many compelling moments throughout the school days: the sweet voices of the second-graders singing as they move from the classroom to the art room, the clatter of middle school students practicing their sword play for the Shakespeare festival, the chorus of fifth-graders reciting Wordsworth, the seniors meeting with their Senior Author advisors, the careful attention of kindergartners at storytime in the library. As parents, we get glimpses of that which happens on campus in the joy and flourishing of our children. Still, it is far too easy to get swept up in hustling through carpool line, packing the lunches, remembering the tennis racket, and finding the library book.

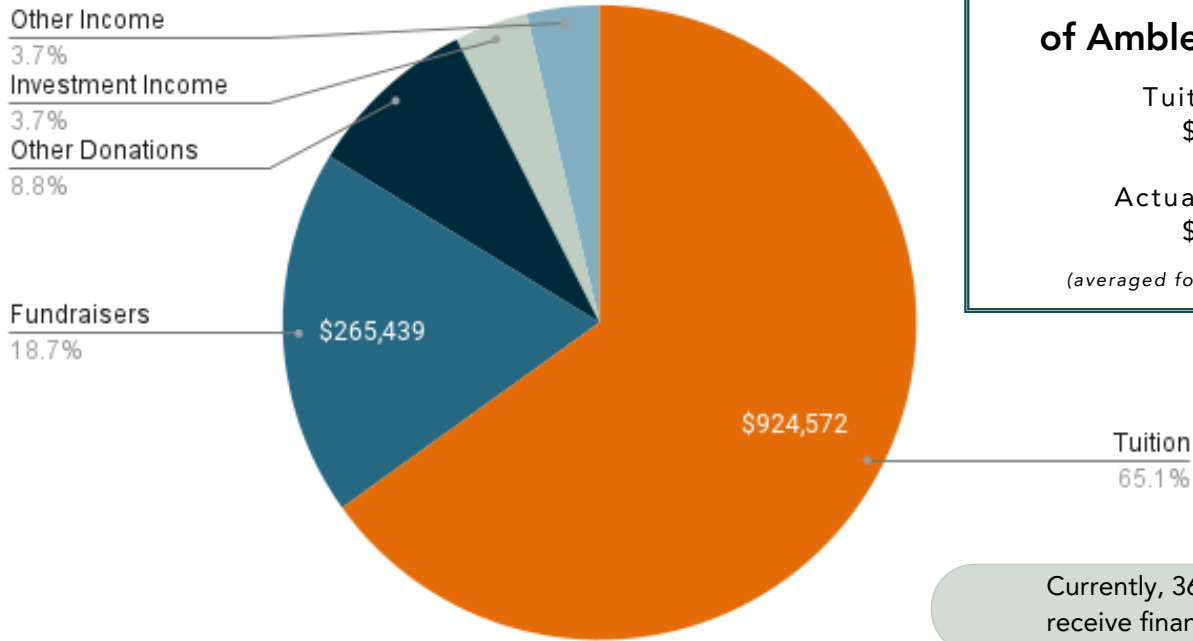
We believe that an Ambleside education is a life in community, not merely childcare or learning information by rote. When we spend so much energy managing the logistics of our children's experience, it can be easy to miss out on the culture of our school. Please know that you are a welcome member of this community! As such, we warmly invite you to participate in the richness of our community life.

In the life and growth of the school, we have moved from a place where “everyone does everything” to a place where we seek to celebrate and capitalize on the variety of gifts and talents in our midst. In some ways, we feel the chafe of that transition. “Being me” in this place means that each person feels valued, safe, challenged and needed. Our goal as a community is to engage in the ways that each person is gifted and equipped and recognize that each person has individual gifts, varied desires for engagement, and myriad other demands on their time and treasure. Join us as we work to be hospitable caretakers and faithful stewards of our greatest resource of all—one another. — RP



Finances & Stewardship

Total Income: \$1,420,561



Tuition vs. Actual Cost of Ambleside Education

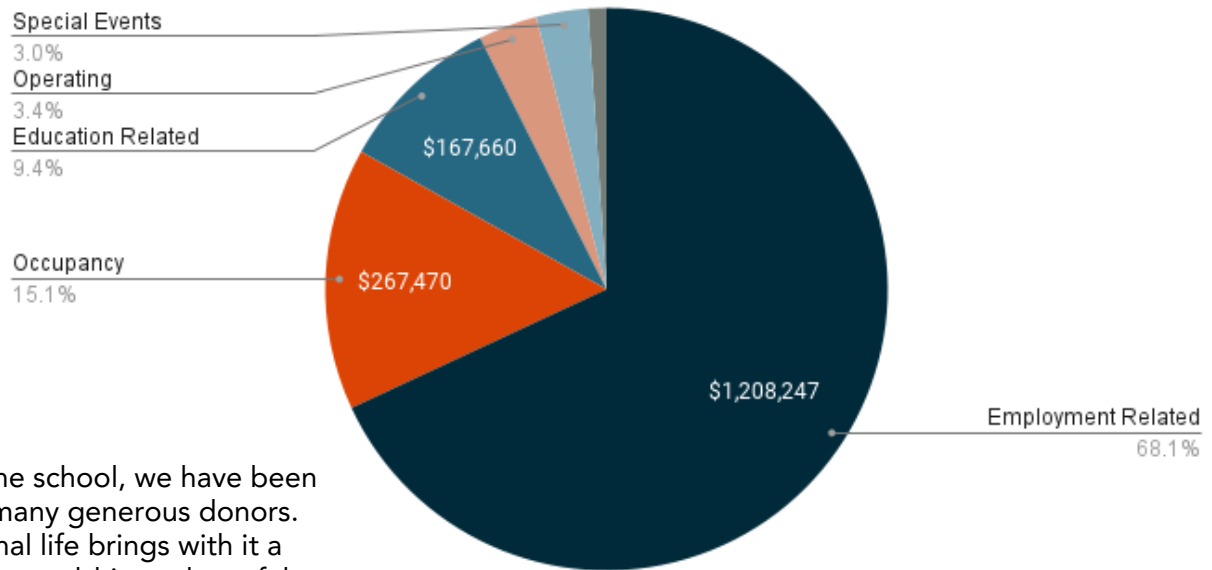
Tuition '22/23:
\$10,800

Actual Cost '22/23:
\$14,750

(averaged for a student Grade 1-12)

Currently, 36% of students receive financial assistance

Total Expenses: \$1,775,112



Throughout the life of the school, we have been abundantly blessed by many generous donors. This season of institutional life brings with it a strong desire for wise stewardship and careful planning. We are working to alleviate our reliance on donations to support the operating deficit in order to increase our ability to use donations towards making Ambleside education available regardless of financial situation. Over and above financial aid, we will continue to invite abundant generosity that will allow us to grow and improve our facilities and institute new programs rather than covering our costs. — KR

How we are working to alleviate our operating deficit:

- Gradually increasing tuition as necessary
- Maintaining relationships with donors to help fund scholarships and keep Ambleside accessible
- Shepherding our expenses while maintaining our environment
- Attracting new students to classes that aren't full
- Encouraging volunteerism and supporting volunteers



AMBLESIDE CLASS OF 2024

and Senior Author Papers

Idalia Archilla

Edgar Allen Poe

Anne Ferguson

GK Chesterton

Anna Kate Goodson

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Garrett Hughes

Jack London

Arianna Shelton

George MacDonald

FINANCIAL GENEROSITY OF 2023

Gifts from our community have enabled the achievement of our Safety and Security Upgrade goals, the establishment of a Robotics Program, the growth of our Living Library, Financial Aid, and more.

Are you interested in financially supporting Ambleside?

Please reach out! Or visit our giving page: amblesidefredericksburg.com/giving.

AMBLESIDE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Emily Bowyer | Board Member

Justin Davis | Board Member

Scott Eilers | Board Chair

Trish Fuller | Secretary

Raine Pipkin | Board Member

Katie Rhodes | Treasurer

Drew Thompson | Board Member

Russ York | Head of School



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