

Wayside Academy Charter

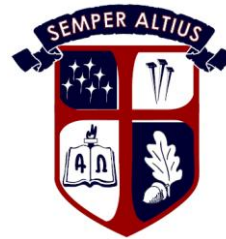


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The Purpose of the Charter

The purpose of this Charter is to establish in one document, or set of documents, a description of what Wayside Academy is, why it exists, how it approaches its mandate, the roles each member of its community is expected to play, and in more detailed documents, to provide any reader with an understanding of how Wayside actually works – in both its overall program and by level of student maturity.

The Charter is intended to give the Board, its committees and staff, and the entire community an explicit means by which it can ensure the endurance of Wayside’s core commitments while at the same time creating a means by which it can evaluate new or improved ideas.

The Charter will enable prospective families to evaluate whether or not Wayside Academy is the place for them. It will enable prospective Board members to evaluate in detail whether or not they can commit to the philosophy and approaches that are core to Wayside’s identity and purpose. Finally, it will provide prospective patrons the means to evaluate whether or not Wayside Academy is an initiative they wish to support.

The Authority of the Charter

A charter “is a document, issued by a sovereign or state, outlining the conditions under which a corporation, colony, city, or other corporate body is organized, and defining its rights and privileges.”¹

In the case of Wayside Academy, we first understand that the gift of parenthood, with its attendant grace, authority and responsibility, is from our Sovereign Lord to parents. We then understand that parents provide a limited authority and responsibility in the upbringing of their children, the framework being this Charter, to the Board and staff of Wayside Academy. It is further understood that while Wayside Academy is a separate corporation, the corporation and its members are not separate – that membership implies obligations and authority within the corporation.

The Purpose of Wayside Academy

Wayside Academy is an independent Catholic school whose purpose is support families in the upbringing (formation) of their children into men and women who ardently long for and seek their own true purpose in life — God Himself. As such, Wayside supports bringing students into the very Life of the Church, by which God invites us to come to Him. To bring students, one by one, into the beating heart of God’s Holy Church is one powerful way to reconnect men and women, here and now, with the very roots of reality. It is one powerful way of giving meaning and hope to our children and, by extension, the society in which we live.

More specifically, Wayside Academy exists to prolong the innocence of childhood, to deepen its joy, to feed its wonder and awe. It endeavors to provide an atmosphere where these qualities

¹ From www.dictionary.reference.com – the first of a series of alternate meanings of the word “charter” as a noun.

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thrive. Our aim is to play a key part in educating the minds and hearts of children so they become able, maturely and consciously, to distinguish Truth from falsehood and lies, Good from evil and apathy, and Beauty from ugliness and distortion. Our aim is, furthermore, to help our students build the strength of personal character which rejects all that falls below the measure of human dignity and its high destiny. Our aim, ultimately, is to teach the mind and the heart to be at rest in God. As part of the mission of the Church, Wayside Academy exists to tend souls, in the educational mode.

While demanding, Wayside Academy seeks to provide in its day to day experience a joyful, playful and spirited context. This also extends to the life beyond the classroom, in a local and regional network of people, activities and institutions. A rich, primarily rural tradition still exists in the area and students and families have access to it through social events, direct service and friendships.

How?

The life of the school has three fundamental aspects: the spiritual, the communal, and the academic. The spiritual aspect is primary, while the communal takes precedence over the academic. Nevertheless, each is necessary to the other: without the spiritual, there is no life. Without the communal, prayer and study become narrow and selfish. Without academics, spiritual and communal life are left rudderless. The three sustain each other in a delicate and vital balance. No school activity could focus on one aspect entirely to the exclusion of the others without weakening the whole.

The more that all participants in the life of Wayside Academy realize and respect the unity of the spiritual, communal, and academic aspects, the more effective the school will become. Nevertheless, each aspect must be nourished in its own proper fashion. It is by consciously developing each of these dimensions in the child and in the school as a whole that Wayside Academy will *achieve* its great purpose.

Spiritual

Wayside Academy nourishes the child's spirituality by focusing first upon the knowledge of God.

Knowledge of God leads to the love of God. The child will learn about God from his catechism, class discussion, the example of others who imitate Jesus, private and communal prayer, the sacraments, Sacred Scripture, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer punctuates the rhythm of school life, teaching each child that his loving Creator is always present and that all good activities can be pathways to Him. Moreover, it is not possible to come close to God without a great deal of self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness. For this reason, disciplined practice of the virtues — faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude — is essential to the child's spiritual life. It is necessary for every child to learn that true joy comes from self-mastery.

Communal

The practice of virtue creates true community. To have faith is to see Christ in every one. To have hope is to desire the salvation of all. To love is to serve others. However, it is possible for

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people cling to one another even after they have ceased to value each other. Therefore, Wayside's community aspect must be fed the constant practice of the virtues. All relationships - those between teachers and students, between students and students, between parents and teachers, parents and children — must be viewed in the light of faith, hope, and love.

The concrete life of Wayside Academy — its intentionally small scale as well as the regular association of students from the kindergarten through the grade twelve level — provides a rich, real-life environment where students learn to develop community and friendship through self-sacrifice and the practice of the virtues. Older students show care for the younger ones, younger students learn from and respect the older ones. Teachers and students talk naturally with one another. Everyone is valued; no one is forgotten. Wayside is to be a concrete manifestation of the Church's life, which is love and joy. It is only by living up to this mission that it can flourish. Such an atmosphere of love and joy will draw others to it. Such an atmosphere is also ideal for the intellectual life, and Wayside Academy's most obvious task is the education of young minds.

Academic

Education is not merely a process of acquiring facts or random skills or the discipline of habits; it is itself the art of learning. For instance, a teacher may teach math or literature as a special subject, but all teachers all the time teach the student how to learn. Every graduate of Wayside Academy should carry with him a great love for the Truth and the conviction that he is capable of finding Him and belonging to Him. He should see his education as having only begun. How is this to be achieved? The means are three: experience, the teacher, and the liberal arts.

Experience

True education begins with experience: science begins in the wonders of nature; literature begins in the beautiful sounds of words and a lively imagination. The wonderful experience of good and beautiful things prompts the youngest of children to ask questions, confident of an answer. This basic process is meant to continue. As time progresses and the child discovers the most astonishing variety of experience and new levels and depths to reality, the answers don't always come with the kind of simplicity or ease they once did. At this point it is good for the child to have someone who can guide him to the answer.

The Teacher

A true teacher will not simply give answers, but will first give the student the means to answer his own questions. The teacher will also *incarnate* and communicate love and enthusiasm for the Truth, assuring the child that questions lead to it. He endeavors to sustain the child's natural confidence and joy in learning, knowing that only in this way will the child truly desire to learn. The student, then, will find in his teacher a model of how to seek, find, accept, and love the Truth, the world around him, and God Himself. The teacher is a servant of the child's education, but a servant, by definition, who "knows better."

The Liberal Arts

Ours is not a chaotic universe, but an ordered one, and to understand it well, the mind must have order and method. The liberal arts are skills which men have perfected over the course of millennia and by which the child can develop such order and method in his search for the Truth.

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They are rooted in the classical world, as is our own civilization. They are rooted in the lives and writings of great thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius and Cassiodorus – all humble disciples of the Truth. The first group of liberal arts is: grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

Each of these arts has both a primary and an extended meaning. To learn grammar is to learn the structure and function of language, to become conscious of the way it works. But, in an extended sense, *grammar* consists of the basic terms, principles, and axioms of any subject, from history to biology. To learn logic is to learn the order of thought and reality, and how to know when the mind has attained the truth. In a wider sense, the *logic* of any subject is the method proper to that subject, whether it is scientific method or literary criticism. To learn rhetoric is to learn to discuss and speak persuasively about the truth one has found. In a wider sense, the *rhetoric* of any subject is the subtle way that each subject communicates itself – the language proper to science, math, literature, history, music, religion, etc....

A student who has mastered these liberal arts is first inspired with wonder and awe at the world around him, at the mystery of humanity and ubiquitous signs of Providence. He seeks to embrace all that truly *is* with his whole heart and mind. Such a student asks meaningful questions; he proceeds with determination and method toward answers. And when he finds the gem of Truth, he cuts away the dross and polishes until It is radiant with its own light. Such a student is a humble disciple to the Truth, who discusses, argues, persuades, learns, listens, searches, finds, rejoices, and shares. Wayside Academy honours this glorious calling by: deepening the experience of the Good, True, and Beautiful, providing Teachers who themselves live this calling, and preparing the soil of mind and heart with the liberal arts.

Some distinctive hallmarks

Of particular note are three hallmarks of Wayside's approach to a distinctive experience of education:

- The central presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our midst, which tempers the atmosphere of the school;
- A commitment to original sources – be it *doing* science, attending or performing a play, reading the original works of the good and great minds, and a focused attention to that part of Creation we live in.
- A polyphonic sacred music program involving students of all ages, participating beautifully in liturgies both in the school and in parishes in nearby communities.

Who?

Wayside is first a Catholic school, inviting all participants to live the life of the Catholic Church ever more deeply. Wayside is also open to non-Catholics, but asks that these show due reverence and respect for the integrity of the Catholic Faith.

A Precursor Phase

In 1995, six families met in the basement of the parish church in Keene, Ontario, to form a home school cooperative, staffed by parents and other volunteers. These families wanted for their

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children an education that deepened their Catholic Faith in a way faithful to the Magisterium, an education that deepened and did not destroy family life, an education that deepened and did not corrupt innocence. Children were thus to learn in an atmosphere of faith, family, and true fun.

The Founding of Wayside Academy

Later in 1995, a larger group met, decided to found a school, obtained permission from the Bishop to operate, established Wayside's first Board of Directors, incorporated as Wayside Academy and obtained charitable status.

By 2001, Wayside had a full-time principal and embraced the classical, liberal arts model of education. In 2006, Wayside Academy purchased its own school building and property, making growth and the greater realization of its proper mission possible. Wayside subsequently committed to a full time high school staff – even with small student numbers – because it realized the need to “grow” the high school program.

Within this historical framework the various school and community roles developed, and since Wayside cannot be severed from its history, these various roles will bear traces of that history. Like the interdependence between the spiritual, communal, and academic goals of Wayside Academy, each role within the community plays a vital part. If any school or community group relinquishes that part, or plays it without sufficient commitment and direction, the whole community suffers.

Wayside Academy is a community which embraces various roles, the primary ones being parent, student, teacher, principal, support staff, and board member. How each of these roles contributes to the school is, in many ways, similar to every educational institution. However, some of the ways in which these roles complement each other are particular to Wayside and grow out of its own history.

Parents

From its beginning, Wayside has depended upon the heroic efforts of parents. They have cared for the Wayside student body as if it were an extension of their own family, as, in many ways, it is. As Wayside has grown and taken on more institutional elements – the board of directors, principal, full-time teaching staff – it no less depends upon the time, resources, and ingenuity of parents. Wayside's survival is guaranteed by no grant, trust, or fortune. It is only guaranteed by persistent work of parents and volunteers.

Wayside Academy depends upon an “apostolic financial formula” that demands from all members of the community a spirit of joyful sacrifice, frugality, humility, and a focus on the essential elements of education and life. Wayside purposefully maintains a tuition rate with a sliding scale to benefit families who are generous to life. For all but one year, the school has chosen to maintain a four day school week, which, combined with the sliding tuition fee schedule, support those families where mothers choose to be the primary caregivers for their children in the home.

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The volunteerism of every family is essential to the community life of Wayside. It is also an essential aspect of Wayside's financial formula. Since tuition covers only a fraction of the total cost of each child's education, each parent must ask himself what more he can provide monetarily, and how, in addition, he will offer skills, time, effort, enthusiasm, and/or expertise. Everyone must give what time and money he can — one will give more, one will give less — based upon what resources God has blessed each with. Those who can give less should be grateful to those who provide more; those who give more should be thankful that God has blessed them with the opportunity to help those in need.

Parents are the primary educators of their children. As such they are primarily responsible for the Christian formation of their children in all its elements. This is a sacred duty and privilege which none can remove. It is often the case, in our fallen world, that parents do not have the time or expertise to educate their own children, and so the school is called upon to help them fulfill their duty, but no school can replace the parent in this role. Though a teacher, for instance, may understand math better than the parents, the parents must know their child better and decide what is best for him in his educational life. Wayside Academy is one educational choice among many; it offers what services it is able to, while remaining true to its own vision. If that vision does not fit with what parents want for their children, it is up to them to find educational help that fits with their vision.

Parents, as the primary educators of their children, are responsible for creating a home environment that promotes this education². The home atmosphere should be conducive to study, play, reflection, discussion, etc. It should avoid anything that merely distracts or dissipates energy. Parents should also direct children to what is real, and place a careful limit on anything virtual — television, internet, video and computer games, etc. Parents should also form the habit of regularly reading quality books (such as are found on the Wayside Academy recommended booklist) to *all* of their children. Ideally this would occur on a nightly basis. The home should be a place where the virtues are studied in the context of family relations, where true discipline is fostered. Students who cannot be kind and generous to their family cannot be truly virtuous. The home is the true testing ground of goodness.

Inasmuch as it is a teacher's duty to communicate with parents and students regularly, the same duty obliges parents both in relation to teachers and their own children. Parents are responsible for the school life of their children and must keep abreast of their children's education and activities. If children are experiencing difficulties or success, the parent ought to share their concerns or their enthusiasm with the teachers and principal. Communications should occur according to proper channels. Especially at times when parents have particular concerns for their children, prudent discussion in a spirit of openness and charity is the only way to resolve such concerns, while nothing destroys a community sooner than gossip and stealthy action. Parents are not *outside* the structure of the school, but are intimately involved in sustaining the life of the school.

² Wayside firmly holds to the belief that "...there is nothing in the way of direct teaching that will ever have so wide and lasting an effect as the atmosphere of home." (M.F. Jerrold)

Students

Every child's education is in his own hands. If a child wishes to learn, the world is open to him. If a child refuses to learn, teaching cannot occur. Wayside Academy, therefore, expects and requires that students come equipped with the necessary docility – the active desire, not only to learn, but to be taught, to *pay attention*. Wayside asks that each student have a deep reverence for God. If, by chance, the student is not a theist, then the very least that Wayside demands is a true reverence for the transcendent values of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. This reverence must be followed by true honour, respect and obedience given to parents and to all in authority over the child. He must show respect toward his peers and care and responsibility toward the younger students. Each student must be prepared to exercise personal hygiene and stewardship of school property, and proper care must be taken of the school uniform and all school work.

There are virtues which are characteristic of good students. Every student ought to strive for these qualities. Socrates described and named them thus: a good student is:

- prepared to learn, willing to develop body and mind so that he is both disposed to and disciplined for study;
- with a sound memory, taking care, in an orderly fashion, to fill up the treasure house of the mind, especially with essential and beautiful things, and to develop the power of memory by will and intellect;
- possessing a love of learning, for only with a love of learning will a student truly grow in understanding; delighting to work in order to gain knowledge, “for where love is present, labour is seldom absent”;
- glad to learn from another, for someone may love to learn only in an independent fashion, manifesting a pride which will hinder all progress in wisdom;
- “naturally bold to ask any question, desirous to search out any doubt, not ashamed to learn of the meanest, not afraid to go to the greatest, until he be perfectly taught, and fully satisfied”³
- loving to be praised for well doing, though for a Christian student all praise is ultimately to be sought from God alone.

With these seven virtues, integral and integrated, the student will be disposed to receive wisdom.

Characteristics that will mark a successful Wayside student will be: leadership skills, confident and articulate speech and writing, an attitude and habit of humble service – in the present and in the future. Wayside students will be adventurous and will be life-long learners.

Teachers

Wayside teachers first of all know and love their students. They are the front line of Wayside's mission to tend souls, and so they must constantly be aware that their mission to educate falls within their larger mission to lead each student's soul to God. In this vision of education there can be no success without charity. Wayside teachers must love their children both individually and collectively. This means that the needs of one child cannot outweigh the needs of the rest, and so the teacher must strike the balance between the individual and the class so as to build a learning environment that is both orderly and creative, stimulating and calm.

³ Roger Ascham, *The Teacher*.

The teacher must also know and love his subject(s). This is true more generally for those in the elementary school who teach the full complement of subjects, and it is particularly true in the high school, where specialization plays a larger role. All teachers must have a deep and humble love for the Truth and be able to form a partnership with their students in quest of It. Teachers must continually train themselves in the Liberal Arts approach, recognizing that their own education is never completed; they must be open to professional development.

Teachers must exercise leadership in and enthusiasm for school activities, as avid participators in the life of the Wayside community. They must be dedicated to the goals of the school. They must model in their lives the virtues that they wish to see shining in the children. This is the heart of their apostolic witness and activity.

The formal curriculum is a beginning, not the end of teacher participation. Wayside seeks to create a shared life in which students can find joy in activities that extend beyond the classroom.

Teachers must recognize their subsidiary role to the parents; they must strive to build open and honest communications with parents, regularly communicating to them the child's progress, behaviour, and attitude.

Principal and Administration

The principal is responsible for the overall implementation of Wayside Academy's vision in the concrete circumstances of daily life. His prime responsibility is the tending of souls, balancing the various personalities and problems, keeping in mind the high goal and fighting for the very soul of the school. The principal will ensure that school morale is high and joyful. He will coordinate all school involvement. He will oversee: the committees, the physical plant, professional development of teachers, hiring and interviews, and school/family relations. The principal oversees and ensures the healthy relationship of all the various branches of the school community; he is responsible that school life is always refining itself according to its motto: *Semper Altius*, "Always Higher."

The administrative assistant is responsible for helping the principal to achieve all these goals according to the directions of the principal. The administrative assistant presents the most frequent face of the administration to parents, students, and any visitors to Wayside. Therefore, the administrative assistant must be consistently helpful, cooperative, industrious, and welcoming. Furthermore, a high standard of professionalism and an in depth knowledge of school life and activity are tremendous assets of the administrative assistant.

Of course, all staff, and especially the principal, have an obligation to represent Wayside well in the broader community and to actively build bridges.

Board

Whereas the principal is responsible for implementing this vision in the daily life of the school, the primary purpose of the board is to look ahead and plan for tomorrow.

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Wayside has been blessed with the active support of the Diocese not only through the permission to exist and to have the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, but also through the assignment of a priest to provide spiritual guidance to the Board and to maintain appropriate links with other elements of Diocesan life – for example, the Vocations, Evangelization and Youth Office (VEYO) of the Diocese.

The board must take responsibility for the school's temporal needs. Board members need to build relationships with the wider community, drawing expertise, resources, and the means of development into the life of Wayside Academy. The board needs to draw upon a healthy mix of people who can creatively think and purposefully act to achieve the necessary material and communal goals of the school. Board members, furthermore, need to educate themselves so as to think in line with the actual vision of the school; they need to prepare themselves for action and to be informed about the school's concrete life. Board members should participate in regular retreats to deepen their mission and commitment to the spiritual and material goals of Wayside.

Further Documents

- This Charter is the beginning of a path that must be walked and realized in life; it must become incarnate. It is, therefore, incomplete. Even as a document, it will need to be supplemented by several other documents, to give as detailed a description of our mission and methods as possible. Such documents include:
- Simple, at-a-glance chart of learning benchmarks, by subject and grade, to give a quick and encompassing view of our program as a whole. This would be ideally suited for the website and for all prospective interest in the school
- Highly detailed course outlines, to facilitate the entry of new teachers into the school, as well as for the purpose of communicating with other schools who may want to recognize or learn from our program
- A well defined and organized bibliography of sources of liberal arts education, preferably with commentary and pointers toward areas of highly valuable material
- Detailed job descriptions for all posts concerning Wayside Academy, i.e. teacher, administrative assistant, principal, and board member
- Discipline policy in its positive and negative manifestations
- Future development strategy
- Terms of reference of for committees
- Committee list
- Additional inspirational documents: e.g., *Educating for Life*, etc.