



# American Heritage School

## ENTRANCE VIRTUES & MISSION STATEMENT

The following is an address to the American Heritage School community that was written but never delivered by Gaylord Swim, who was scheduled to speak at an American Heritage School Family Lecture Series event on January 7, 2005. In late 2004 Mr. Swim was diagnosed with advanced-stage cancer and by the time of the event in early January 2005 he was physically unable to deliver this address. Mr. Swim passed away in February of 2005. At the time of his passing, Mr. Swim had served as Chairman of the American Heritage School Board of Trustees for over a decade.



Good evening ladies and gentlemen, parents, visitors and especially to you of the rising generation who are attending with us this evening.

My purpose tonight is to speak of principles and ideals as reflected in the motto and mission statement of American Heritage School and to discuss why the concepts expressed therein are so vital for families seeking to raise up "children unto the Lord." (Mosiah 4:15, D&C 68:28).

I will also discuss the attributes of character found emblazoned over the main entrances to this building. One needs to go around the entire structure to see them all. There is a purposeful sequence found in the attributes as displayed, the reasons for which I hope you will give some serious consideration tonight.

It is our hope to inspire families and especially parents to rise to their potential in their sacred family duties relative to providing a Christian education for their children. This is why we have both the school for children as well as the Family Education Center for parents.

### Educating Hearts and Minds

I will begin with our school's motto: "Educating hearts and minds." These simple words, "educating the hearts and the minds" help us focus on the principle that true education must begin with spiritual understanding. It is the spirit that we are educating. It is the Spirit of the Holy Ghost that really does the teaching. We train

minds in math, science, language arts, and other technical skills, but it is first and foremost the heart that must contemplate truth and develop character for a person to be truly educated.

A few years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley said,

*"Each day we are made increasingly aware of the fact that life is more than science and mathematics, more than history and literature. There is need for another education without which the substance of our secular learning may lead only to our destruction. I refer to the education of the heart, of the conscience, of the character, of the spirit - these undefinable aspects of our personalities which determine so certainly what we are and what we do in our relationships one with another." (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, pp. 167-168.)*



*A Tribute to the Prophet  
(Pencil Sketch by Kolby Jones, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)*

Now to use a methodology utilized in our classrooms, let's turn to the Noah Webster 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, which is a vital part of our educational program here at American Heritage. We define words in order to lay a foundation of common understanding.

*EDUCATION, n. The bringing up, as of a child; instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable, and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties. (American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828).*

Education is, of necessity, a spiritual endeavor and we will see this all the more clearly as we proceed further with another definition:

*EDUCATE, v.t. To bring up, as a child; to instruct; to inform and enlighten the understanding; to instill into the mind principles of arts, science, morals, religion and behavior. To educate children well is one of the most important duties of parents and guardians. (American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828).*

Isn't this a wonderful beginning point to understand the responsibility of parents and the scope of a true Christian education?

### Character Education

Now, I will turn to the character traits on the building. Before doing so, I would like to talk about the importance of character itself. Someone has said that "Character is what we really are when we think no one else is looking."

President David O. McKay taught us about character and education:

*"In my opinion, the highest, noblest purpose in all our education from the grades to the university is to teach citizenship and noble character. . . . A man's character is greater than intellectual attainments or social privileges; that "every thought creates character; that every act is an incarnation of character; that every decision is a revelation of character; that habit*

*is a pillar in the edifice of character." (Gospel Ideals, p. 434)*



President McKay said further,

*"Character is the aim of true education; and science, history, and literature are but means used to accomplish this desired end. Character is not the result of chance, but of continuous right thinking and right acting. True education seeks to make men and women not only good mathematicians, proficient linguists, profound scientists, or brilliant literary lights, but also, honest men, with virtue, temperance, and brotherly love. It seeks to make men and women who prize truth, justice, wisdom, benevolence, and self-control as the choicest acquisitions of a successful life. (Treasures of Life, page 471-72)*

So we can clearly see that it is not what we *know* but what we *become* that matters most.

The attributes of character arching over our the school's entrances are a constant reminder to all - parents, students administration, trustees, teachers and visitors - why this school exists and what each person should desire to become in terms of the development of personal character. Elder Neal A. Maxwell suggested that "it is easier to be a character than to have character." (The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book, p. 38)

It is certainly clear that many very public figures are acting out in extreme ways in order to garner attention. It is important that we teach our youth that fame or popularity is not the same as leadership or heroism. Being a character is not the same has having character.

American Heritage School Character Traits

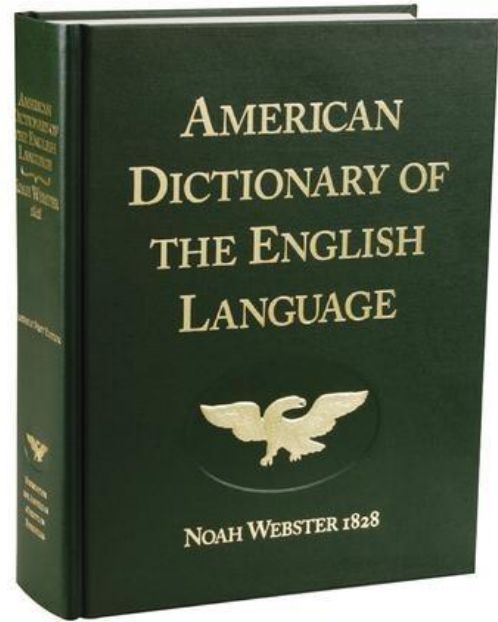
As you look at the American Heritage School building from the front, humility is at the far left. Reading left to right, and wrapping around the building on the other side, are the words:

- Humility
- Faith
- Charity
- Courage
- Self-government
- Virtue
- Industry
- Wisdom

What do these terms mean and how are they interrelated?

*Humility.* We begin with “HUMILITY” over the northwest door – the door many of you entered this evening to attend this function.

*HUMILITY, n. 1. In ethics, freedom from pride and arrogance; humbleness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own worth. In theology, humility consists in lowliness of mind; a deep sense of one's own unworthiness, penitence for sin, and submission to the divine will. 2. Act of submission.* (American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828; see also Mosiah 3:19 and Helaman 3:35. Conversely, pride is the most significant obstacle to learning.)



*Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary is used alongside modern dictionaries at American Heritage School. It still contains biblical references to word definitions and conveys a Christian worldview of English language and meaning. Noah Webster has been called the "Father of American Scholarship and Education."*

In the area of education, humility is a necessary first step to learning by acknowledging that knowledge of a subject is lacking or insufficient and recognizing or submitting to the authority of another to teach one in that subject. Likewise, humility is the very first step in the process of discipleship.

*Faith.* Following humility is faith. It is faith that puts everything in context and allows us to be anchored in the principles of revealed knowledge and to know in whom we must place our trust. (Ether 12:4) Paul the Apostle said that "without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]." (Heb 11:6) It is also true that without faith it is impossible to know God. Humility leads to faith as the humble person comes to know the need for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Charity.* The person who exercises faith to the point of receiving the cleansing power of the atonement then becomes the recipient of charity. Charity is the pure love of Christ. Moroni pleads with the reader of The Book of Mormon to pray with "all the energy of heart" (Moroni 7:48) to be filled with that love. A heart filled

with charity is a changed heart for it has come to know the reality of the atonement and has surrendered to it. It can then follow that such a person will find courage because he knows that charity, or Christ's atonement, will never fail him and that as long as he is right with Christ he can withstand any temptation and any enemy.

*Courage.* Courage is a natural outgrowth of the heart filled with charity. As we speak of courage, let us not confuse it with bravado or a willingness to take reckless risks. The courage about which we speak is the strength to act in harmony with one's own sense of right and wrong in the face of opposition, even life-threatening opposition.

The man of humility and faith, possessing charity and courage will then want to live in full alignment with God's will, which in turn instills a deep desire to govern oneself in accordance with divine law and eternal principles.

*Self-government.* And so our next character trait is self-government. Self-government is the beginning of freedom, individually as well as nationally. In fact, James Madison wrote that the Framers of the Constitution would "rest all [their] political experiment on the capacity of mankind for self-government." (Federalist Number 39)

*Virtue.* Thus, naturally springing from a spirit of self-government is virtue. It is the willingness of individuals to govern themselves in harmony with virtuous principles that makes a free and lasting republic possible. By virtue, I mean the free-will adherence to moral law and the commandments of God. These traits, so far, lead to nobility of character and uprightness. But it is not good enough to do good; one needs to be good for something, so we follow with the next trait, that of industry.

*Industry.* The character trait of industry ties us closely with our pioneer heritage and our Utah state motto. Industry is work; but it is more than just work. Industry connotes sustained diligence, labor and work of mind or body toward a specific, purposeful end. Industry is the commitment and investment of all the instruction received in one's education to profitable and fruitful application. President David O. McKay taught us that, "...the privilege to work is a gift, the power to work is a blessing, [and] the love of work is success." Industry

is the devoted work of men, women and children who are dedicated to a righteous cause – and it leads to the related character trait of wisdom.



*Wisdom.* We conclude our journey around the building, and the sequential development of American Heritage School character education, with the character trait of wisdom. Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge. It might also be said that wisdom is the manifest fruit of a truly educated person who has sought to learn the truth and live in harmony with it.

Educating hearts and minds then promises, even requires, the raising up of the young to be both capable and knowledgeable, but more importantly, to also be willing to submit in faith to Christ and to the revealed word of truth. According to Webster's definition of education, this process is "one of the most important duties of parents and guardians."

In a previous century, our Church leaders pled with the members to establish private Christian schools and to support them with their resources. In support of this plea, the First Presidency in 1886, admonished the members relative to the content of the curriculum:

*Our children should be indoctrinated in the principles of the Gospel from their earliest childhood. They should be made familiar with the contents of the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. These should be their chief text books, and everything should be done to establish and promote in their hearts genuine faith in God, in His Gospel and its ordinances, and in His works... In no direction can we invest the means God has given us to better advantage than in the training of our*

*children in the principles of righteousness and in laying the foundation in their hearts of that pure faith which is restored to the earth. We would like to see schools of this character, independent of the District School system, started in all places where it is possible.* (Pres. John Taylor, Counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, An Epistle of the First Presidency to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October, 1886, Messages of the First Presidency, Vol. 3, pages 86-87)

We would hope that Presidents Taylor, Cannon and Smith would find in American Heritage School an appropriate embodiment of their earlier counsel and plea. At American Heritage School we use scripture as our most authoritative textbooks and all students maintain their own copies of the Standard Works of the Church at their classroom desks. We encourage our teachers to turn freely to the scriptures in classroom subjects and to incorporate gospel principles into every subject.

I refer again to Elder Gordon B. Hinckley's words in General Conference of 1964:

*Each day we are made increasingly aware of the fact that life is more than science and mathematics, more than history and literature. There is need for another education, without which the substance of our secular learning may lead only to our destruction. I refer to the education of the heart, of the conscience, of the character, of the spirit - these indefinable aspects of our personalities which determine so certainly what we are and what we do in our relationships one with another.*" [Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, pp. 167-168.]

And thus the motto of American Heritage School: "Educating hearts and minds." For us as parents and teachers to convey anything less to our children would be to fall short of our responsibility and educational ideal – that of developing the Christian character of the child.

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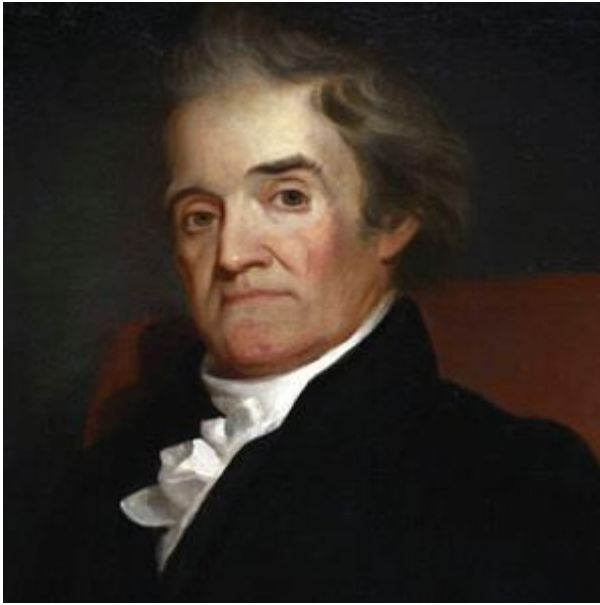
Now let us move to a brief review and discussion of the Mission Statement of American Heritage School, which reads as follows:

*American Heritage School assists parents worldwide in developing the hearts, minds, and bodies of students to realize their divine potential by:*

1. *BEING USEFUL IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD IN BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH;*
2. *INCREASING FAITH IN AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION;*
3. *DEVELOPING A LOVE, UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION FOR AMERICA AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS;*
4. *DEVELOPING THE ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NECESSARY TO BE ABLE TO MAKE SELF-EDUCATION A LIFE-LONG PURSUIT;*
5. *LEARNING TO REASON AND DISCERN BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG, TRUTH AND ERROR;*
6. *DEVELOPING CHARACTER AND SELF-GOVERNMENT OF MIND AND BODY; AND*
7. *CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE AS CHRISTIANS.*

*All activities, teaching, governance, and administration are to be accomplished in light of the above objectives and in so far as possible in harmony with revealed principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and laws of the land. All teachers, staff, administrators and trustees shall strive to be living examples of the values, principles, and skills taught at the school.*

Let's begin with the preamble and seventh and final item of the Mission Statement, "American Heritage School assists parents worldwide in developing the hearts, minds, and bodies of students to realize their divine potential by... conducting themselves in all aspects of life as Christians."



Noah Webster defines *Christian* thus:

1. A believer in the religion of Christ.
2. A professor of his belief in the religion of Christ.
3. A real disciple of Christ; one who believes in the truth of the Christian religion, and studies to follow the example, and obey the precepts, of Christ; a believer in Christ who is characterized by real piety.
4. In a general sense, the word *Christians* includes all who are born in a Christian country or of Christian parents.

In a November, 1996 General Conference address entitled "Christians in Belief and Action," Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin defined a *Christian* similarly:

"Thus two characteristics identify Christians: (1) they profess *belief* in a Savior, and (2) they *act* in harmony with the Savior's teachings... In our belief and our action, we demonstrate that 'Jesus Christ himself [is] the chief corner stone' [Eph. 2:20] of our faith."

Christianity, then, is the cornerstone of the curriculum and of the policies of American Heritage School. All subject material and all methodologies spring from that foundation.

How is this accomplished? How does a school produce Christians? American Heritage endeavors to teach principles drawn from the doctrine of the gospel of Christ. Hence, American Heritage is a principle-based school.

Let's return to item one of the Mission Statement which declares that our mission is to educate children that they may "be useful in the hands of the Lord in building the kingdom of God on earth..."

This is an extension of Principle Six of the Foundation for American Christian Education's "Seven Principles of American Christian Education and Government," which greatly influenced our "Seven Principles of Personal and Civil Liberty." The sixth FACE principle reads, "How the Seed of local Self-Government Is Planted." This means that our students are trained to go forth into the world and plant the truths they have learned wherever they may be. Benjamin Franklin taught that the aim and end of all education is to render one of greater service to his fellow man. Going back to the Noah Webster definition of education, this would qualify as "fit[ing children] for usefulness in their later lives."

Item two in our Mission Statement is, "Increase faith in and knowledge of the plan of salvation." This hearkens to "The Christian Principle of Individuality." Our students learn that as God's children, their Heavenly Father has a plan for each of their lives and this individual plan fits within the scope of His plan for all His children, His family. This sense of mission in the lives of our students provides meaning and motivation in all endeavors in all subject areas.

Item three in our Mission Statement states, "Develop a love, understanding and appreciation for America and the Founding Fathers." Students are taught of America's Heritage of Christian Character. President Hinckley spoke of "the tremendous heritage we have, which has been made possible by the sacrifices of the generations who have gone before. Without such [an] understanding, it is not likely that there will be much of gratitude or appreciation." (Church Educational System Conference, 6/89) President Hinckley further spoke of our "tremendous responsibility to live up to [our heritage]..." At American Heritage, history is taught from the perspective that history is "Christ - His story." Hence, a love of all who have gone before is inculcated daily, as is the sense of duty to emulate history's heroes.

Item four in our Mission Statement, "Develop the academic knowledge and skills necessary to be able to make self-education a life-long pursuit." Teaching the Principle of Christian Self-Government accomplishes these educational goals through the law of the harvest found in Galatians 6:7 "...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap..." This principle is exemplified in the lives of our Founding Fathers. George Washington was quoted in the Washington Post, "I do not believe that Providence has done so much for nothing... that we should not be left... to prove that mankind... are unequal to the task of governing themselves, and therefore made for a master." Our students learn of the necessity of self-government according to the laws of God in their individual lives and in their nation.

Another methodology employed in accomplishing the goal of self-government in self-education is 4 R-ing, or "Research, Reason, Relate and Record." This method develops habits of sound research, then of reasoning truths from such research with the light of the Spirit, then of likening deduced truths to life on a personal level, and then making a record of what has been learned. This method consecrates hearts and minds to the truths of God's word and establishes patterns of life-long learning.

Consequently, Christian self-government is applied in all curricular areas to achieve academic excellence. When Christ is the standard, everything is elevated, scholarship is increased, and self-confidence is inevitable.

Item five in our Mission Statement declares that American Heritage students will "learn to reason and discern between right and wrong, truth and error." This critical ability is taught throughout the curriculum as the principle of "Conscience is the Most Sacred of All Property" (James Madison) is repeated. Dominique Enright, in *The Wicked Wit of William Shakespeare*, p.150, specifies, "Many of the greatest speeches of Shakespeare's plays arise from a character's conscience, whether in the form of guilt or in the form of moral consciousness and questing." In *King Richard III*, Act V, Shakespeare reinforces this truth with, "Every man's conscience is a thousand swords." After such instruction, the students are ready to accept and reason from such truths as the following from President David O. McKay, "Conscience is the link that binds

your soul to the spirit of God." (Improvement Era, 9/60, 495) The reasoning process is vigorously taught at American Heritage and the result is always to aim "to discern between right and wrong, truth and error."

Item six in our Mission Statement is to "develop character and self-government of mind and body." Many students memorize the following quote from President McKay, "What is the crowning glory of man in this earth so far as his individual achievement is concerned? It is character - character developed through obedience to the laws of life as revealed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ..." (*Instructor*, 8/65, 301) The development of character presupposes the development of the mind in the classroom and the body in Physical Education. Children are taught to use all their faculties in the service of their fellow man, including academic knowledge through the use of their minds, and physical skills through the use of their bodies - their hands, their feet, their physical prowess.

The unity created by the teaching of parts one through six of the Mission Statement prepares the children to understand what it means to bear the name of Christ and conduct themselves as His disciples. At American Heritage there is a constant striving for the unity of all activities and all personnel to the end of joining with the Savior of mankind in striving to accomplish His work.

Mosiah 18:21 teaches, "...people should have hearts knit in unity and love..." The great Founding Father and physician, Benjamin Rush, taught in his book *Road to Fulfillment*, "Spiritual unity with God saves us from misdirected effort, from unsatisfied ambition, from a wasted life." What a profound educational philosophy.

In conclusion, the ultimate goals of the Mission Statement of American Heritage School are that:

1. "Every classroom will [be] a reflection of a unique individual responding to the high calling of American Christian education," and
2. "The end product [will be] a self-governing, Christ-reflecting character, one who is enterprising and productive... one who will change the world for the glory of God." (FACE , *Noah Plan*)

--Gaylor Swim (1948 – 2005), Chairman, American Heritage School Board of Directors (1995-2005)