

September 2022

Dear Parents and Students,

I have finished my first year as your administrator and WE ALL survived this experience! This year you may have notice we are stepping it up with new curriculum and changing some expectations of behavior and attitude in our school culture. You will hear the children start saying things like, “we are in the business of education!” We will be busy building from STEAM Kits, and starting a career development phase. Also, this year I would like to contribute each month to our newsletter a “fireside chat” like what Franklin Roosevelt did many years ago. I want to leave out politics as that is a private family thing, but a question, or something of notice, so your family can have a discussion around the dinner table.

I would like to start with a question. This question is very basic but very important; what is the definition of education? Have you ever really thought about this? I would like to share an article that shed light on answering this question for me from author Joshua Charles. Did you know there is a difference between the modern definitions of education as found in the Merriam-Webster dictionary and an older definition found from Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary?

The modern definition from Merriam-Webster dictionary defines education this way: “The action or process of educating or of being educated; the knowledge and development resulting from the process of being educated.” (If you paused like I did in trying to figure out what is actually being said, I gather education is simply a matter of “knowledge” and “development”). “What constitutes either is unclear. There’s nothing particularly objective in the definition. What isn’t defined is capable of being defined, and thus “education” in this sense is something always malleable, never fixed.” When I looked at this definition it is not sufficient!

“From the older definition from Webster’s dictionary “education” is defined: “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.” (I stop here as the rest of the definition is for families to discuss and outside the realm of our schools business). “In this definition, we encounter not only a definition of what education is, but the nature of the human person to which it applies. This person is, we see, capable of ‘understanding,’ and thus reason. So the human person is a reasonable creature. However, this creature must be educated in such a way as to correct [their] temper, and have their manners and habits formed in such a way that they conform to reason. This is the key: the human person is capable of reason, but is also flawed, and thereby prone to the irrational. How does education correct this tendency? By increasing knowledge in the arts and sciences, along with various habits of life, the [person] can use reason to move along their path in a sound way.

When I read Joshua Charles article and learned from Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary definition I was struck with what I feel is a fuller definition of what education should be. It makes me sad that the meaning of education is changing, or has been lost or diluted over time. I hope as you discuss around the dinner table these 2 definitions you might see that we are striving to uphold the old definition here at Lake George Charter School. Do you see we are striving to give instruction and expect individual self-discipline? Through instruction in a disciplined manner are you seeing your child becoming more enlightened, striving to develop better character and moving towards better reasoning abilities?

(Citation came from Joshua Charles, *Time*, August 28, 2021)