



## Educating for Relationship

*Education is the Science of Relations*

— Charlotte M. Mason —

When we think of relationships, we usually think of those persons whose lives have touched our lives – family, friends, and co-workers. As important as these are, we must expand our vision. For whether this idea is acknowledged or not, we are created for a vast array of relationships – relations with nature and number, art and music, literary characters and historical persons, our culture and the culture of foreign peoples. In all of these, we find the shadow of the eternal Word of whom it is said,

“All things came into being through Him and apart from Him nothing came into being.”

We are made to know more, not less; to have relationships with more not less.

How tragic it is when we find a child’s vision narrowed rather than expanded:

“History is boring.”

“Music is not for me.”

“I don’t like science.”

Even, “I don’t like people.”

How does the infinitely curious, confident three-year-old become the apathetic, skeptical eleven-year-old? Mustn’t we adults take responsibility for this?

Speaking of her first-grade son, a mother once told me, “My son struggles in math. In fact, our whole family does. He will never do well in math.” I thought to myself, “What a tragic belief.” I responded, “Your son has never had the opportunity to have a relationship with math. He is only six years old. This year, let’s believe in him and support him in establishing the ‘right relationship’ with math.”

This mother, herself lacking a vital relationship with mathematics, was in the process of passing on the same flawed relationship to her son. We can offer better. But, we must believe that better is possible. We must believe that, as bearers of the divine image, all children are created to know. We must be careful not to limit them because of our own fears and prejudices.

In Charlotte Mason's words:

*Education considers what relations are proper to a human being, and in what ways these several relations can best be established; that a human being comes into the world with capacity for many relations; and that we, for our part, have two chief concerns—first, to put him in the way of forming these relations by presenting the right idea at the right time, and by forming the right habit upon the right idea; and, secondly, by not getting in the way and so preventing the establishment of the very relations we seek to form.*

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Pictured are Ambleside students taking part in an annual bluebird monitoring project.