

# HERITAGE

AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL MAGAZINE — SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS — VOLUME 1

A young person is the central figure, wearing a black tricorn hat with a black ribbon bow and a blue coat with a white collar and gold buttons. They are holding a black microphone. To their left is a portion of the American flag. The background is a large, out-of-focus image of a historical document with cursive handwriting. The text on the document includes "insure domestic Tranquility, from", "and our Posterity, do ordain and", and "Article 1".

Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future:  
The Legacy of American  
Heritage Schools



# MISSION STATEMENT

---

American Heritage Schools assist 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.

---





## EDITOR'S NOTE

### HERITAGE MAGAZINE

Volume 1—January 23, 2026

**Published by**  
American Heritage School  
Salt Lake City Campus

**Editorial Review & Final  
Approval**  
Leland Anderson

**Contributing Writers**  
Administrators, Trustees,  
Faculty, Parents & Students  
of American Heritage School

**Photographer**  
Troy Smith

**Printed by**  
AlphaGraphics

**Cover Photo:** William  
Jackson, Class of '30. Photo  
by Troy Smith.

**This Page:** Photo by Ricardo  
Costa.

© 2026 American Heritage  
School. All rights reserved.  
No part of this publication  
may be reproduced without  
permission.



**Ricardo Costa**  
*Founding Editor · Creative  
Director · Lead Designer*  
Portrait by Spencer Jarman.

On a Wednesday afternoon last summer, I began brainstorming names for this magazine. I remember the day clearly because Wednesdays were when Kristen Jansen came to work at the Salt Lake Campus to oversee enrollment and marketing matters in her role as Admissions Director. I recall narrowing it down to three options, with *Heritage* standing out as my favorite. When I shared the names with her, she immediately agreed with my choice.

It was all so fast. Once the name was approved by administration, the idea moved quickly from concept to creation, and I began designing what would eventually become thirty different cover versions—each exploring a different way to visually express the magazine's purpose and theme. Now, approximately seven months later, I

cannot help but think back to the day I sat in Principal Anderson's office and shared the vision for this issue. He offered thoughtful insight and palpable excitement as we discussed what this magazine could become.

With the final pages prepared and the magazine ready for press, I feel deep gratitude—for our administrators, especially Leland Anderson, whose full support, encouragement, and editorial guidance made this work possible; for the teachers, coaches, parents, and students who contributed so much; and above all, for the hand of the Lord in inspiring a vision that is now becoming a reality. As a child of God—the Creator of all things—it brings me great joy to have helped create something that may inspire others to join and support American Heritage School's cause: helping the rising generations realize their divine potential.



# WELCOME

## FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

---

The year 2026 marks the 250th birthday of our country, the 55th anniversary of American Heritage School, and the completion of my twentieth year as head of school at AHS.

Some of the students I taught in my early years at AHS are now back as parents enrolling their own children. Some have married each other. Some have joined our faculty. Some will lead the school long after I am gone. It is a tender and humbling “eternal round” to behold.

Most parents who come to American Heritage weigh the same big question that we all ask as parents: “If we only have a brief period of time with our children, what are the most important values, skills, and feelings we can aspire to convey to them?”

Children are born into families with different gifts and “intelligence.” Intelligence, according to scripture, is not just inclination, information, or knowledge, it is the glory of God. It is light and truth. Intelligence is Jesus Christ, and other “noble and great ones,” in whose presence we learn to cleave unto light and truth, to choose God, and to forsake evil. Intelligence then in its fullest sense leads to a fullness of joy in Christ.

The title of this annual magazine is “Heritage.” The word “heritage” is defined by Noah Webster in his 1828 dictionary as follows:

*HERITAGE, 1. Inheritance; an estate that passes from an ancestor to an heir by descent or course of law; that which is inherited. In Scot's law, it sometimes signifies an immovable estate, in distinction from movable. 2. In Scripture, the saints or people of God are called his heritage as being claimed by him, and the objects of his special care. (1 Peter 5:3)*



This is the Christian view of the child that permeates the culture and outcomes of American Heritage School. We do not view children and youth simply as empty vessels needing to be filled by adult wisdom and experience. Rather, we view them more like the sculptor Michelangelo did when he set to work: “I saw an angel in the stone and carved to set it free.”

When we maintain this vision of our divine heritage, we strive not only for mastery of substantive disciplines, but mastery for a purpose that is centered in Jesus Christ. By His light we seek truth in every subject and by His love we use that truth to serve others and “set them free” to magnify their divine callings in life.

It is a simple yet powerful approach to education that has been employed from the beginning of time by faithful parents and teachers who know that not all education is of equal value. The most important education of all is that kind that gives us a new heart “to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

With love and gratitude to all who strive for this kind of intelligence and transformation in the rising generation,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Grant Beckwith in dark ink. The signature is stylized and cursive, written in a professional manner.

Grant Beckwith



# WELCOME

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

---

This edition of Heritage Magazine reflects a small sample of goodness, learning, and light experienced at American Heritage School – Salt Lake City.

At American Heritage School, we learn all subjects in remembrance of God's gifts, especially his Son Jesus Christ, who lived that we might have life more abundantly. We come to God through Jesus Christ whose work is to give liberty to God's children and order all things for their good as fast as they are able to receive them (see Doctrine and Covenants 98:8 and 111:11).

There is a chronological arc to the stories included in this volume, which begins with a brief history of American Heritage School and reaches forward over 55 years to the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), while emphasizing the importance of mentorship and human connection.

The articles in this edition are the work of faculty, senior students, and parents, and provide personal glimpses of what our scholars and families experience while learning and serving together at American Heritage School.

Readers will learn about the establishment of American Heritage School's K–12 campus in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City and the consecrated individuals who continue to build a beautiful, unified culture on all of our campuses.

Students Amy VanDam, Cannon Rockwood, and Nodoka Ito are highlighted among 257 equally beloved students who attend AHS SLC at the time of this writing. Each AHS student's life is inspiring, and their stories could fill volumes.



We glimpse into the lives and influence of some of AHS's faculty, such as Dr. Michael Murdock, Sara Fenn, Jared Cornell, Tayson Holzer, Dr. Rob Swenson, Kayson Brown, and Micole Mayfield.

We appreciate brief introductions to the Costas, Thorns, Mortensen, and Rockwoods, among more than 130 remarkable families attending the school.

Brief articles introduce the American Fork Campus, American Heritage Worldwide, and AHS Online. We invite families everywhere to participate in one or more of our AHS campuses.

Ricardo Costa provided thematic guidance for the magazine, and he designed the layout with an editorial look and feel to emphasize the historical nature of this work. The design, look, and feel of this beautiful piece of journalism are worthy of our deep gratitude.

Please enjoy this glimpse of God-given heritage gratefully received and joyfully experienced daily at American Heritage School – Salt Lake City Campus.

Sincerely,

  
Leland Anderson

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 3 EDITOR'S NOTE

### 4-5 WELCOME LETTERS

HEAD OF SCHOOL  
SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

### 8-11 AMERICAN FORK CAMPUS

PREDECESSORS OF AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL  
FROM UTAH TO THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

### 12 AHS WORLDWIDE

### 13 AHS ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL

### 15 EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

### 16-27 SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS

CONSTRUCTION & REMODELING  
DEDICATION CEREMONY REMARKS  
SACRED SYMBOLISM  
CANNON FIRING CEREMONY  
PATRIOTIC PROGRAM—THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA SPEAKS  
IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

### 28-33 FINDING OUR PLACE

THE COSTAS  
NODOKA ITO  
THE THORNS  
THE MORTENSENS  
THE ROCKWOODS

### 34 A PORTRAIT OF OUR COMMUNITY

### 35 PARENT SERVICE ORGANIZATION

### 36-40 PROFILES

DR. MICHAEL MURDOCK  
CANNON ROCKWOOD  
MRS. SARA FENN  
AMY VANDAM

### 41 CORE VALUES

### 42-45 AN UNENFORCEABLE AGREEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

### 46-50 ORGANIZED INTELLIGENCES

### 51-53 MASTER CLASS LECTURES

### 54-56 MEDIA ARTS

PODCASTING  
VIDEOGRAPHY  
PATRIOT NEWS

### 57 MOCK TRIAL

### 58-65 PERFORMING ARTS

HERITAGE YOUTH CHOIRS  
LYCEUM YOUTH ORCHESTRAS  
THEATRE ARTS

### 66-70 ATHLETICS

### 71 DEVOTIONALS

### 72-74 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

### 75 PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN HERITAGE GRADUATE

### 76-81 ADVANCEMENT

THE GIFT OF GIVING  
THE GIFT OF RECEIVING  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
SALT LAKE CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLAN  
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS  
A FINAL WORD



### 2024-2025 STUDENT COUNCIL

Left to Right—First Row: Amy VanDam, Juliette McLoney, Peter Anderson, Durgin Jones (President), Cade Hunter & Lili Welsh. Second Row: Sofia Murillo, Chris Denning, Mary Anderson, Breona Rubschlager, Eduardo Murillo, Savannah Shurtz & Rachel Coy. Third Row: Heidi Jordan, Lia Polanco, Sam Smith, James Marks, Cannon Rockwood, Anna Huber & Allie Gilmore. Fourth Row: Jordan Larsen, Josh Rohbock, Sarah Steed, Harrison Larsen, Logan Costa, Vitoria dos Santos & David Jackson. Photo by Ricardo Costa.





# HERITAGE

AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL MAGAZINE  
SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS — VOLUME 1

JANUARY 23, 2026

## BOARD OF TRUSTES

### CHAIRMAN

DAVID ANDERSEN

### TRUSTEES

HAL BOYD, CHAIRMAN-ELECT  
CHRIS BECKSTEAD  
GRANT BECKWITH  
BRENT BISHOP  
DAVID BOREN  
JENET ERICKSON  
SHANNON FOSTER  
BRENT GERLACH  
LYMAN KIRKLAND  
DEREK MAXFIELD  
JANINE MINER  
SHANNON NORTON  
LAURIE SWIM  
MARY KAY WARE  
DAVID WARNER

## ADMINISTRATION

### HEAD OF SCHOOL

GRANT BECKWITH

### SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS

#### PRINCIPAL

LELAND ANDERSON

#### ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

CAROLINE MCNIVEN  
ANA YSLAS

#### FINANCE & HR DIRECTOR

SARAH COSTA

#### FACILITIES MANAGER

NICHOLE LARSEN

#### ADMISSIONS MANAGER

JUSTINE THORN

### AMERICAN FORK CAMPUS

#### PRINCIPAL

CHASE HALE

#### ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

ELIZABETH ACUNA (9-12)  
BLAINE HUNSAKER (6-8)  
CHARNE ADAMS (K-5)  
DAVID BUER (ATHLETICS)  
ROB SWENSON (PERFORMING ARTS)

#### BUSINESS OFFICER

ADAM HERDRICKSON

#### FINANCE & HR DIRECTOR

DEANNA ROWEN

#### COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

DAVID BUER

#### SECURITY/FACILITIES DIRECTOR

JEREMY WRIGHT

#### ADMISSIONS MANAGER

KATIE BUSH

### AHS WORLDWIDE

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JUSTIN HANSEN

#### PRODUCT DIRECTOR

PETER KNECHT

### AHS ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL

#### PRINCIPAL

CHASE HALE

#### ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

JEN STARLEY

## ADVISORY BOARD

### SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS

#### CHAIRMAN

DAN BURTON

#### BOARD MEMBERS

GRANT BECKWITH  
HAL BOYD  
SONJA EDDINGS BROWN  
ERIC BUELL  
BRYCE DALTON  
BRETT GERLACH  
CHRISTINE GILBERT  
DUSTIN HOLT  
SHANNON NORTON  
RUSSELL SHURTZ  
TIM SLOAN  
DAVID WARNER



# WHEN THE LORD CLOSES DOORS, HE ALWAYS OPENS NEW ONES

## The Predecessors of American Heritage School

by Grant Beckwith

In the winter of 1967, a Deseret News staff journalist wrote an article about an unexpected announcement that “B.Y. High” and “B.Y. Elementary” (also known as “BYU Training School” and “Brigham Young Academy”) would be closing at the end of the school year:

*Dorothy O. Rea  
Deseret News Staff Writer  
December 20, 1967*

*PROVO — Memories tag after you, pulling at your heart-strings, when you walk down the hall and past the classrooms where you went to school a long time ago. This reporter took that tour through the B.Y. Elementary school building after this week’s announcement by BYU Pres. Ernest L. Wilkinson that [the Academy] will close at the end of this school year...<sup>1</sup>*

The following Spring brought the last commencement exercises of Brigham Young High School: the “B.Y. High Class of 1968.” Following graduation, the doors were barred, the stately Academy building was relegated to changing and temporary uses, then shuttered, sold, neglected, and vandalized. It marked a sad and distressing chapter in the history of Brigham Young Academy, Brigham Young High School, and Brigham Young University.<sup>2</sup>

When the Lord closes doors, he always opens new ones. No sooner had the light gone out at the Academy, than Dr. H. Verlan Andersen, a talented BYU professor and his wife, Shirley, who had enrolled their children at the Academy for many years, began

sowing the seeds of the old Academy in a new field. In just two years’ time, by August 31 of 1970, they had 85 students and an old church building in Pleasant Grove, Utah, where they managed to reopen doors that had been closed in 1968. It was a restoration of sorts – the return of a school more akin to the old Academy of 1876 than the BYU Training school of 1968. It was entirely independent of both state and church, but fully dependent upon the Founding principles of America and the Restored Gospel. The name would be American Heritage School.

Brigham Young High School began as the Brigham Young Academy in 1876. It was a secondary school that grew over the decades to include grades K through 12. In the 1890s, the school began to include a few college-level students, but the Academy was always primarily a high school.<sup>3</sup>

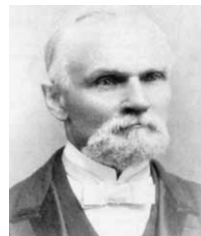
The 1880’s were a bleak chapter in the history of the Saints in Utah. For years preceding the fateful Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which criminalized polygamy and appointed a non-LDS commissioner of public education,<sup>4</sup> President Brigham Young, President John Taylor, and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles had counseled the Saints to “establish schools free from the trammels of State aid where they could unhesitatingly teach the doctrines of true religion combined with the various branches of a general education.”<sup>5</sup>

The Brigham Young Academy was a prominent example of one such school. It was independent of both state and church (though loyal to both) and it was founded and led by early Saints who felt the urgency of educating the rising generation in the light of the Restored Gospel. The principal of the Acad-

emy in its founding years was none other than Karl G. Maeser. Maeser was a “spiritual architect” and a “character technician.”<sup>6</sup> He saw as much value in teaching students to be stewards of their building as he did in teaching them to read and write. He expected students to look “after the ventilation, temperature, and order of the room, the desks, blackboards, books, and apparatus . . . , roll call, attending to visitors, order in the classrooms and the premises before, between, and after recitation time, mail, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

Maeser taught that “the prevailing system of feverish competition in our public school, emphasizing, as it does, intellectual advancement to the almost entire neglect of every other requirement, engenders a spirit of selfish ambition, an evil that sadly mars the characters of many of our most prominent public men today.”<sup>8</sup>

Students at the Academy embraced their education not by an externally imposed system of “do it or else” that was prevalent in schools of the day. Such a base approach only elicits the student response “if I have to.”<sup>9</sup> Rather, Maeser’s approach incorporated the power of the Restored Gospel view: by inspiring a student with a vision of his capacity and discipleship in Christ, the student more willingly consents to be taught, and declares to the teacher “I will” in response to Christ’s injunction, “Come follow me.”<sup>10</sup>



*Karl G. Maeser, Principal,  
Brigham Young Academy,  
1876-1892*





Brigham Young Academy, Established 1876

From 1880 to 1890 the Saints continued to vote for increasingly tax-supported district schools that provided “free” education.<sup>11</sup> Enrollment in the Academy plummeted as Latter-day Saint families increasingly chose the less expensive government-funded schools. The debate over Church education policies grew more intense, particularly given that part of the federal government’s plan (as outlined in the Edmunds-Tucker Act) was to stop polygamy through mass enrollment of Mormon children in public district schools. Compounding the difficulty for the Academy were two serious national economic depressions that occurred from 1873-1879 and 1893-1898.

During one financial crisis, Maeser informed his wife and daughter that because of lack of sufficient money on which to live, he was going to accept a position at the University of Deseret.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, his wife and daughter got things packed and sat on their trunks. When the daughter finally mustered enough courage to ask her father when they were moving, his response was, “I have changed my mind. I have had a dream - I have seen Temple Hill filled with buildings - great temples of learning, and I have decided to remain and do my part in contributing to the fulfillment of that dream.”<sup>13</sup>

Day after day for a period of 15 years, Maeser and his entire faculty struggled to keep the Academy afloat so that his vision could be achieved. In 1891, in one of his last addresses as principal of the Academy, Maeser reflected upon the sacrifice and significance associated with the founding years – and future – of the Academy:

*Amid the ever-changing scenes of development which Brigham Young Academy has passed through, whether holding forth in one single room under makeshift arrangements or enjoying the benefits of more suitable facilities: whether in rented premises, fitted up for the time being, or in her own palatial habitation; whether laboring according to the humble programme of the pri-*

*mary and intermediate grades or aspiring to academic or collegiate honors; there must go through it all, like a golden thread, one thing constant: the spirit of the latter-day work. As long as this principle shall be the mainspring of all her labors, whether in teaching the alphabet or the multiplication tables, or unfolding the advanced truths of science and art, the future of the academy will surpass in glory the fondest hopes of her most ardent admirers.<sup>14</sup>*

Shortly thereafter, in 1892, Benjamin Cluff, Jr. was appointed the new principal of the Academy. Cluff was confronted with the worst financial crisis in the history of the Academy – even worse than the crises of the Maeser administration – and he strained for answers as to how he might advance the Academy’s mission in the face of a very uncertain future.<sup>15</sup>

Cluff finally came to the conclusion that the only viable solution to the Academy’s financial problems was incorporation by the Church. He wrote that “one evening while returning from a walk down town and while studying deeply over the future of the Academy, the thought came to me like an inspiration: ‘give the school to the Church.’ Immediately my mind was at rest. I knew that it was the right thing to do.” Although this same suggestion had been made and rejected a number of times in the past, on July 18, 1896, the Academy’s board of trustees finally transferred the Academy to the Church.<sup>16</sup>

Seven years later, in 1903, Brigham Young Academy was divided by the Church into two separate entities: Brigham Young High School on the “lower campus” (housed in the new Brigham Young Academy building for middle and high school students, and the Training School building for elementary school students) and Brigham Young University on the “upper campus” where BYU and its colleges would continue to expand.



Left: Benjamin Cluff, Jr., Principal, Brigham Young Academy, 1892–1903. Right: Brigham Young Academy, Founders Day, 1900.



On November 9, 1900, three months before he died, Karl Maeser visited a public elementary school that carried his name (Maeser Elementary, located in Provo, Utah). There, with a piece of chalk, he wrote in large letters four sayings on separate black slate-textured walls, which were used at that time for chalkboards. Miraculously, three of the four boards survived for more than 100 years:



“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”



“Man grows with his higher aims.”



“This life is one great object lesson to practice on the principles of immortality and eternal life.”

“Let naught that is unholy ever enter here.”  
[destroyed].

The children that attended B.Y. Elementary and B.Y. High reaped the benefit of a unique model of education that had all but vanished with the Church's closure of its other academies and introduction of the seminary program in the 1920's.<sup>17</sup> B.Y. High served as the heart (and laboratory) for the BYU College of Education. Masterful and spiritually attuned mentor-teachers at the academy trained generations of student-teachers – once known as “Normals” – to start successful teaching careers, often with only a high school education.<sup>18</sup> Men such as Brigham Young, Karl Maeser and Benjamin Cluff had laid a firm foundation that would serve thousands of children and families for the next 65 years.

The reporter continued her reminiscing:

*I lingered for a while in the room where I was a fourth-grader. Belle Smith was the teacher. When she married and became Mrs. Spafford, she invited us to dance the Maypole at her wedding reception in the Women's Gym. It was in Belle Smith's class that I gained my first by-line when “The First Thanksgiving” was published in [the Academy newsletter].<sup>19</sup>*

Some things never change! May each of us comprehend the strength of our past in gaining wisdom to face an uncertain future. And may the eternal principles of educating Zion be written on our hearts as we strive to train up our children in the way that they should go – that they may never depart from it.

1 Dorothy O. Rea, BYU Training School - A Reporter's Fond Memories, [www.byhigh.org/TrainingSchool/TrainingSchool.html](http://www.byhigh.org/TrainingSchool/TrainingSchool.html)  
2 [www.byhigh.org/History/HistoryDecades/From1961to1968.html](http://www.byhigh.org/History/HistoryDecades/From1961to1968.html)  
3 [www.byhigh.org/index.html](http://www.byhigh.org/index.html)

4 The non-LDS population in Utah had risen dramatically since the railroad's completion in 1869 and the increasing number of complaints to Congress about the Mormon influence in public schools enflamed a federal government that was already bent on defeating the “twin barbarisms” of slavery and polygamy. The Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 brought the crisis to a head by criminalizing polygamy, seizing most of the Church's real estate and assets, and taking control of Utah's district schools through a federally appointed non-LDS commissioner of education. Many LDS church and business leaders were taken into custody or went into hiding, including President John Taylor. Women and children tried to carry on businesses and homemaking without their husbands and fathers.

5 President John Taylor, in an 1886 letter to the Saints in Idaho, reprinted in Messages of the First Presidency, James R. Clark, Vol. 3, 1966, p. 5. In 1873 Brigham Young said “Do not say you cannot school them, for you can. There is not a family in this community but what we will take and school their children if they are not able to do it themselves.” Journal of Discourses, Vol. 16, p. 20, April 7, 1873.

6 David O. McKay School of Education, BYU, “Educating the Soul” historical and art exhibit  
7 “Church School Department,” Juvenile Instructor, vol. 36 (1 March 1901): 153, reprinted in The Founding of the BYA.

8 Maeser, School and Fireside, 37, reprinted in The Founding of the BYA.

9 Richards, The Founding of the BYA.

10 Id.

11 Jack Monnett, Revealed Educational Principles & the Public Schools, pp. 33-42, 88, and 152. Significant school tax legislation was supported time and again by LDS voters, including in 1880, 1882, and 1886 - contrary to prophetic counsel. In 1873, over 80% of the operating money for district schools came from tuition-paying families that were enrolled in the schools. By 1883, 32% of operating costs were covered by tuition and by 1891, due primarily to the Free School Act of 1890, only 2% of operating money for district schools came from tuition.

12 The University of Deseret was the predecessor of the University of Utah.

13 <http://unicomm.byu.edu/president/maeser.aspx>

14 Karl G. Maeser, Founder's Day address, October 16, 1891, reprinted in Educating Zion, p. 4-5.

15 <http://unicomm.byu.edu/president/cluff.aspx>

16 Id.

17 With the passage in 1890 of the Free School Act by the Utah territorial legislature, enrollment in the tuition-based LDS academies plummeted. In subsequent years and through the turn of the century, a few Saints who remained faithful to the early prophet's counsel continued to send their children to the church schools; however, by 1920, it was evident that the Saints had chosen the model of tax-supported district schools and the Church gave the order to eliminate almost all existing church schools and academies other than a few institutions such as Brigham Young Academy (B.Y. High) in Provo, and Ricks Academy in Rexburg, Idaho. At the same time, so as not to entirely abandon the Saints in their chosen mode of education, the Church continued to institutionalize the release-time seminary program, which had been a trial program begun in Granite School District in 1913 and which had seen some success by 1920.

18 [www.byhigh.org/index.html](http://www.byhigh.org/index.html)

19 Dorothy O. Rea, BYU Training School - A Reporter's Fond Memories, [www.byhigh.org/TrainingSchool/TrainingSchool.html](http://www.byhigh.org/TrainingSchool/TrainingSchool.html)



From a humble chapel to multiple campuses and worldwide reach, American Heritage School's story is one of faith, sacrifice, and vision.

Fifty years ago, a small group of parents and professors dreamed of a school that united academic excellence with the principles of faith, liberty, and morality. That dream took root in 1970 and grew into American Heritage School (AHS)—a vibrant K-12 institution now serving thousands of families across Utah and beyond.

## BEGINNINGS IN FAITH AND SACRIFICE

When Brigham Young University's Training School closed in 1968, Dr. H. Verlan Andersen and like-minded families saw an opportunity to create something new. With little more than determination and prayer, they purchased an aging church building in Pleasant Grove with a \$1,000 down payment—most of their savings.

On August 31, 1970, AHS opened its doors to 85 students. Resources were scarce; teachers were often paid only after bills were covered, families cleaned classrooms, shoveled coal, and painted walls. But sacrifice became the school's hallmark. Alumni remember dirt playgrounds turning into paved courts, the excitement of new swings and monkey bars, and the warm sense of community.

## GROWING INTO A NEW CAMPUS

For decades, the beloved Pleasant Grove chapel housed AHS. But by the 1990s, the school had outgrown its walls. Miracles of generosity followed—most notably an \$800,000 gift in 1998 that allowed the purchase of land in American Fork, across from the Mount Timpanogos Temple.

On September 4, 2002, students entered a new building filled with light, space, and symbolism. Words like charity, courage, faith, humility, industry, self-government, virtue, and wisdom were etched in stone above the doors, reminding all who entered of the character traits AHS sought to build. At the dedication, board chairman Gaylord Swim prayed that the “spirit of sacrifice never be lost.”

## EDUCATING HEARTS AND MINDS

American Heritage's guiding motto, *Educating Hearts and Minds*, emphasizes that learning is more than academic achievement—it is character and spirit. The adoption of the F.A.C.E. (Foundation for American Christian Education) curriculum in 1999 gave structure to this principle-based approach. Subjects from math to literature are taught in light of God's truth, encouraging students to reason, relate, and act with Christian character.

Traditions like Constitution Day, Shakespeare Week, and annual curricular celebrations bring learning to life. Students dress as historical figures, perform classic literature, and participate in cultural festivals, making education both memorable and meaningful.

## COMMUNITY AND WORLDWIDE REACH

Over time, AHS has grown far beyond its American Fork campus. With homeschool support programs, online courses, and worldwide broadcasts, AHS now serves families in all 50 states and more than 60 countries.





# FROM UTAH TO THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD



Fifty-Five Years  
Developing the Hearts, Minds,  
and Bodies of Students to  
Realize Their Divine Potential



American Heritage School is deeply family-centered. Parents volunteer in classrooms, support teachers, and serve in governance roles. Teachers, often describing their work as a “calling,” integrate gospel principles into every subject. Students graduate not only with academic preparation but with a sense of stewardship—to live with purpose, defend liberty, and serve others.

The mission has expanded from Pleasant Grove to a stately campus in American Fork and to a thriving new school in downtown Salt Lake City. With worldwide broadcasts, and a growing network of homeschool and online programs, AHS continues to reach families across the nation and around the globe.



# BRINGING AN AMERICAN HERITAGE EDUCATION RIGHT INTO THEIR HOMES

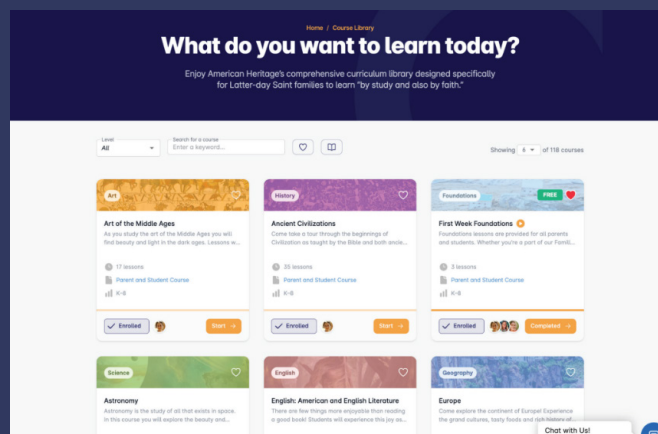
## Empowering Families to Teach in Light & Truth

**D**id you know the American Heritage experience extends far beyond our physical campuses? American Heritage Worldwide offers a flexible K–8 pathway for a home-based education that integrates strong academics with cherished values.

The comprehensive open-and-go curriculum covers all core subjects including History, Science, Humanities, Geography, Math, and Language Arts, alongside unique skills-based electives like Photography, Health, and Leadership. Recognizing that every family is unique, the program offers more than just coursework. Options for live online classes, tutoring, and progress assessments are available to ensure every student thrives.

Virtual devotionals and interactive events as well as in-person gatherings further connect like-minded families. This partnership empowers families to teach in light and truth, extending the American Heritage legacy of learning directly into the home. The result is an education that builds deep spiritual roots alongside academic confidence.

Learn more at [ahsworldwide.org](https://ahsworldwide.org).





---

# A“5-Star Education” from Anywhere in the World

by Jeni Starley

I have had many conversations with families who live far from our campuses yet long for an American Heritage education that weaves faith, patriotism, and deep learning into every lesson. As an assistant principal, I see firsthand how our virtual extension of American Heritage School has become a lifeline for families like these, bringing the heart of an AHS education into their homes, no matter where life has placed them.

For me, it's always felt less like a program and more like a shared journey. We don't just send out lessons into the void; we walk with parents every step of the way, helping them tailor an experience that fits their child's world—whether that's weaving in time for sports, music, or whatever sparks their curiosity. It's this close partnership that turns what could be solitary distance learning into something intimate and supportive, ensuring kids thrive not just academically, but in spirit, too.

Over the years, I've heard our curriculum called “elevated, inspiring, academically rewarding, and enriching,” but those words come alive when I think of the students who pour themselves into it. We offer structured paths with weekly check-ins to build that sense of rhythm and responsibility, alongside more flexible courses that bend to the ebb and flow of family life.

At the end of it all, my hope is that these young people step into college or whatever comes next feeling prepared—not just with knowledge, but with the confidence that comes from meaningful growth.

Let me share a bit from families who've been part of this:

- Steph once told us how it felt like a custom-fit adventure, mapping out a four-year plan that balanced athletics and academics, letting her kids access what she calls a “5-star education” from anywhere in the world.
- Ryan opened up about his two children who had felt lost in their school, weighed down emotionally and spiritually. For them, our online high school was like a timely gift, giving them the space to truly grow.
- Michelle appreciated how the courses



wove high-level academics with values and testimony, planting those seeds in students' hearts as they learned.

- And Allison shared that it was the perfect match for her self-starting daughter, offering the flexibility to chase musical dreams while staying on track.

These stories echo my own. Getting to know these bright, determined students—watching them dive deeper into subjects simply because they loved learning—stirred something in me. In my 40s, their enthusiasm pushed me to enroll at Brigham Young University for an MBA. It was their drive that reignited mine, and now, as I wrap up the program, I treasure learning in a way I never did before. I carry that passion into our community, hoping to pass it on.

If this speaks to you, I'd love for you to visit our website, set up a time to chat with one of our advisors, and consider joining us.



---

**What binds us all is our mission: drawing nearer to Christ, serving those around us, and chasing knowledge throughout our lives. It's not just a statement—it's the quiet thread running through our days.**



Whether it's for a full high school path to graduation or just to bridge a few educational gaps, we're here whenever you're ready.



## AT-A-GLANCE

---

### AMERICAN FORK CAMPUS

**GRADES SERVED**

KINDERGARTEN TO 12TH GRADE

**ENROLLMENT**

1260 PATRIOTS

**TEACHERS**

114 TEACHERS

**STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIO**

12:1

**AVERAGE CLASS SIZE**

23 STUDENTS

**VARIETY OF CLASSES OFFERED**

168 CLASSES

### WORLDWIDE CAMPUS

**GRADES SERVED**

KINDERGARTEN TO 8TH GRADE

**ENROLLMENT**

160+ VIRTUAL SCHOOL STUDENTS

**VIRTUAL MICRO SCHOOLS**

7 COHORTS

**ACTIVE PARENT & STUDENT  
ACCOUNTS**

900+ ACCOUNTS

**VARIETY OF CLASSES OFFERED**

60 COURSES DELIVERED THROUGH A FLEXIBLE MIX OF VIDEO LESSONS, GUIDED INSTRUCTION, AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING





# “PARENTS! IT’S MISSING PARENTS!”

## An Inclusive Education Philosophy

by Leland Anderson

While attending the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I learned from Dr. Richard Elmore, a world-renowned professor of education. He shared a clear model of instruction that I would never forget. At the core of instruction, he said, there are three elements: a student, a teacher, and content. He drew a triangle to illustrate the model. This model was influenced by David Hawkins’ 1967 essay, “I, Thou, and It.”

A teacher masters the content and plans interactions between the students and the content. Two people sitting in the forest on the ends of a log discussing a subject could constitute instruction. Everything else—like buildings, federal programs, and state testing—is ancillary.

My experience teaching eighth and ninth graders English at Oak Canyon Junior High School and Provo High School confirmed this. I found that Mastering curriculum and leading my students to interact with curriculum was central to instruction.

Following my graduation with a master’s degree in School Leadership in May 2008, I began employment at American Heritage School in American Fork. I shared Dr. Elmore’s model with my new colleagues one day as we met in Mr. Grant Beckwith’s office. I drew the model on a large notepad, and I remember thinking it was incomplete.

As we considered the model, we discussed how the Holy Ghost teaches us all things, and brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26), and if we receive not the spirit, we shall not teach (Doctrine and Covenants 42:14).



Photo by Troy Smith.

God’s light was central to all learning. We believe that the Son of God is at the center of learning. Jesus Christ is the source of all truth, and he enlightens every man that comes into the world (John 1:9). We added a shining sun to the model to represent the Holy Ghost and the light of Christ.

I remember Mr. Beckwith looking at the model and receiving inspiration, as he often does. “Parents!” he said. “It’s missing parents!” He cited our school mission statement, which asserts that AHS “assists parents” in their divine responsibilities regarding their children. At AHS, we believe parental involvement is core to AHS’s mission to assist parents. We added parents to the model, transforming the triangle into a square.

Parent involvement is key to student learning. I remember an occasion as a teacher when I called a home to share a student’s excellent work with his father. The student entered my room the next day and said joyfully, “Thanks, Mr. Anderson, for calling my dad!” He became a different boy—more disciplined and diligent—from that day on because he knew I loved him and his father.

The model I learned from Dr. Elmore at the Harvard Graduate School of Education was improved significantly by administrators such as Mr. Grant Beckwith at American Heritage School. The improved model, which includes the light of Christ and parents, is what we strive to implement daily at American Heritage School.

Most contemporary schools of thought conclude that education is comprised of a basic relationship between teachers, students, and content. (See Figure 1 above.) We believe that the family, and especially parents, are an essential relationship in the teaching and learning process, and that **the influence of the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ are at the very core of all transformational learning in life**, illuminating and magnifying the other essential relationships as the student comes to a clearer understanding of truth. (See Figure 2 above.)

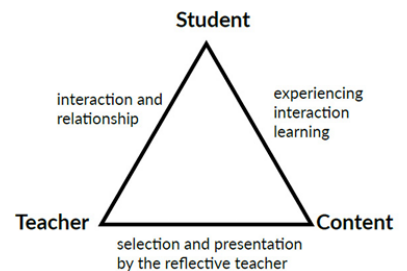


Figure 1. The didactic triangle model of education influenced by David Hawkins’ 1967 essay, “I, Thou, and It.”

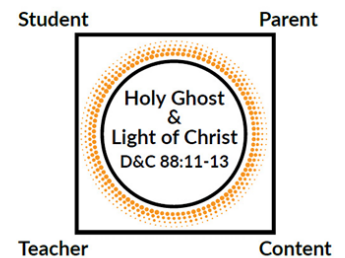


Figure 2. The AHS model of education. The square-encompassed circle is also reflected in the design of the school, elements of which were taken from the design of the Mt. Timpangoes temple.

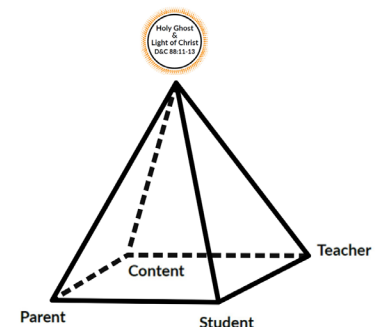


Figure 3. A three-dimensional representation of the square base of a pyramid with the added “sun” representing the Holy Ghost, who points us to the Son of God, the Master Teacher.



Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Principal Leland Anderson & Head of School Grant Beckwith at the AHS SLC Campus Dedication. Photo by Troy Smith.

ELDER  
RASBAND  
DEDICATED THE  
AHS SALT LAKE CITY  
CAMPUS ON  
NOVEMBER 18,  
2022

# THE UNFOLDING FULFILLMENT OF A VISION

## A Legacy Reimagined: Built in Faith, Renewed in Purpose

Long before it became home to classrooms, choirs, and children at play, the Salt Lake Stake Center stood as a remarkable expression of faith, craftsmanship, and community devotion.

President David O. McKay, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a former Seventeenth Ward member, closely followed the construction of the new Salt Lake Stake building, which would become the ward's future meeting place.

A formal groundbreaking was held on Labor Day, September 2, 1963. A large crowd gathered to hear Stake President Henry D. Moyle offer encouragement and vision to members engaged in the building effort. Bishops Sheffield and Bettridge were present, alongside ward members whose commitment would shape the project's success.

At the dedication service, Elder Harold B. Lee, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, presided as the Presiding General Authority.

The building itself reflected exceptional planning and stewardship. Architect John N. Clawson designed the structure, with Erich W. Prusse serving as Project Clerk and Frank J. Lemperle as Construction Superintendent. Members of both the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards rallied behind their bishops, donating time, talents, and financial resources. Great care was taken in every phase of construction, leading many to call it one of the most beautiful chapels in the Church.

Central to the building's identity was its historic stained-glass window. Rather than treating it as a decorative feature, the structure was planned around it, with the pattern of its majestic arch repeated throughout the

building's design. When completed, the final construction cost was approximately \$550,000.



A large crowd gathered at the Salt Lake Stake groundbreaking held on Labor Day, September 2, 1963, to hear President Henry D. Moyle (pictured on the bottom left with Bishops Sheffield and Bettridge to the right).



---

# A New Generation Now Fills The Halls With Purpose and Promise

More than half a century later, the Salt Lake Stake building entered a new chapter.

In early 2019, American Heritage School's Board of Trustees began prayerfully discussing the possibility of establishing a campus in Salt Lake City following a meeting on March 29, 2019, with Elder Ronald A. Rasband and Elder Craig C. Christensen. That meeting helped frame the opportunity and encouraged thoughtful consideration of how the school's mission might be extended into the heart of the city.

In the months that followed, the Board carefully weighed various points of view, locations, and long-term possibilities. In 2021, the Board unanimously decided to move forward with establishing a Salt Lake City campus.

In the fall of 2021, professionals, advisors, and teachers visited the Salt Lake Stake Center meetinghouse and made recommendations regarding how to remodel the building most effectively for educational use. Curtis Miner Architecture and Hogan Construction were selected to manage the project.

In 2022, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints generously facilitated a favorable long-term lease of the Salt Lake Stake Center, making the project possible. Many donors caught the vision and gave generously. On March 2, 2022, the steeple was removed. Later that month, the baptismal font was filled. On March 12, 2022, members of the Fourteenth Ward, Seventeenth Ward, and Mount Ensign 4th Branch worked together to move resources to their new buildings on 500 North and 95 South State.

An open house held on March 29, 2022 welcomed more than 300 Church employees and members of local wards for a final visit before remodeling began. Each week thereafter, owner-architect-contractor meetings were held in the Hogan Construction trailer. Before renovation could proceed, asbestos containment and abatement were completed. Throughout months of remodeling, plywood carefully protected the historic



## AHS SLC INAUGURAL CLASS PHOTO – OCTOBER 2022

*The Salt Lake City Campus opened on August 30, 2022, with 120 students in grades K–9 and 36 employees (15 full-time, 21 part-time) from 15 countries and six continents.*

stained-glass window and organ console.

The remodel preserved the soul of the building while fully modernizing its infrastructure. Fire-suppression sprinklers, new HVAC systems, updated framing, plumbing, electrical, internet, and security systems were installed. Smaller offices were combined to create classrooms, restrooms were upgraded, and the former Relief Society room was divided into classrooms for science, music, and art. On May 19, 2022, American Heritage School administrators and trustees inspected the progress.

---

What began as  
a sacred gathering place—  
shaped by faith,  
generosity, and inspired  
design—now continues  
its legacy as  
a place of learning,  
creativity, and character  
formation.

Pews were removed from the chapel to facilitate performances and assemblies. Today, the school's orchestras, choirs, and harp ensembles rehearse there weekly. Four original pews were reupholstered and placed in foyers and hallways, which also feature artwork from the building's past. Outside, landscaping was beautified. East of the building, a secure playground and playfield were created, along with a public park space and meandering path. Several neighbors have expressed how much they enjoy seeing children at play.

With signage reading *American Heritage School & Family Education Center*, the Salt Lake City Campus opened on August 30, 2022, serving 120 students in grades K–9 and employing 36 staff members from 15 countries and six continents.

On November 18, 2022, Elder Rasband dedicated the American Heritage School Salt Lake City Campus. The total cost of start-up and remodeling reached \$7.1 million.

What began as a sacred gathering place—shaped by faith, generosity, and inspired design—now continues its legacy as a place of learning, creativity, and character formation.

The arches remain. The light still pours through stained glass. And a new generation now fills the halls with purpose and promise.

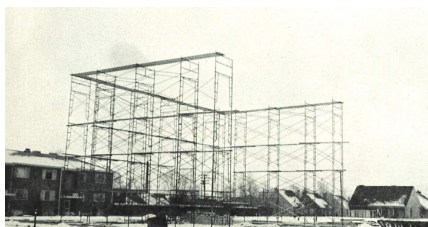




The old Seventeenth Ward meetinghouse.



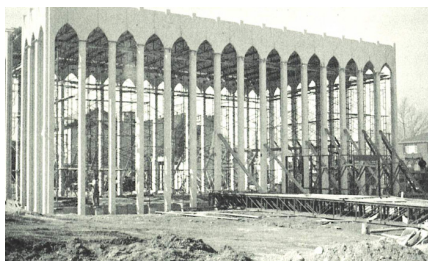
Footings and foundation are underway as the building is shown in early stages of construction.



The scaffolding was erected as the building moved into its next phase of construction.



Time, effort and a great deal of care was taken in its construction to make this what many have called the most beautiful chapel in the The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints.



The old Seventeenth Ward meetinghouse can be seen through the superstructure of the new chapel.



The new building was planned around the historic stained glass window, with the pattern of its majestic arch being repeated throughout the building's design. Final building cost was approximately \$550,000.

## Construction & Remodeling



On March 2, 2022, the steeple was removed. The baptismal font was filled later in March.



On March 12, 2022, members of the Fourteenth Ward, Seventeenth Ward, and Mount Ensign 4th Branch worked together to move resources to their two new buildings.



Before remodeling could begin, asbestos containment and abatement was required.



Small offices and rooms were combined to form classrooms. Restrooms were upgraded. The large Relief Society room was divided into classrooms for science, music, and art.



On May 19, 2022, AHS administrators and trustees inspected the remodeling and construction progress.



Pews were removed from the chapel to facilitate performances and assemblies. Each week, the school's orchestras and choirs rehearse here. Four pews were reupholstered and placed in the foyers and hallways, which also feature some of the building's artwork.



### AHS SALT LAKE CITY CAMPUS INAUGURAL FACULTY & STAFF

**First Row:** Kristie Mathews, Lindsey Ten Eyck, Sarah Costa, Chris Moray, Justine Thorn

**Second Row:** Micole Mayfield, Tehani Wilkinson, Sara Fenn, Lakyn Lee, Mauri Richmond

**Third Row:** Katy Steele, Mary Gilmore, Tracy King, Jasmine Babbitt, Elizabeth Nielson, Caroline McNiven  
**Fourth Row:** Matt Robins, Shane Hawthorn, Leland Anderson, Thiago Lopes, Greg Guggisberg, Jared Cornell, Lane Bitner, Jakob Withyr

**Not Pictured:** Sarah Arnesen, Beverly Bartlett, Laura Lee Bradshaw, Kayson Brown, Kristen Jansen, Stephanie Hatch, Will Hatch, Julie Keyes, Mary Maile, Rob Swenson, Ellen VanDam, Yung-Wei Wang



# Some of the Best Ideas Are Not Our Own

**A**s is often the case, some of the best ideas are not our own. The idea for a downtown Salt Lake Campus was not even on our radar screen when we received a meeting request from Elder Rasband and Elder Christensen to meet at Elder Rasband's office on March 29th 2019.

Not knowing beforehand any details regarding the reasons why the meeting had been requested, Grant Beckwith, Chase Hale, and a few of us representing the Board of Trustees met at the Church Administration building and were welcomed into Elder Rasband's office.

As I entered Elder Rasband's office I noticed a familiar painting on the wall, by Arnold Friberg, entitled "Peace, Be Still" depicting the moment when Jesus Christ calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee with those powerful words. That same painting hangs in my home office as a daily reminder that amid life's storms and uncertainties, our Savior is always able to bring peace, calm and stillness into our hearts and into our lives. I felt that Spirit of peace as we sat down in Elder Rasband's office.

Elder Rasband began the discussion by describing a recent observation that he and the other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency had just realized as part of the Rome, Italy Temple dedication. They noted that over time the Catholic Church felt the need to build walls around Vatican City to keep it separate from the rest of Rome.

As the brethren considered the Church's headquarters in downtown Salt Lake City, they felt a strong desire to have a different relationship with the city, one where there could be strength, complementarity, and a vibrant, healthy long-term relationship, without the need for walls of separation. As part of that strengthening, Elder Rasband next shared that they recognized the importance of strong, faith-based K-12 education offerings, to enable faithful families to effectively raise their children while living near downtown Salt Lake City.

That was when the purpose of our meeting that day became clear – it was for Elder Rasband and Elder Christensen to extend an invitation to us to consider opening an American Heritage School in downtown Salt Lake. This school could provide that strong, faith-affirming, K-12 educational opportunity for families currently living near downtown to choose to stay downtown, and strengthen the appeal for future families to choose to live near downtown Salt Lake City.

Elders Rasband and Christensen then shared ways that the Church may be willing to be a helpful partner in this endeavor, including the possibility of enabling us to utilize a chapel in the downtown area on favorable terms. To say that this invitation took us by surprise would be an understatement! I can also share that under any other circumstance, we as a Board of Trustees and Administrators would have been highly unlikely to support such an endeavor, for many reasons.

However, as we considered and deliberated about this possibility, three foundational truths served as an anchor to us, and ultimately led us to embrace this opportunity.

First, we each felt the Spirit in that room on March 29th, as Elder Rasband spoke – I am a witness of the strength and power of the Spirit in that room, accompanying Elder Rasband's words.

Second, we as a board and as administrators know that God loves all of His children, and that the experience of attending American Heritage School in a child's life provides literally thousands of opportunities for that young person to feel of God's love, and to deepen their love for Him and for His Son Jesus Christ.

And third, we love, support, and sustain the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as Prophets, Seers, and Revelators. I believe that Elder Rasband, as a Seer, had a vision for the good that would come into hundreds, even thousands of lives, as a result of this Salt Lake City Campus of American Heritage School.

And today we all are witnesses of the unfolding fulfillment of that vision. I feel so honored and grateful to have witnessed miracle after miracle leading us from that first meeting three and a half years ago, to this meeting here today, including Leland Anderson's willingness to come back to the US to provide such remarkable leadership to this school, and for generous donors who enabled such accelerated progress towards our first school year beginning just a few months ago.

I am so thankful to Leland, to Grant, and the other administrators and faculty members of this incredible school, and to Elder Rasband, Elder Christensen, Elder Christofferson, Elder Pearson, Bishop Budge and many others who have so meaningfully enabled this day to become a reality.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.

**American Heritage School— Salt Lake City Campus  
Dedication Remarks by Dan Burton,  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Friday, November 18, 2022**





At 10-feet wide and 20-feet high, a stunning arch-shaped, stained-glass window framed by a pointed “gothic” arch, portrays Joseph Smith’s First Vision of our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The window was commissioned by Sister Annie Watkins in 1905, glazed in Belgium, and shipped to Salt Lake City for the Salt Lake Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At the base of the window is an inscription:

If any of you lack wisdom,  
let him ask of God that  
giveth to all men liberally  
and upbraideth not, and it  
shall be given him.  
—James 1:5

This remarkable promise is reflected in the stained-glass portrayal of the youthful Joseph Smith reaching heavenward in prayer, and God the Father and His Beloved Son Jesus Christ responding.

The promise is also reflected in the architectural motif of arches and inverted arches placed around and throughout the building that is now American Heritage School—Salt Lake City.

Pointed arches draw eyes heavenward as a reminder to look to God for wisdom, a symbol of *earth reaching toward heaven* and is common to Christian cathedrals and churches.

Less common in Christian architecture are inverted arches, symbolizing *heaven reaching toward earth*. At the Salt Lake City campus, inverted arches appear throughout the building

# SACRED SYMBOLISM

“Arch”-itectural Motifs at  
the American Heritage School  
Salt Lake City Campus

by Leland Anderson

in the masonry, window frames, hanging pendant lights, organ woodwork, pulpit, pews, stage, and handrails.

Juxtaposed together, the arch and inverted arch remind AHS scholars and families that when we reach heavenward in faith, God will respond.



The scriptures are replete with this pattern of individuals asking God for wisdom and receiving His assistance. Consider Nephi asking God for wisdom about how to build a boat to carry his family to the promised land and receiving inspiration: “And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things” (1 Nephi 18:3). Consider the brother of Jared asking for wisdom about how to light his vessels and receiving wisdom (see Ether 3).

The touch point between the arches—a short a vertical line connecting the arches—suggests that we cannot comprehend all of God’s goodness at once. Rather, “I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30).

Growth comes here a *little* and there a *little*—not here a *lot* and there a *lot*. Incremental progress, day-by-day, is typical for humans. Nevertheless, God promises, “Be ye...wise... and yet without sin, and I will order all things for your good as fast as ye are able to receive them” (Doctrine and Covenants 111:11). As we strive to be “quick to observe” (Mormon 1), we can receive God’s gifts more quickly.

Artwork throughout the building also portrays individuals communing with God. George Washington pled for heaven’s mercy and grace in Valley Forge, and received comfort, grace, and eventual success. Joan of Arc, sought inspiration and followed the Light of Christ. Joseph Smith searched, pondered, and prayed.

The promise—if we ask God for wisdom, He will give—appears dozens of times in scripture. Consider these passages:

**Ask and ye shall receive;  
seek and ye shall find;  
knock and it shall be  
opened unto you.  
—Matthew 7:7**

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7)

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11:24)

“Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he shall direct thee for good.” (Alma 37:37)

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you.” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63)

At AHS, we believe that God keeps this promise. The architecture and artwork of American Heritage School are fortunate reminders.









# THE SOUND OF A NEW BEGINNING

## An Opening Day Tradition

by Jared Cornell



I became fascinated with Blackpowder firearms, from pistols to cannons at a very young age. I have had a life-long interest in shooting and recreating these items of times long gone.

At age 12, I got a copy of a book written in 1757 that was the inspiration to me to actually build and fire a cannon from our Revolutionary War era. Over the next few years my creations went from scaled down replicas to a full scale 6-pounder cannon I still use on many occasions.

When I began to teach at American Heritage School in American Fork, it was suggested that it be a memorable opening day to show our patriotic side by a wonderful flag presentation and cap the event by actually firing a blank cannon shot to start the year with a BANG.

Over the next 24 years we have done this at both campuses as a tradition each year to open our school year.

It has been an honor to let students see, hear, and smell the smoke, as it were, of one of the tools that helped forge our new nation—a muzzle-loading cannon firing to start the scholastic year off in a memorable and focused moment.



The Salt Lake City Campus opened on  
August 30, 2022, with the traditional  
Cannon Firing Ceremony



# A Tradition of Patriotism

by Leland Anderson

In 1974, teacher Geneve Cornell wrote *The Spirit of America Speaks*, the school's first patriotic program. This program is one of the most impactful events produced by the School each year. Admission is free and open to the public. Hundreds of guests each year attend this one-of-a-kind production, which traces the epic "line of Christian liberty" through scenes from the Old and New Testament, the Voyage of Columbus, the Reformation, the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Restoration of the Gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Civil War.

At American Heritage, we witness a young generation taking up the torch of freedom, working in unison to shed brilliant light on the very origins of this priceless gift from God. Young scholars who participate in *The Spirit of America Speaks* will long remember the principles of liberty they recite the lives of those they portray, a few of which are included here:

## MARTIN LUTHER

"I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited, for my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor right. Here I take my stand. I can do no other, so help me God!"

## THOMAS PAINE

"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated."

## GEORGE MASON

"In all our associations; in all our agreements, let us never lose sight of this fundamental maxim—that all power was originally lodged in, and consequently is derived from, the people. We should wear it as a breastplate and buckle it on as our armor."

## SAMUEL ADAMS

"If we would most truly enjoy the gift of Heaven, let us become a virtuous people; then shall we both deserve and enjoy it. While, on the other hand, if we are vicious in our manners, though the form of our Constitution carries the face of the most exalted freedom, we shall in reality be the most abject slaves."





# THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA SPEAKS

PATRICK HENRY

"We shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

MERCY WARREN

"Government is instituted for the protection, safety, and happiness of the people, and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any man, family, or class of men."

ABIGAIL ADAMS

"We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them!"

DOROTHY QUINCY

"Liberty must at all hazards be supported. And liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people."

AMERICA



Photo by Troy Smith.



# IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

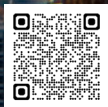
## Salt Lake City Campus

by Leland Anderson

**A**merican Heritage School – Salt Lake City launched its first television and YouTube video in the spring of 2022, which included these words:

*She's discovering things of the heart...  
While learning the history of this nation.  
And she's doing it all...  
...Here. Where pioneer ancestors settled...  
Where grandparents were married...  
Where truth has touched hearts for generations.  
The new Salt Lake Campus of American Heritage School. KeyBank  
Education for the heart, in the heart of it all.*

Since it opened in August 2022, American Heritage School families increasingly benefit from learning in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City, especially through the people and institutions in the capital of our wonderful state.



Watch our first video by scanning this QR code.

### DEVOTED FAMILIES, SCHOLARS, AND TEACHERS

On pages 28–33, read brief profiles about devoted families, scholars, and faculty who are converging downtown, coming from all directions, and making sacrifices to be a part of American Heritage School.

### GREAT MEN AND WOMEN

Contact with great men and women makes a difference in our vision and motivation to learn a subject matter. At AHS SLC, we invite mid- and late-career professionals to teach our high schoolers the enduring ideas and principles that shaped their lives and help them devote their lives to faith, family, and freedom. Read about our master class presenters on pages 51–53.

### INSPIRING INSTITUTIONS

Being downtown makes it convenient to visit neighboring institutions. AHS is in walking distance (or a very short commute) of so many institutions who hire employees with skill, expertise, and wisdom. See our article on experiential learning on pages 72–74.





## AT-A-GLANCE

### ESTABLISHED

AUGUST 2022

### GRADES SERVED

KINDERGARTEN TO 12TH GRADE

### ENROLLMENT CAPACITY

300 STUDENTS

### TEACHERS

36 HOMEROOM & SPECIALTY TEACHERS

### AVERAGE CLASS SIZE

20 STUDENTS

### ACADEMIC FOCUS

EDUCATION IN PRINCIPLES, CHARACTER FORMATION, COLLEGE PREPARATION, WITH EXCELLENT ACADEMICS

### VARIETY OF CLASSES OFFERED

109 CLASSES OFFERED INCLUDING  
2D ART & 3D ART  
ANALYTICAL READING & WRITING  
ASIAN HISTORY & CULTURE  
BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS  
COMPARATIVE WORLD RELIGIONS  
COMPUTER SCIENCE  
DRAMA: STAGE PRODUCTION  
ETIQUETTE & SOCIAL DANCE  
GRAPHIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES  
HIP HOP  
IMMERSIVE MANDARIN  
IMMERSIVE SPANISH  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
PERSONAL FINANCE  
PODCASTING  
PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP  
PRINCIPLES OF REASONING  
PUBLIC SPEAKING  
ROBOTICS & ENGINEERING  
SENIOR THESIS  
US CONSTITUTION & GOVERNMENT  
VIDEOGRAPHY FUNDAMENTALS  
YOGA  
AND MANY MORE

### AP CLASSES OFFERED

14 CLASSES

### AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

CROSS COUNTRY  
CYBERPATRIOT  
DRAMA  
MOCK TRIAL  
MOUNTAIN BIKING CLUB  
PATRIOT TV  
PICKLEBALL  
SOCCER  
YEARBOOK  
YOUTH CHOIRS  
YOUTH ORCHESTRAS





# FINDING OUR PLACE

## All Roads Led Us Downtown

by Sarah Costa

We were living on a 46-acre Amish farm in Chester County, Pennsylvania. We had just opened our first tax office. We were still homeschooling our boys and I was teaching a hands-on science co-op for them and other homeschool students from church. We had a lot of good friends close by and my parents and siblings all lived within a short drive. We were not looking for major changes. In fact, things were finally starting to settle down from the major changes we had made two years prior. Little did we know, those major changes were just the beginning of a long and winding journey that the Lord has taken our family on.

In the summer of 2018, based on a strong prompting I had received, prayer, and eventually confirmation for himself, Ricardo, my husband, had quit his job and gone to Brazil to start up a business with his parents and brothers. The first few months he saw great success. Unfortunately, when returning to Brazil after a 3 week visit home, he realized that the business was not sustainable without his constant presence in the country. We strongly considered moving to Brazil and were making efforts to find my replacement in my family's financial services business. My dad was

getting close to retirement, and his partner was not thrilled with the idea of maintaining the tax side of the business. I had started a tax services business which I had merged with their investment business 12 years prior and had been running and servicing clients without much input from him. He and my father agreed that instead of replacing me, it was best to spin off the tax business, giving ownership back to me and to discontinue providing the services at their firm.

With this new opportunity of having our own tax business and the financial loss we had already taken in Brazil we determined it was best to change course. We knew the Lord had wanted Ricardo to go to Brazil and were confused why things had not worked out. However, we felt at peace with the decision to stay in the US and to work on this new business which was already well established.

A few months later, we moved to the Amish farm. A few months after that, we opened

our office just over the Pennsylvania border into Delaware. On the day it officially opened, Ricardo called me on his way there with the distinct impression we needed to move to Utah. He didn't understand why and knew that it made no sense, however, he couldn't deny it. My first reaction was to doubt and question him, "Well when are we supposed to make this move? We just opened this new office." He didn't have the answer, but he wanted me to be aware that he felt our time in the Delaware office would be short.

On that last point he couldn't have been more right. In only six months the COVID pandemic would change the world. Again, being led by the Lord, we moved everything from our Delaware office to our home in Pennsylvania and two days federal health officials announced what would later become known as the COVID shutdown. We were barred from crossing state lines and would not have been able to collect our client's information or complete the tax season of which we were well into by that time.

As we continued the tax season working remotely with clients, we realize that we could run the business from anywhere. This made the possibility of Utah living seem more realistic. We could continue to operate and generate income without having to see clients in person.





During General Conference that April we both separately felt impressed to buy an RV. It seemed like such a strange idea since neither of us had considered the idea before, nor had we ever had or used an RV. The fact that we both received this impression confirmed to us that it was in fact inspired by the Lord. In early July we were able to purchase both an RV and a truck for a very reasonable price thanks to the stimulus funds we received from the government.

Over the weeks that followed we witnessed many tender mercies and things began to fall neatly into place for us to make the cross-country move to Utah. To provide some background, Ricardo and I lived in Utah before. In fact, Utah State University is where we met and the city, Logan, is what our eldest son was named for. Utah was not an unfamiliar place to us, and we still had friends there. We had even talked about living in Utah early on in our marriage. However, I was still apprehensive and doubtful of the timing.

After a priesthood blessing which gave Ricardo the specific instruction to meet with his church leaders, we set up a video call with our bishop. On the call we shared the impressions we had received and also our lack of understanding. Why would we be asked to leave our home, our family, our personal and family connections? What could possibly be waiting for us in Utah?

Our bishop's counsel changed everything. "I have had three impressions as you have been sharing with me," he said. "First, Lehi was asked to leave everything he knew and journey in the wilderness to an unknown destination." This was not a surprising thought as we knew the story well and it had come up in previous discussions. It was also part of our thought process when considering the move to Brazil. We continued to listen as he shared his next thought. "If Lehi had not obeyed and left Jerusalem when he did, then the Nephi we know today, would not have become the Nephi we now know." As we heard that, we turned to each other and without a word we knew we had received our answer. To this day, Ricardo and I have no idea what the third impression was.

Within two weeks, we had cancelled our lease on the farm, packed up the entire house into a U-Haul on our own (the pandemic restrictions were still in force) and we were heading to Utah. We left with an understanding that the move to Utah was not about us but was for our children. There was something waiting in Utah that would help to shape them into the men that the Lord sent them here to be. However, we had no idea how the Lord had also planned to bless us for our obedience and faith through this move.

Because of our status as self-employed individuals and how many small businesses were going under due to the pandemic, finding housing was proving to be our biggest challenge. Fortunately, because we had bought the RV, we were able to live in it full-time at the KOA just off of North Temple in Salt Lake City. We finally understood the prompting to acquire one and were so grateful for the experience.

Immediately upon settling in the RV park, we started to see the hand of the Lord bless our lives. Ricardo, who had given up the dream of acting and working on films to raise our family suddenly had opportunity after opportunity open up to work after being cast as a Nephiite disciple in eight episodes of the Book of Mormon Videos. I, on the other hand, received an unsolicited call from Utah State University offering me a scholarship to come back and finish my bachelor's degree. I had taken a medical withdraw my junior year and had always desired to return to school. That dream was finally going to be realized! Our oldest son, Logan, was able to get into the Utah Military Academy (UMA) and Lucas, our youngest, continued his homeschooling, spending his days with us in our tax office we had rented a few blocks from Logan's new school.

After 11 months of RV living, we moved to a home in Farmington which was closer to the Portuguese speaking branch that started with our family and the family of the branch's future president. The Lord was working through us and we saw ourselves being pioneers in our own right. However, after a wonderful first year at UMA, a change in administration had us looking for other alternatives.

I was visiting family and clients in Pennsylvania when I got a call from Ricardo. He had booked an acting job with AHS's Worldwide Campus and had just finished his first day of filming. He was very impressed with the school and wanted me to check out their website and their American Fork Campus even though we did not want to move to Utah County. Fortunately, a banner on the site caught my eye. There were plans to open a campus in Salt Lake City and an open house was taking place at the Capitol Building the day I was flying back to Utah. After hearing about the mission of the school, its history, and the model of parent involvement in their child's education I was all-in. I remember saying to Ricardo upon leaving the open house, "This is the school I wanted to create for my children. It already exists! Even if the boys are not able to go here, I want to work for this school!"

A few months later I was working in the front office, and our boys were enrolled as students in the inaugural year of the new Campus. They even posed for the first AHS SLC promo photo shoot (pictured left). After that first year, I finished my degree and took on a full-time role at the school. I was even able to fulfill a life-long goal of becoming a teacher and shared my working knowledge of business and personal finance with my students. We then moved downtown across the street from the school after another prompting and tender mercy. Ricardo was then hired, part-time at first and then full-time.

During our few short years of involvement with American Heritage Schools we have come to more fully understand that this journey which the Lord has taken us on has all led us to here. Looking back, I can now see that had we not taken a leap of faith and started the business in Brazil, I would never have been given back ownership of the tax business. Had the business in Brazil not failed, I would never have stayed in the US. Had the pandemic not happened we would never have found a way to change our business model and operate from multiple locations. Had we not listened to an inspired bishop we would not have made the move to Utah. Had Ricardo not been given the opportunities to work in the film industry again, we may have never been connected with American Heritage School.

We have lived our lives the last decade as Nephi did when he said, "*And I was led by the spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.*" (1 Nephi 4:6) Nothing about our journey has been easy but, oh, how worth it! To be a part of this inspired work of education and a small part of the growth and vision of the apostles to bring families back to downtown Salt Lake City, has brought great joy. The people we have met, the lessons we have learned, the mentors who teach and care for our sons, the talents we have been able to use and improve, and the opportunities we have been able to take advantage of have blessed our family in ways we could never have imagined. We have learned firsthand that the Lord cares just as much about our wants as he does about our needs. American Heritage, our promised land, has given us both.

## THE COSTA FAMILY





# FINDING OUR PLACE

## From Japan to Utah: Foundations of Faith & Fortification

**N**odoka Ito, a senior student from Japan, yearned to study in America. She applied to schools that would allow her to strengthen her English skill and prepare for college in America.

Nodoka and her parents found American Heritage School – Salt Lake City through a friend. Nodoka applied, was accepted, and moved to Salt Lake City to attend the school. She recalls how perfectly everything worked out for her.

Upon arriving at American Heritage School, Nodoka met students who love God, feel comfortable with each other, and encourage one another in their comments and class contributions.

“In Japan, many students feel uncomfortable talking about religion at school. Being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in a secular school can be trying,” Nodoka admits.

Nodoka’s testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been strengthened by attending AHS. “AHS always helps me grow my faith,” Nodoka says. Nodoka found that learning is productive with classmates and who share moral standards and belief about Jesus Christ and His character.

And it’s not just AHS students who feel that a faithful learning environment promotes excellent learning; AHS teachers notice a difference in student behavior, too.

Dr. Murdock, one of AHS’s high school teachers with decades of experience teaching at various universities, points out that AHS students are exceptionally well-behaved. He mentions that the concentration of high-performing students in a single class is unusual, especially for a high school age group.

AHS attracts youth with great capacity who willingly live the school’s standards that align with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to the school’s credit, AHS also provides a suitable learning environment for students of other faiths.

Senior student Stella Morill observed, “AHS provides a space where it’s okay to speak freely about the divine nature of things. AHS students develop a strong commitment to personal righteousness and demonstrate in their actions their understanding of what it means to strive to be Christlike.”

American Heritage School promotes faith and academic achievement, and the effects of faith-infused instruction is evident in observing the students themselves, such as Nodoka, who is grateful to attend such a school.

*Written by Stella Morrill, a Senior at AHS Salt Lake City Campus,  
with assistance from Leland Anderson.*



**NODOKA ITO**





## It Began to Feel Like It Was Us Against the World

by Jesse Thorn

Our family has lived in Salt Lake City since 2013. Our kids were attending the Salt Lake City School District, specifically Emerson School. The experience there was what my wife and I experienced growing up in South Jordan, Utah in our youth. Our kids had caring, well-intentioned teachers who were following the curriculum as laid out by the district. The principal was a caring woman who did her best to set the students up for success within the framework provided. Many children go through this school and district and come out like we did, hopefully alright. (Don't judge too harshly.)

The church we attend, while large in some parts of the valley, is rather small in our community. We don't mind it but it means that there aren't many children in school, or in Church, that have similar values and beliefs. While we teach our children that we can be tolerant and caring of anyone and their beliefs, sometimes when going through life, it's helpful to not feel like it's you against the world. It began feeling like that.

We had some close friends who moved away after their kids were bullied and coerced into making choices that negatively affected their life because they were active members of our church and faith. This began causing some concern between my wife and myself.

We began to just look around at what options we have as parents for education and faith building experiences for our kids. We looked at all schools, within the Salt Lake City School District, charter school, and even private schools. We have some friends whose children attended the Madeline School connected with the Catholic cathedral, and they really liked it, but we didn't feel it fit what we were hoping for our children. Then we stumbled upon the American Heritage School's website. I remembered that my friend who lives by the American Fork campus had his children attending there and had a lot of praise for the school.

We decided to check out the school further, but uncertain we could financially make the switch happen. We prayed diligently for guidance and if this should be where we moved our family's educational experience to. We met with the principal and the admissions director at a meeting in Bountiful Library one fateful night. We immediately felt a connection, not only to the principal and the admissions director, but to the ethos of the school. We longed to be part of this incredible school and the community that was being built. We began discussions about transferring our children and worked out a scholarship that assisted with the financial concerns. We were on our way to joining with the new student body for the inaugural school year.

One thing that I wasn't anticipating was when one day, Justine said out of the blue that she applied for a position at the school. She joined the front office and subsequently took on the admissions responsibilities since that time. She has loved serving in this capacity being able to meet all of the families looking into the school for one purpose or another. We have received many blessings transferring to American Heritage School, Salt Lake City Campus. We can't count them all.

We have seen our children flourish in math, reading, history, and critical thinking. They've been able to associate with other children who share their values and know that there are many others who believe similarly to them. They know that while they can accept others for their beliefs, it's acceptable for themselves to have their own beliefs as well. We love the focus not only on Jesus Christ, but in citizenship, liberty, and love of their country as well as other countries around the world. We believe that the education they receive here will benefit them for their entire lives.

### THE THORN FAMILY



# FINDING OUR PLACE

## We Wanted Friendships Rooted in a Shared Purpose and Interests

by Elisabeth Mortensen

Transitions in education often come at pivotal moments. For our family, our first pivot was in 2020 when we unexpectedly started homeschooling due to COVID. What began as a temporary solution quickly turned into five years of spirit-led growth and learning. Education became personalized, flexible, and family-centered. Homeschooling allowed us to tailor learning to our daughters' needs, strengthen their testimony, and gave us the flexibility in our family schedule. It strengthened our family spiritually and reminded us that education is about fostering a love of learning.

Our second pivot came last year as we looked ahead to another school year. Having recently moved to Utah and my daughter going into high school, we found ourselves reevaluating what environment would best support our daughter's academic growth, faith, and personal development. The decision to move from homeschooling back into the classroom was not about giving them something better, but about stepping into a new season, one that offered new structure, community, and opportunity.

This pivot, and an incredible family, led us to American Heritage School. As we were prayerful about the transition, we were looking for a place that would honor the love of

learning we had cultivated at home while providing a feeling of family. We were also drawn to the feel of a small school where all grade levels interact and support each other. There is so much opportunity for discipleship when you have older students as mentors for younger students. We watched our older daughter be a mentor for her sister as she navigated similar educational and social struggles over the years. The relationship that was formed during those years at home would not have happened if our girls were in separate schools. The mutual respect across all ages at American Heritage has been beautiful to witness during this transition.

Family has always been at the center of our decisions, so finding a school that truly supports a "family first" mindset was a non-negotiable. Education should enhance family life, not compete with it. As a family with a competitive gymnast, scheduling flexibility was essential. Training hours, competitions, and travel are a significant part of our lives, and we needed a school willing to work with those realities. The understanding and support we've received have allowed our daughter to pursue excellence in both academics and athletics without feeling forced to choose between them. We felt strongly that American Heritage School respected parents as partners and honored the importance of strong family foundations that homeschool provided us.

It was difficult to give up the incredible flexibility homeschooling offered us, but through our multiple moves with the military and our daughters getting older, we found ourselves longing for a consistent community of peers and families who shared our same excitement for adventure and learning. We wanted friendships rooted in a shared purpose and interests. It was a big leap of faith to give up the flexibility in hopes we would gain something better in return. From the beginning, American Heritage School embraced our family, not just our daughters. They sought opportunities to bring our family into the school and give us a place where we could connect with others. It isn't just a place for students to feel a sense of belonging, but for families.

Transitioning from homeschooling back to the classroom was not a decision that was easy. It was the result of reflection, prayer, and a desire to do what was best for our daughters in this season. Looking back, we are thankful for the years we spent learning at home and equally thankful for the welcoming, supportive, and inspiring environment we have found at American Heritage School.

Every educational journey looks different. Ours has simply been shaped by seasons, and right now we feel very confident that this is the place our family is meant to be.

### THE MORTENSEN FAMILY







## We Knew We Were at the Right School at Exactly the Right Time

by Beverly Rockwood

In the spring of 2022, Cannon's dad felt a strong impression that our family needed to move from the Denver area to Salt Lake City. Cannon's grandmother is in her 90s, and we felt it was important to be closer to her so we could help and support her. Miraculously, we found a condo in her building, and within just three months of making the decision, we were moving.

At the time, we had no idea which school Cannon should attend. Luckily Cannon's uncle, who works in Salt Lake City for the Church, mentioned that he had just learned American Heritage was opening a new campus in Salt Lake. Amazingly, it was just down the block from where we were moving—and it was even located in a building that had once been Cannon's grandmother's church. We were impressed by what we learned about the school and began the application process online. We were also able to complete part of the process in person at the American Fork campus during a weekend visit.

With each step, we became more impressed with the school. It was during Back-to-School Night that we truly knew we were part of something special. When we entered Ms. Simons's classroom, we noticed a timeline on the wall titled "Jesus Christ: His Story." As she explained how students would learn about the influence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in guiding prophets and others throughout history—and how that same influence is present in

each student's life today—we knew we were at the right school at exactly the right time.

Cannon has loved attending American Heritage. He has formed meaningful friendships and discovered talents he didn't know he had. One thing he especially appreciates is the smaller school environment, which allows students to be more connected and involved with one another. The teachers' genuine investment in their students has been another wonderful blessing of attending American Heritage in Salt Lake City.

Initially, we believed our move to Salt Lake City was solely to support Cannon's grandmother. While that has certainly been a blessing in our lives, our family now firmly believes that Cannon attending American Heritage was equally important and part of the reason for our move to Utah—we just didn't realize it at the time.

## THE ROCKWOOD FAMILY





City	Number of Cases
Salt Lake City	78
Bountiful	31
South Jordan	19
Centerville	13
Millcreek	13
West Valley City	11
Farmington	8
Murray	8
Kaysville	7
Layton	7
Tooele	7
North Salt Lake	5
Sandy	5
Taylorsville	5
Fruit Heights	4
Midvale	4
Alpine	3
Highland	3
Riverton	3
Stockton	3
West Bountiful	3
Bluffdale	2
Lake Point	2
Midway	2
North Ogden	2
Provo Canyon	2
Saratoga Springs	2
Cottonwood Heights	1
South Ogden	1
Syracuse	1
West Jordan	1
Woods Cross	1

A map of the Denver area showing the number of people in each of the five most densely populated census tracts. The tracts are numbered 12, 80, 150, 10, and 2, with 150 being the highest density.

Basin	Number of Species
Salt Lake	150
Davis	80
Tooele	12
Utah	10
Weber	3
Wasatch	2



# A CULTURE OF UNITY AND JOY

## Serving Together Can Also Bind People to Each Other in Unity

by Leland Anderson

**R**ecently, I ate dinner with a family from a far away land. The family has a beautiful culture. We enjoyed several hours of eating and talking. Those around the table were from various countries of the world or had traveled much. One friend at the table observed that eating and talking together more often is something the world needs.

Eating together can be a unifying activity. Meals help bringing people together. Shared mealtime binds children to parents and parents to children because meals provide time to talk.

Serving together can also bind people to each other in unity. Serving gives individuals opportunities to listen to one another, talk together, accomplish a project, and fulfill a need while they work side-by-side. AHS parents do this often in the lunchroom, in a classroom, on a field trip, or on a committee. There is joy in working together and accomplishing something meaningful.

To foster a culture of unity and joy is why AHS asks parents to serve 30 hours per household year, or about one hour each week—perhaps some weeks more and some weeks less. Serving creates a bit of heaven on earth by fostering friendship and growth.

Thank you in advance for your future service and for past service. We notice your service continually and are deeply grateful!

### AHS SLC 2025–2026 PSO BOARD



**CARRIE DUNN**  
President



**AMANDA SECRIST**  
Secretary



**KENDRA HAWKINS**



**FIFI LATTEIER**



**LISA MARGETTS**



**ELLEN VANDAM**



**JEN SHURTZ**



**BRANDI WIELAND**

## To Join the PSO or Not, That Is the Question!

by Brandi Wieland

**I** am wondering if from my silly title you can tell which part of the Parent Service Organization (PSO) I represent? Drama, baby! But in all seriousness, there has been no drama in working with such amazing parents.

I have recently been involved with a few dinners for the staff. I am amazed at the care, time, and efforts that went into making it special so that they truly knew of our appreciation for all they do. Each dish was over the top divine. Everyone pitched in to make sure no one was overburdened.

There was laughter and camaraderie and sharing of thoughts and recipes. One board member mentioned that she had a large activity that she was in charge of at the last minute and she was quickly offered some of the items we had used to benefit her event. Joy, love, and respect was felt that day.

I have been so grateful to be a part of this group that is supportive, encouraging, and truly loving. Ideas are shared and bounced off one another, teachers and faculty are supported and students' needs are put first in a way that uplifts and inspires everyone involved.

I've benefited in more ways than I've given. Isn't that always the case in service? I certainly think so! If you're ever looking for a spot to benefit from, PSO is where it's at.

### AHS SLC INAUGURAL PSO BOARD



**Left to Right:** Amanda Secrist, Heather Street, Kellie Barton, Megan Buell (President), Jennifer Dimick, Carly Kenney, Angie Boyden & Tehani Wilkinson.



# PROFILES

## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

---

### Following God's Plan



Predictably, Dr. Murdock prefers to avoid interviews. He can be evasive, tight-lipped, reserved, and downright squirrely when he wants. Nevertheless, exceptional questions asked just the right way have managed to extract some insights about his life.

Before serving his mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Dr. Murdock studied geology at Brigham Young University, paying his tuition with a geology scholarship. While a missionary in Taiwan, however, he discovered a love for the people and cultures of Asia. Upon returning home, he found his interests torn between two extremely different options, geology and Asian studies.

Fortunately, God provided him guidance. When a friend offered to take him into a mine to shadow a real geologist for a day, Dr. Murdock jumped at the chance. At 4:00 a.m.

he and the geologist outfitted themselves in steel-toe boots, hard hats, lanterns, and waterproofed, bright yellow coveralls. After a day of exploring and investigating a hard-rock mine in Eureka, Dr. Murdock emerged with a new realization—he never wanted to enter a mine again. The quality of life among those already working in the mine did not match what he sought.

At the time, Dr. Murdock was working as a teacher in the Provo Missionary Training Center. Unlike the mine shaft in Eureka, working at the MTC filled him with light and joy.

A few weeks after the mine incident, Dr. Murdock and five fellow MTC teachers, all of whom spoke Mandarin Chinese, travel to China. In 1986 China had only been opened to outsiders a few years so the group decided to conduct some informal research there on the religious attitudes of the Chinese and

even secured a grant to offset expenses. China's communist state had formally repressed religion in China for decades. Thus, the group hypothesized that people's answers to simple questions about religion would elicit one of three possible responses: 1) indifference, 2) confusion, or 3) hostility.

After landing in Hong Kong, the group traveled to Guangzhou and boarded a train headed for Hangzhou, a 37-hour train ride. The group dispersed about the train car to better meet and converse with Chinese on the train.

After finding a seat in a small booth, Dr. Murdock was joined by a family with two teenaged daughters. Almost immediately they greeted him in English. He responded in Chinese, much to their surprise. They asked where he learned Chinese, to which he replied that he had served as a missionary in Taiwan. Upon hearing he had been a

---

We are so thankful that Dr. Murdock was brought to us and is helping our students find the path that God intends for them.

---



missionary the family began peppering him with questions about what he'd taught. After answering many of the questions, Dr. Murdock asked if they'd like to hear everything from the beginning. They eagerly conceded so he began teaching the missionary discussions one after another until he'd covered all six lessons.

By the end he had to stop because he'd talking himself hoarse and lost his voice. Securing a Chinese Book of Mormon from one of his buddies, he let the family read it while he slept from exhaustion. They read deep into the night, covering all of 1 Nephi and into 2 Nephi before resting themselves.

The next day they returned the book and asked Dr. Murdock if he had ever considered serving as a missionary in China. This surprised him, but he said he wouldn't be opposed if the opportunity opened. They then asked him to come visit them and teach their entire extended family should such a day ever come. Then they gave him their address.

Dr. Murdock explained that everywhere he and his peers went thereafter, people showed genuine and sincere interest in the gospel message. He met many, many more people who responded in just the same way. Needless to say, the small group of Americans had completely underestimated and could not have imagined how eager and interested people in China could be about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Murdock took this experience as evidence from heaven that he should abandon geology as a career track and embrace his interest in Asia. That experience taught him another lesson as well, the importance of giving his life to God so He could make something great of it.

Since then, Dr. Murdock received his bachelor degree in Chinese Language & Asian Studies, then a master degree in International & Area Studies from BYU, then another masters degree and then a PhD in Modern Chinese History from the University of Michigan. He has since taught at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Bowling Green State University, the University of Michigan, BYU-Provo, and BYU-Hawaii.

**“Giving one’s life to God means that sometimes God will force you to leave one path to make way for a better one.”**

Retiring from university life, he missed the classroom and joined us here at American Heritage School – Salt Lake City Campus. We are so blessed to have Dr. Murdock as our high school history teacher for grades 10–12. He teaches Modern World History, American History, Asian History, British Literature, American Literature, International Relations, AP Macroeconomics, and AP Microeconomics.

He prepares high school students for college-level classes and teaches them critical thinking and analytical skills for their future education and beyond. Dr. Murdock cares for each of his students and seeks to help them succeed both in and out of the classroom.

We are so thankful that Dr. Murdock was brought to us and is helping our students find the path that God intends for them. We hope that our students can follow his example to accept and follow God's plan for them and find comfort and contentment in him.

As our interview closed Dr. Murdock explained his philosophy of a good life. He said that giving one's life to God means that sometimes God will force you to leave one path to make way for a better one. Like travelers to the unknown, Dr. Murdock works contentedly on whatever path God puts in front of him until God directs him to another path. With each move, new growth and service opportunities appear, making life rich and rewarding.

*Written by Cade Hunter & James Marks,  
Seniors at AHS Salt Lake City Campus, with assistance from  
Dr. Michael Murdock.*



#### **HERE ARE A FEW PARENT AND STUDENT COMMENTS ABOUT DR. MURDOCK:**

“I wanted to take a moment to express my appreciation for Dr. Murdock. He is an exceptional teacher who goes above and beyond to inspire and support his students. His dedication, teaching methods, and ability to connect with students make a significant positive impact. I believe his contributions deserve recognition, and I am grateful for the difference he makes in the school community. I can say with a full heart that the 11th and 12th grade classes love him and appreciate all that he does. Dr. Murdock will never fully understand the profound impact he has had on us. His genuine care and passion for teaching have earned him the love and respect of his students.”

“Dr. Murdock is just great in every way! I feel like he's my friend and he's trying to help me learn as much as I can. He makes it easy to learn in his class.”

“I cannot say enough positive things about Dr. Murdock. He has been a game changer for Claire. Although his teaching style took some adjusting to, he has inspired her to work harder and smarter. He is invested in Claire and believes in her ability to learn and grow. Claire knows that and she feels that. That motivates her to keep going.”

“Dr. Murdock always makes the time to communicate with me and give me feedback about my daughter's progress.”

“My daughter loves Dr. Murdock. She gets excited about what she will learn in his class, loves the way he teaches. We are just finishing winter break and, she said, ‘I can't wait to get back to school because I miss Dr. Murdock's lectures.’”

“Dr. Murdock is the reason I get up in the morning and get ready to go to school. He teaches so well and makes everyone feel special. He puts in a lot of effort into teaching us and getting to know us.”



# PROFILES

## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



*Cannon Rockwood in American Heritage School – Salt Lake City Campus' performance of Fiddler on the Roof. Photo by Troy Smith.*

## Heart, Humor & Hustle

There are students who make a mark through talent, and then there are students who make an impact. Cannon Rockwood does both, and somehow still manages to make everyone around him smile in the process.

Cannon stands out not because he tries to, but because he cares. His teachers describe him as thoughtful, reliable, and principled. Someone genuinely curious about the world and how ideas connect. Whether he's diving into mythology, discussing world religions, or analyzing history, Cannon listens with intent and speaks with insight. His curiosity isn't limited to a grade or an assignment; it's fueled by a real desire to understand life on a deeper level.

One teacher recalls his standout presentation on Buddhism. "He went beyond the textbook. He explored its history, connected it to mindfulness and compassion, and explained everything with such balance and respect. You could tell he wasn't just presenting — he was sharing something he truly valued," says Dr. Logan Wells.

That sense of thoughtfulness has only grown over the years. Once a quiet, observant student, Cannon has found his voice, one that's confident, kind, and encouraging. He's a natural leader in group settings, the kind who makes sure everyone feels included.

"He doesn't take over," a teacher said, "but he helps bring out everyone's strengths," observes Mr. Tayson Holzer.

But make no mistake, Cannon's not just serious. He's also the mind behind the legendary Bowling Ball Dance of American Heritage. The "Bowling Ball Dance" is a fun classroom tradition in Dr. Murdock's class where a student must perform an interpretive dance of Dr. Murdock's choice before leaving the room for the day. Some giggle and just run but when Cannon was asked to be a bowling ball, he embraced it wholeheartedly rolling with the moment and making everyone laugh with his upbeat, go-with-the-flow attitude. A creation that will probably be remembered long after graduation. His friends describe him as "round, loud, and red." A burst of energy rolling through the halls with good humor and good vibes.

Cannon's creativity doesn't stop there. He's an artist who once drew every single Winnie the Pooh character on an assignment just for fun. He's a performer who's been in every school production, taking on roles from Amis to Mr. Collins to Angelo, even embodying a Russian character with flair. He proudly calls himself the OG Leprechaun of American Heritage, a title no one else could pull off quite the same way.

Beyond theater, Cannon's drive and curiosi-

ty shine in every field he touches. From engineering and computer science to volleyball and summer programs galore. When Cannon commits to something, it's full throttle. One teacher put it perfectly. "When he puts his passion into a project — whoa! Get out of his way, or you'll get bowled over," says Dr. Wells.

In the future when Cannon has a free day, he wants to spend it driving around and exploring because that's just who he is, a traveler at heart, always eager to see, learn, and experience more. His dream destination? China, a place that Cannon says "holds a deep respect for tradition."

When asked for advice, Cannon keeps it simple and powerful: "Don't fall under social standards — just be you."

And maybe that's what makes Cannon so unforgettable. He's proof that being kind, creative, and true to yourself is the most remarkable thing you can be.

To Cannon this writer says, "Thanks for leading with your heart, sharing your humor, and showing everyone what it means to roll through life — bowling ball dance and all — with purpose and joy."

*Written by Breona Rubschlager,  
a Senior at AHS Salt Lake City Campus.*







*Sara and Jerry Fenn with President Dallin H. Oaks and during her service in the LDS Chicago Mission.*

## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

# A Family Member Said To Me, “American Heritage Is What I Imagine School Will Be Like in the Eternities”

by Sara Fenn

**M**y husband, Jerry, and I had the privilege of serving a mission in Chicago for three years, where we had the blessing of working closely with over 750 young missionaries. Then we were given another opportunity to work for three additional years with over 200 young men and about 2400 seniors serving as missionaries in Salt Lake City. In these missions, we had wonderful opportunities to see men and women striving to become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.

There are patterns that people learn that lead to greater discipleship. In a mission, we taught missionaries to pray every day, to study the Book of Mormon, to exercise discipline by being exactly obedient to the commandments, to work diligently, and to seek to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Out of such patterns, faith in Christ grows, the Spirit comes into people's lives, they experience the healing and enabling power of the Atonement, and they develop a hope,

through entering into sacred ordinances and keeping the covenants associated therewith, that they will receive eternal life.

When our mission was over, I began looking for an opportunity to return to my elementary teaching career. A family member said to me, “American Heritage is what I imagine school will be like in the eternities.” I applied. When I entered the school for the first interview, I felt the spirit and knew immediately that this was where I wanted to teach. A school that aligns academics with faith and character. A school where teachers strive to help establish patterns in the lives of those they teach, bringing them closer to Christ.

There is power in aligning a gospel-centered life with academic learning. At American Heritage School we try to create an environment where students can “seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” (D&C 88:118) We hopefully “establish” (D&C 88:119) a classroom where young people have their hearts drawn to the Lord by practicing patterns through devotionals, prayer, study and diligence, and where they are treated with kindness and respect. A peaceful, positive environment results when faith is nurtured and where learning “reading, writing, mathematics, history, and science” is enhanced by the Spirit of the Lord.

The traditional values and pedagogy of American Heritage School not only help young people flourish and experience happiness in future academic and temporal pursuits, but can help them find joy in serving the Lord as missionaries.






# PROFILES

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

---

## Beyond Words

by Ellen VanDam



**A**my LaDawn VanDam began expressing her voice through the violin beginning at age 6. She studied with Corine Hart until age 14. She has been studying with Erika Hubbard for the past three years and began extra scholarship lessons with Eugene Watanabe, founder of the Gifted Music School, two years ago.

Playing the violin has allowed her to express herself in ways that go beyond words. She graduated from all of the Suzuki Violin books by age 13 and has enjoyed playing advanced repertoire in her studies in the Conservatory Gifted Music School Program.

She was thrilled to solo with the Lyceum Symphony Orchestra last year. She would like to pursue a degree in Violin Performance at a University.

*Amy VanDam in AHS SLC's performance of Fiddler on the Roof.  
Photo by Troy Smith.*





# CORE VALUES

American Heritage Schools focus on three areas of education, which are our three core values: Christian Character, Transformational Scholarship, and Responsible Liberty.

## Character > Scholarship > Liberty

---

### CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

The primary focus of all teaching and learning at American Heritage School is to help students develop hearts centered in Christ, influenced by His example, and refined by application of His truths in their lives. Teachers, staff, and administrators are charged with being living examples of Christian discipleship by receiving the gift of His atoning power in their lives. This primary focus recognizes the essential role of the Holy Ghost to illuminate all learning through the light of Christ, and enable the conversion process through which His truths become woven into our lives.

### TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

American Heritage School provides a rigorous academic experience with a restored-gospel perspective. Teaching and learning “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) is a revelatory process that requires the teacher and student to apply themselves diligently to researching, reasoning, relating, and recording their learning. We use best-practice teaching methods to stimulate curiosity, challenge assumptions, and allow students to think and act for themselves. Faith is not an excuse or substitute for poor research or reasoning but deepens and expands the need and desire for the hard and careful work that is essential to understand, apply, and internalize truth.

### RESPONSIBLE LIBERTY

The third primary focus, which is a result of Christian character and transformational scholarship, is grounded in the truth that God has given each of us the freedom to experience liberty and eternal life through Christ and his teachings, or captivity and death through disobedience to those teachings. We invite students to experience liberty through Christian self-government, recognizing that personal and civil liberty can only exist when there is adherence to moral law by self-governed individuals. By carefully studying the founding principles of America and the lives of the founding fathers and mothers, students learn the importance of moral self-government and why it is essential to lasting liberty.

---



# AN UNENFORCEABLE AGREEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## An Exercise in Self-Government

by Tayson Holzer



I am not that old — I was born in the 1990s — but already during my short stay on this planet, I have lived through three major technological revolutions: the explosion of the Internet in the 1990s, the rise of the smart phone in the 2000s, and now the advent of publicly accessible artificial intelligence in the 2020s. Viewed in the context of world history, this is astonishing for a single, short lifetime.

My grandparents, who grew up without computer technology of any kind, have witnessed just how dramatically the Internet has changed modern life — and yet, strangely, I and my entire generation don't know anything different. We can't conceive of a world without Google and electronic banking and social media profiles. This isn't to say that we agree with everything the Internet has done to society, but it is nearly impossible for us to picture society without it.

Well, just as I grew up during the emergence of the Internet and cannot imagine life without it, today's rising generation is growing up during the emergence of artificial intelligence — and by the looks of it, they will never know a world without it. While facial recognition and personalized search suggestions and intelligible conversations with a computer astonish many of us, to them, they seem perfectly normal — because they have never experienced life without them.

The omnipresent, normalized nature of AI today may tempt many of us to offload our work — including our thinking and our writing — onto a computer. Our scholars also feel this pull and may sometimes be tempted to use AI tools in ways that short-circuit the very learning and growing experiences they came to American Heritage to obtain. Yet simply telling them not to use AI so often feels to them like we are telling them not to breathe!

What follows is an example of how we at American Heritage School – Salt Lake City attempt to inspire our scholars to learn for themselves. At the beginning of the school year, I present this “unenforceable agreement” to the scholars in my senior-level English class. All of the student authors who have contributed to this magazine have willingly made (and, to my knowledge, honorably upheld) this unenforceable agreement. That means that the articles in this magazine are authentic representations of the work produced at American Heritage School and provide real glimpses into the minds and hearts of the incredible scholars who are being educated here.

## Class Example

### AN UNENFORCEABLE AGREEMENT?

In addition to our other class policies, I am now asking you to make an unenforceable agreement. It is unenforceable because I cannot make you abide by it, and if you decide to break it, I likely will not know. Nevertheless, I am asking you to freely bind yourselves to act in accordance with this agreement, without me applying any force or manipulation or bribery, and then to hold yourself to your word. This is an exercise in self-government — “obedience to the unenforceable” — which is one of the fundamental principles undergirding all free societies. What John Adams famously said about our Constitution applies well here:

“We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and Religion. ... Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”  
—John Adams,  
11 October 1798





# Let's Consider Lifting Weight

Many people willingly lift weights. Some people even love it. Some of you may have signed up for our very own Strength and Conditioning course this year. Nevertheless, you have to admit that lifting weights hurts! So why would we do it? Why would we subject ourselves to that pain, especially if we have access to a car jack or a forklift? (Just think how ridiculously easy it would be to lift a 200-pound dumbbell with a forklift!)

Well, there are a few reasons:

## 1. IT ISN'T ABOUT THE WEIGHT

The point of lifting is not to change the position of the weights, right? After all, we will promptly set them down again — exactly where they were before! When we leave the gym after our workout is done, the weights will be exactly the same as they were when we arrived: same mass, same shape, same position, and on and on. So why do we spend time lifting those weights? That's simple: we are not trying to change the weights; we are trying to change ourselves.

## 2. WE LIKE THE RESULTS OF LIFTING

We keep going back to the gym because we like what we are getting from the experience. We like the way we feel after a hard workout. We like the way we look when we are in shape. We like the respect we get from our family and friends who are impressed when we can lift the piano all by ourselves. We like the feeling of being in control of our bodies and our lives. We like the deep satisfaction of knowing that we can accomplish hard things, that we are fulfilling our potential, that we are becoming.

## 3. THE FORKLIFT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE CAPABLE OR AVAILABLE

For the naïve and unmotivated weightlifter, it might be tempting to use the forklift: 'It's so easy! It requires so little effort! Yeah, I'm not getting stronger, but so what?! I can just use the forklift next time, too.' But can you? What about when you need to move a piano up a couple flights of stairs? How useful is the forklift going to be then? Or what about when someone forgot to charge the forklift battery? Or what about when you are far from home and suddenly have to lift a fallen tree limb off the road, or off your car, or off your trapped family member?

# Artificial Intelligence: A Digital Forklift

The writing we will do in our class will be much like lifting weights. Certainly, there are far easier, less painful ways of getting the writing done. Plagiarism, like a car jack, has been a good historical option. Now, in just the last few years, the forklift has been driven onto the scene: artificial intelligence. (Just look at how ridiculously easy it is to generate a 20-page paper with ChatGPT!)

So why would we not use these tools? Writing can be an arduous, difficult — some might even say painful — process. Why would we subject ourselves to that difficulty, especially when we have access to digital “car jacks” and “forklifts”?

Well, here are a few reasons:





## 1. IT ISN'T ABOUT THE WEIGHT

The point of writing in our class is not to get perfect writing. If all I wanted was examples of flawless writing, I could get them in far more efficient ways. I don't care about your writing as much as I care about you!

Now, don't get me wrong: I do believe that your writing can and will change the world. I believe that with all my heart! But in this course, I don't care as much about producing isolated pieces of great writing: I care about producing great writers, who can then go on to produce piece after piece after piece of influential, inspiring, world-shaping writing for years to come.

The naïve and unmotivated writer who uses AI to do his brainstorming, thinking, drafting, writing, revising, or editing cheats the very premise of this course: that you will become a better writer by writing.

As you wrestle with ideas and words — and it will be a wrestle at times — you will repeatedly find yourselves in a state of Conscious Incompetence, where you consciously know that you need more knowledge — about the topic you are addressing, about specific writing forms, about sentence structure, or about grammar and spelling. That is good!

The act of writing will have pulled you out of the ignorant state of Unconscious Incompetence and made you ready to learn. You will then be, in the words of Alma, “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6). Rather than a teacher hitting the entire class in the face with grammar rules or spelling conventions that someone might need someday (this is how most English classes work, right?), you will receive the personalized knowledge you need when you actually need it — and can use it immediately — making it far more likely that you will truly learn and remember.

If you persist in this process, your mind and spirit will expand. You will move from Conscious Incompetence to Conscious Competence, and then slowly to Unconscious Competence — where you will naturally, unconsciously, apply that knowledge in your writing, having become the master of that part of the English language. But this will only happen if you do not short-circuit the process by resorting to AI when confronted with something you don't initially know how to do.

## 2. YOU LIKE THE RESULTS OF LIFTING

You will like the way you feel after the hard work-out of brainstorming, drafting, writing, revising, and editing your own work yourself. You will like the respect, the compliments, the praise you receive from others who read your work and appreciate your well-articulated thinking.

You will like the feeling of accomplishment at the end of the writing process. You will like the feeling of your mind and soul expanding — that is one of the most invigorating and wonderful feelings we can experience in this life. You will like the deep satisfaction of knowing that you can accomplish hard things; that you are fulfilling your great, God-given potential; that you are becoming. And you will like seeing the results of your work, as they affect real people and thereby help to change the world.

You may have your initial doubts about this, but please trust me! You will like the results, both those on the page and those in your soul. You may not yet love writing (tragically, few students ever get to that point), but if you will give it a sincere chance, I believe this course can change that for you. And you may just find that you never want to go back.

Your work is nothing less than to “shine the brightness of your hope” on this ever-darkening world and “make it what it ought to be” (to quote President Jeffrey R. Holland) — and this work is yours to do. God has placed you here, at this precise time and in your precise orbits of influence, for great and important purposes known only to Him.





### 3. THE FORKLIFT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE CAPABLE OR AVAILABLE

If you are prepared, He will call upon you to do things that literally change the world. Your potential and your purposes reach far beyond the very mortal world in which we live: they reach into heaven, into eternity: they are celestial. Knowing the greatness and grandeur of your work, do you think that AI could do it better than you?

Elder David A. Bednar recently called AI “a technology that can only think telestial.” AI cannot do what you will need to do, simply because of its telestial nature: it is not capable of being enlightened by God’s pure intelligence; it is not possessed with divine nature and moral agency; it is not embodied in a physical form that was created in the image of God; it is not eternal and eternally valuable, as you are.

The machine learning models upon which generative AIs are built are trained on the learning of the world, and all they are capable of doing is giving back an average of the world’s thinking. This world doesn’t need more of what it already has: it needs the light and hope that you can draw out of heaven and shine into the world. AI cannot — and will never be able to — replace you in your all-important mortal missions. So please, to quote Elder Bednar again, do not “[surrender] [your] precious moral agency to a technology that can only think telestial.”

Artificial intelligence, though powerful and useful in its own sphere, is earth-bound: it is doomed to end when this world ends. By contrast, your soul is eternal, and the mental and spiritual capacities you develop here on Earth will rise with you into the eternities. Do you think that God depends on artificial intelligence? No, He has real intelligence — and it is, in every conceivable way, vastly superior to any artificial intelligence system that man has or ever will invent. If we are to become like God, it behooves us to exercise and enlarge our own real intelligence rather than become dependent on the artificial intelligence of the world.



## The Agreement

So here is the agreement I am asking you to make. Beginning immediately, and continuing to the end of the year, I will not use artificial intelligence tools of any kind for anything related to this class. Specifically:

- I will not brainstorm using AI. (We will use other methods of generating ideas in this class.)
- I will not draft, write, or revise using AI. (We will personally write at every stage of the writing process, from the very beginning to the very end.)
- I will not edit using AI. (This means that we will not use Grammarly or other AI tools to find errors, suggest edits, or make changes of any kind. The sole exception to this rule is the ordinary spell checker that comes with conventional word processing programs.)

By signing below, I indicate my willing and freely made agreement that I will not use artificial intelligence tools of any kind to brainstorm, draft, write, revise, or edit anything for this course — all year long.

SIGNATURE

DATE

*\*This agreement does not set any policies for other classes or extracurricular activities. In these cases, you should consult with your parents, your teachers or coaches, the Holy Ghost, and your health professionals to know if AI is right for you.*

**WELCOME TO THE GYM! THANKS FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO LIFT WITH US!**



# ORGANIZED INTELLIGENCES

## Love, Mentorship & Presence in the Age of AI

by Grant Beckwith

---

“Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones.”<sup>1</sup>

“And he beheld the spirits that God had created, and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people.”<sup>2</sup>

**W**e all have everyday seers in our life who can peer deeply into our souls. They go beyond answering the surface-level questions we are asking and inspire us with deeper questions that we should be asking.

These are the mentors in our life who change us the most. They don't just see our trajectory and envision our future. They see us. They see our countenance. They see our joy and our pain. They see our strengths, weaknesses, and motives. And they can see it all because they love us.

---

*Chris Culver, AHS Art Teacher (left) and Laurie Swim, AHS Trustee (right). The vision and experience of loving mentors is one of the most valuable sources of inspiration in life.*

---







## A “Pandemic of Isolation & Loneliness”

---

Elder Gerrit W. Gong speaks about discipleship in an age of artificial intelligence at a recent conference, November 5, 2025 (image credit Spencer Yamada/Faith Matters). In his remarks, Elder Gong acknowledged that “AI is opening new and remarkable opportunities to lift and bless” and also could further worsen a “pandemic of isolation and loneliness.”

---

We live in an age of instant gratification and ubiquitous answers to almost any question. It’s a “brave new world” of artificial intelligence and the “AI companion.”<sup>3</sup> As of late 2025, the two most frequent uses of artificial intelligence are (1) productivity and knowledge work (writing and editing, research and summary, coding and debugging, brainstorming ideas, etc.); and (2) companionship and emotional support (“relational AI” such as interactive online companions and counselors).<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, it is also an age of what Elder Gerrit Gong, whose own father pioneered AI systems, recently described as a “pandemic of isolation and loneliness.”<sup>5</sup>

Last year, our AHS Safety Committee was deliberating about next steps in promoting mental and emotional health in our school community. One of the ideas presented was an AI-powered emotional support companion developed by a K–12-focused software company. The promise of the developers was that the AI companion would meet students anytime, anywhere, even at 3 a.m. when no human being would be available to counsel an anxious or depressed teenager. Moreover, the AI was trained on a closed universe of safe content, carefully vetted by a board of professional K-12 school psychologists, and programmed to nudge the teen toward a human therapist at every turn. It would also cost a fraction of school counselors. The pitch was compelling.

Dr. Alicia Henderson, a wise and experienced member of our AHS student counseling office, spent some time test-driving and interacting with the AI companion. She concluded the following:

*Strengths – The AI companion gives really great tips for students strugg-*

*ling or feeling overwhelmed with academics. It also gives sound suggestions, such as with making friends and sleeping. It validates often; I don’t know how I feel about AI validating me when it has not lived the breadth and depth of human emotions that life offers us.*

*Weaknesses – The AI companion seems unable to engage in true motivational interviewing, which is so key to change or initiating effective behavior. It did start asking about values, which was good.*

And then she added these feelings, which I will never forget:

*My last two cents . . . I’m so deeply concerned that as a society we are turning to Google for help, instead of reaching out to our wise elderly neighbor across the street, who can offer perspective and a reminder that we can tolerate uncertainty and loss. I’m concerned that when we want a recipe for peach cobbler we ask an AI companion, instead of our friend or grandma who has a stellar recipe. I’m concerned that youth are asking the internet for help, instead of catching a leader while they are mowing the lawn or making fresh pasta and pulling up a chair or porch step to chat. It is in those moments we find out how people are really doing. There is no vulnerability with AI, and therefore no courage exercised. No relationships strengthened. No burdens lifted. No connections made. We lose so much of the valuable substance of society when we forget to turn to people.<sup>6</sup>*

To be clear, none of this is to say that AI systems are useless or inherently dangerous. “The fact that technology can be misused, does not mean that it should never be used,” said Elder Gong.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Elder Kim Clark, the former commissioner of Church Education, has recently proposed that a proprietary AI companion be developed specifically for Church Education System students, trained on Church resources only, and used under very specific and carefully controlled circumstances.<sup>8</sup>



But we must also keep in mind the following:

"Always remember that an AI companion is only a mathematical algorithm. *It does not like you. It does not care about you. It does not really know if you exist or not.* To repeat, it is a set of computer equations that will treat you as an object to be acted upon, if you let it. Please, do not let this technology entice you to become an object... My intent is not to suggest that artificial intelligence is inherently bad; it is not... But the righteous possibilities of this amazing technological tool can be realized only if we are aware of and guard against its perils."<sup>9</sup>

---

Left: Sydney Kopp, AHS Student Council President, with AHS teacher, coach, and mentor Holly Robinson. "The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women." (Booker T. Washington)

---



Elder David A. Bednar's address "Things As They Really Are 2.0" takes on the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence systems. "Always remember that an AI companion is only a mathematical algorithm. It does not like you. It does not care about you. It does not really know if you exist or not."

## LDS Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence

Recently I attended a conference devoted to Latter-day Saint perspectives on artificial intelligence. The conference was held at the Church Office Building in downtown Salt Lake City. Presenters included faithful Latter-day Saints who are experts in their fields of science, technology, law, education, psychology, government, human development, child protection, and a host of other fields that have been pulled into the swirling vortex of AI.

Most presenters conveyed a sense of gratitude for AI and the myriad ways that it is already benefiting society, balanced by warnings of the dangers of AI if developed and used irresponsibly.

All agreed that AI is so uniquely transformational in the history of technology advancements that it is less like a new internet application and more like a humanity-altering breakthrough akin to the internet itself,

electricity, and even fire.

It was a fascinating experience to hear so many presenters, from so many different fields, grapple with fundamental questions like:

"What is *intelligence*?"

"What makes *humans* intelligent?"

"What makes for *authentic* relationships between humans?"

"Is it possible for machines to have an au-



thetic relationship with a human being?” “How does AI *change* the relationships that human beings have with each other?”

“If AI is a ‘large language model,’ then what is *language*, and why is it important to humans?”

A few answers resonated with me as deeply profound:

—“Intelligence is moral, relational, and capable of love.”<sup>10</sup>

—“Humanity’s existence is only fulfilled when in relationship with the Divine.”<sup>11</sup>

—“Human-to-human and human-to-divine relationships are lacking in AI systems.”<sup>12</sup>

—“Covenantal relationships are grounded in a relationship with God the Father and his son Jesus Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

—“I see AI as a remarkable flow of divinely inspired technologies that enable learning to flourish both secularly and spiritually. I believe that Father in Heaven has allowed for AI to come forth, and that the Lord is preparing wonderful opportunities for us to experience “deep learning,” which also comes with significant challenges. The foundation of deep learning is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the light of the world. Because of Him, the Holy Ghost can teach us all truth. *Only through Him is deep learning possible.*”<sup>14</sup>

—AI architecture begins with intent. What exactly are we building AI for? If we say “efficiency” we get speed. If we say “profit” we get systems that exploit. If we say to make human beings healthier, more moral, more thriving, then we get those outcomes. Unpurposed intelligence is dangerous. Purposed intelligence is productive.<sup>15</sup>

—Trust is part of the beauty of any architecture. We don’t see the beams in the high-rise, but we know that they’re there, and we trust them. Like any architecture, trust in an AI system’s architecture is built through three blueprints: (1) transparency (walls should be glass where they can be; so should AI systems); (2) testimony (systems that can bear witness to their reasoning; why they answered as they did; what evidence they relied on; honesty and integrity; so should AI systems); and (3) testing (systems need to be continuously measured and tested to maintain trust and accountability; so should AI systems).<sup>16</sup>

I was particularly moved by the thoughts of Dr. Terryl Givens, who entitled his remarks “Human Intelligence: Love, Language, and Presence.”<sup>17</sup>

*Nothing is more sacred than for one human to enter into a sacred relationship with another human being. Relationships have two pre-requisites: (1) boundedness, and (2) a way across that boundedness.*

*Love is the conquest of distance. We calibrate love by the distance that parties have crossed to forge it.*

*Jesus invited us to become neighbors with those who we view as separated by some distance or difference. Christianity places a premium on embodiment. Incarnation is God’s living witness that the most complete version of the divine is the enfleshed form of divinity. Presence becomes the bridge across the chasm. The boundedness of our body is the precondition of the love and relationships that we construct.*

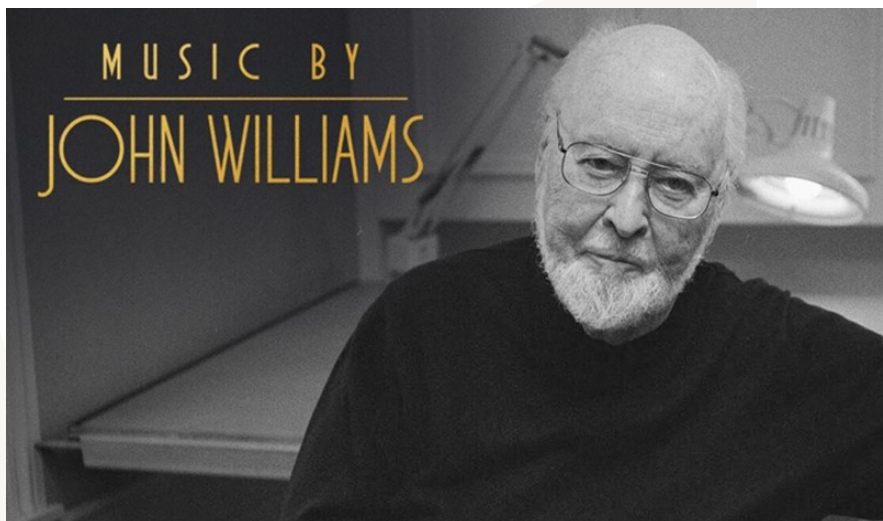
Dr. Terryl Givens, senior research fellow at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship at BYU. Until 2019, he was a professor of literature and religion at the University of Richmond, where he held the James A. Bostwick Chair in English.



We should really ask not “When will AI simulate human intelligence?” but rather “When did human intelligence begin to emulate AI?” The task of the humanities is to challenge and refine the most moral and edifying hierarchies of human attention. We show preference for certain ways of knowing over other ways of knowing.

Many who claim to know Christ never knew Christ. Did we know Him only through our left brain, mathematically, or did we know Him through the right brain also, present with Him, feeling Him?<sup>18</sup>

## On Love, Mentorship & Presence



The 2024 documentary film entitled “Music by John Williams” chronicles the life and work of composer John Williams and demonstrates the power and influence of personal mentorship.

The 2024 documentary film entitled *Music by John Williams* chronicles the life and work of composer John Williams, one of the greatest modern musicians of our time. Williams composed and orchestrated the movie scores for many of the most epic films in the last half century, including *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Indiana Jones*, *E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, *Harry Potter*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and more.



Filmmaker Steven Spielberg (left) with composer John Williams (right). Their friendship and mentorship of each other spanned decades and continues even today. Spielberg is 79 and Williams is 93; both are still working... together.

What struck me most about Williams' arc of success was his mentorship and friendship with the American filmmaker Steven Spielberg. Williams and Spielberg were inseparable, creating an astounding 30 films together. Both credited their success to each other, and it is difficult to say which of the two had the greater influence on the other.

One thing is clear, they deeply loved and respected each other, they mentored each other, and their respective gifts were magnified in the presence of each other.

History abounds with examples of gifted individuals whose talents were magnified or channeled in the presence of inspiring friendship and mentorship: Socrates and Plato (philosophy); Emerson and Thoreau (literature); Ray Charles and Quincy Jones (music); Warren Buffet and Bill Gates (business and philanthropy); George Mason and Thomas Jefferson; Abraham Lincoln and William Seward (government); the Beecher and Stowe families' religious and political influence on Harriet Beecher-Stowe (American Civil War abolitionism); Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton (women's civil rights); J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis (religion and religiously influenced literature); and Ziauddin Yousafszai and his daughter, Malala (international women's rights), to name a few.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes it takes losing our mentors before we fully realize how much influence they had upon us, how much we loved them, how much they refined us, and how much we relied upon them for our strength and success.

In the case of John Williams, it wasn't just Spielberg who inspired greatness in him. Williams and his wife Barbara were lifetime friends and partners. She was a Hollywood actress; he was a Hollywood composer. They had a loving and committed marriage that produced three children. In 1974, Barbara

died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage in her early 40's, leaving behind John and the children.

John described Barbara's passing as one of the most difficult and painful chapters in his life, but also a defining moment in his creative journey. He said that after Barbara's death, her presence actually became more influential in his music, describing "a feeling that she was actually by his side."<sup>20</sup>

"I felt like she was helping me," he said. "I still have the feeling today. In some way I grew up artistically [after her death], or gained some kind of energy, or it penetrated what I was doing more deeply. And the busiest, most successful period in my life in film started immediately thereafter, when I was asked to do a film called Star Wars."<sup>21</sup>



Composer John Williams with his first wife, Barbara. After her passing, John felt he "gained some kind of energy" from her, that "penetrated more deeply his work," that she was "by his side" helping him as he composed music.

And thus his music took on another dimension, inspired by the presence of what he described as a loving mentor from another dimension.

Natural intelligence requires more than IQ or information. Natural intelligence is capable of authentic relationships, and ultimately authentic love. In turn, authentic relationships and authentic love require presence with other people, or in the language of scripture, "organized intelligences."

In the end, maybe Booker T. Washington said it best:

"The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women."<sup>22</sup>

With gratitude for every act of love and mentorship, seen and unseen, that is the lifeblood our school community,

Grant Beckwith



Booker T. Washington (front row center, third from left), seated next to Andrew Carnegie (on Washington's left) and other sponsors, faculty, and distinguished graduates of the Tuskegee Institute, later Tuskegee University, Alabama, 1903.

1 Abraham 3:22

2 Moses 6:36

3 Salman Khan, founder of Khan Academy, published his 2024 book *Brave New Words: How AI Will Revolutionize Education (and Why That's a Good Thing)*, which touts the benefits of AI tutors for students and also promotes Khanmigo, his new AI tutoring software business.

4 Marc Zao-Sanders, "How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025," *Harvard Business Review*, Apr. 9, 2025, <https://hbr.org/2025/04/how-people-are-really-using-gen-ai-in-2025>. See also, National Association of Independent Schools, 2025 Trends.

5 Elder Gerrit W. Gong, "Discipleship in an Age of Artificial Intelligence," presented at "Organized Intelligence: LDS Perspectives on AI" conference, Nov. 17–18, 2025. "We have a pandemic of isolation and loneliness," he said. "It started prior to the Covid pandemic. Overuse of SM and AI can leave us disconnected from human relationships. Many of us are on devices from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep. Precisely because AI can distort core covenantal relationships, our topic is timely." See Deseret News summary of Elder Gong's and other presenters' remarks: <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2025/11/05/church-of-jesus-christ-wont-use-ai-to-create-images-of-jesus-or-conference-talks/> Elder Gong was also tasked with overseeing the Church's committee to outline principles of responsible AI use, which are published here: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/learn/artificial-intelligence?lang=eng>

6 Dr. Alicia Henderson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist.

7 Elder Gerrit W. Gong, "Discipleship in an Age of Artificial Intelligence," *Id.*

8 Elder Kim B. Clark, "Deep Learning in the Age of AI," presented at "Organized Intelligence: LDS Perspectives on AI" conference, Nov. 17–18, 2025. Elder Clark did not say that such an AI companion was under development, only that he had a vision of its potential usefulness under very carefully controlled circumstances. See Elder Clark's presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mgeZASyErM> and a Church News summary: <https://www.thechurchnews.com/living-faith/2025/11/10/elder-kim-clark-ensign-college-devotional-ai-artificial-intelligence-education/>

9 Elder David A. Bednar, "Things As They Really Are 2.0," Nov. 23, 2024, *Worldwide Devotional for Young Adults*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/worldwide-devotional-for-young-adults/2024/11/13/bednar?lang=eng> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AblogGUK2k>

10 Dr. Medlir Mema, BYU-Idaho

11 *Id.*

12 *Id.*

13 *Id.*

14 Elder Kim Clark, *Id.* "Deep Learning in the Age of AI"

15 Bennett Bordon, "The Moral Architecture of Intelligence," presented at "Organized Intelligence: LDS Perspectives on AI" conference, Nov. 17–18, 2025.

16 *Id.*

17 Credit to Dr. Givens and to Dr. Medlir Mema, the Organized Intelligence conference organizer, for their influence on the title of this article.

18 Dr. Terryl Givens, "Human Intelligence: Love, Language, and Presence," presented at "Organized Intelligence: LDS Perspectives on AI" conference, Nov. 17–18, 2025.

19 Sometimes the mentor or partner is a kind of "equal opposite" who offers occasional opposing but complimentary views, like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson; Abraham Lincoln and William Seward; Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; and Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton.

20 "Music by John Williams," 2024 documentary film, George Lucas Films (Disney).

21 *Id.*

22 Booker T. Washington made this observation in his autobiography, originally published in 1901 as *Up from Slavery*. The quote comes from Chapter 3: *The Struggle for an Education*.





# AT THE FEET OF GREAT MEN & WOMEN

## Masters Inspiring Young Scholars

by Leland Anderson

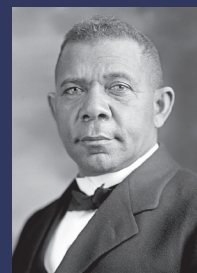
In 2006, I escorted my class of eighth graders to the Oak Canyon Junior High School library to check out books.

“Peruse the books,” I instructed. “When you find a book that interests you, begin reading it. You have 20 minutes to decide if you want to check it out.” Modeling what I wanted my students to accomplish in the library that day, I perused for a moment, selected a book—*Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington—and began reading.

Although I was familiar with Washington’s name, I knew little about him. Within minutes, I was enraptured by what I was reading in his autobiography, so I checked it out and finished it over a few days.

Washington’s account of his struggle for an education inspired me, especially this statement:

“The older I grow, the more I realize there is no education which one can get from books or fancy apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women.”



I memorized this statement and have quoted it hundreds of times since.

The idea that placing young scholars in contact with great men and women will inspire them in their education is at the heart of the AHS SLC Campus Master Class Lecture Series, which takes place several times per semester on Fridays from 2:30 to 3:15 PM.

The series has been successful. Our high schoolers ask many questions during the presentations and often stay after to ask additional questions. The following pages highlight some of the expert presenters and the principles they shared with AHS high school students.

*This page, top to bottom: Dr. Sarah Franklin (UofU Associate Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine); Dr. Casey Griffiths (BYU Religion Professor and President of the BYU Latter-Day Saint Educators Society); W. Claire Kenney & Sydnee Dickson (Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction); Calrton Christensen (UTA Director) & Principal Anderson; Eduardo Murillo, Harrison Larsen, Durgin Jones, Peter Anderson & Jordan Larsen (Zupas VP of Catering); Sarah Costa, Logan Costa, Michelle Moore (Zions Indie Film Festival Owner/Director) & Cade Hunter.*



KATHY LOVELESS

On Friday, March 22, 2024, Mrs. Kathy Loveless taught high school students the following principles, using stories from her life:

- Visualize what you desire.
- Believe in God's willingness to provide your righteous desires.
- Know that our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are real. They are aware, watching, and involved.
- Work harder and smarter than others.

Burn the midnight oil. Show up with what's required and something more.

- People are watching you all the time.
- How you dress matters.
- The words you use matter.
- How you treat others matters.
- Honesty matters.
- Honoring your commitments matters.
- Loving others especially counts.
- Appreciate the uniqueness of every person and country.

## FEATURED MASTER CLASS LECTURE SERIES SPEAKERS

### GUEST SPEAKER

AJ Secrist  
Al van der Beek  
Bonnie Jean Beesley  
Dr. Brad Wilcox  
Brent Beesley  
Bruce DeCaster  
Bryce Anderson  
Carlton Christensen  
Casey Elliott  
Dr. Casey Griffiths  
Elder Clark Gilbert  
Dr. David Dibble  
Doug Wilks  
Harris Simmons  
Heidi Swinton  
Jared Cornell  
Jarom Chung  
Jeff Mitchell  
Jenny Pulsipher  
John Miller  
Jordan Larsen  
Kathy Loveless  
Dr. Kevin Jones  
Dr. Kyle Holzer  
Larry Stevenson  
Lew Cramer  
Loren Reid  
Lyman Kirkland  
Dr. Merrill & Debbie Dayton  
Dr. Michael Murdock  
Michelle Moore  
Nate Stoddard  
Owen Richardson  
Ray Robinson  
Rob Swenson  
Russ Shurtz  
Ryan Eggett  
Samantha McConkie  
Sara Bauman  
Dr. Sarah Franklin  
Scott Blakeslee  
Shaler Mortensen  
Shima Baughman  
Stacey and Larry Mudgett  
Stephen James  
Sydnee Dickson  
Tanna Fox  
Tessa Stewart  
Tom Taylor  
William T. Thurman

### ROLE

Investor, Adjunct Economics Professor  
Music Arranger, Singer, Musician, & Technician  
Philanthropist  
Marriage Expert  
Developer & CEO  
President & CEO  
Product Manager  
Utah Transit Authority Director, SLC Council  
Singer & Actor  
Religion Professor, Author  
Commissioner of Church Education  
Painter & Color Artist  
Executive Editor  
Banker  
Biographer  
History Teacher  
Senior Director of Product  
Computer Scientist  
History Professor  
Band Director  
Vice President of Catering  
CEO  
Surgeon  
Electrical Engineer  
Scholarship Expert  
CEO  
Investment Manager  
Director of Communication  
Thoracic Surgeon, Mission Leaders  
History Teacher  
Owner & Director  
Statistics  
Artist, Art Designer  
Manager  
Choir Director  
Lawyer  
Religious Educator & Dating Expert  
Biologist  
Violinist  
Associate Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine  
Product Manager  
C-7 Instructor Pilot, First Officer  
Professor of Law  
Police Officers, Former Chief Firearms Instructor  
Real Estate Developer  
Utah State Superintendent of K-12 Education  
Nutritionist and Gut Health Specialist  
Political Advocate  
Family History Professional  
Judge

### ORGANIZATION

University of Utah  
The Piano Guys  
Utah State Board of Education  
University of Virginia  
Heritage Bank  
Crescentia Global Talent Solutions  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
UDOT; Salt Lake City Council  
GENTRI  
Brigham Young University  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Comissioned; Blue Sky Studios (20th Century Fox)  
Deseret News  
Zions Bank  
Self Employed/Commissioned  
American Heritage School  
Lucid  
Entrepreneur  
Brigham Young University  
American Fork High School  
Zupas  
Loveless Enterprises  
University of Utah Health System  
L3-Harris Communications  
BYU Education Week Speaker  
Colliers International  
Goldman Sachs  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
IHC, BYU Medical School  
American Heritage School  
Zions Independent Film Festival  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Commissioned  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
American Heritage School  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
UVU Institute  
UVU, Brigham Young University  
Utah Symphony  
40/40, U of U Medical Research, Charity  
nCino  
US Air Force, Delta Airlines  
BYU Law School  
LAPD/LAPD SWAT  
Daybreak Communities  
Utah State Office of Education  
Self-Employed  
Senator Harry Reid's Office  
Pictures & Stories  
US Bankruptcy Court, District of Utah





ELDER CLARK G. GILBERT

During his master class on May 4, 2024, Elder Clark G. Gilbert shared three messages for American Heritage School scholars:

**1. Education is a Spiritual Responsibility.**

The more we learn today, the more we can serve others tomorrow. As President Russell M. Nelson taught, “In the Church, obtaining an education and getting knowledge are a religious responsibility. We educate our minds so that one day we can render service of worth to somebody else.” The Lord can do more with us if we learn more.

**2. Involve the Lord in Your Learning.**

The Lord wants us to assist in His work, so He will help us learn all subjects. With our grit and the Lord’s grace, we can develop skills to learn and serve better. For example, we can improve our skills for listening, note taking, discussing, organizing our time, and working hard to do our best.

**3. There is a place for you in the Church Educational System.**

BYU is the Church’s “ambassador” research and outreach institution. BYU – Idaho is the “educator” institution, focused on exceptional teaching and learning. BYU – Hawaii provides great education to students who live or work in Asia and the Pacific region. Ensign College excels at helping students get their first and second jobs. BYU Pathway Worldwide is the “access” institution that provides access to higher education at very low cost for students from around the globe. Seminaries and Institutes “help youth and young adults deepen their conversion to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.” All youth are invited to participate in Seminaries and Institutes.

Attendees appreciated the conversational style and expansive vision shared by Elder Gilbert.



BRYCE ANDERSON

Mr. Bryce Anderson was our master class speaker on Friday, January 17, 2025. He shared stories from his career path in the Priesthood and Family Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He illustrated these principles with many delightful personal stories:

**Learning #1: Reframe challenges as opportunities to grow (even standout).**

When a major natural disaster destroyed buildings in the southern US where Mr. Anderson worked, he reframed a challenging situation into an opportunity to serve people and build unity. We can do the same when we face challenges.

**Learning #2: Remember that all things are spiritual.**

When working for the Facilities Department of the Church, Mr. Anderson collaborated with a visionary leader who remodeled the 23rd and 24th floors of the Church Office building in a beautiful way to support the inspirational nature of their work. “We shape our buildings, and then they shape us.”

**Learning #3: Shoot your shot! Be bold - Full Send!**

When Mr. Anderson took a leap of faith and offered to serve a colleague by driving him to work in exchange for some mentoring, he found a new friend and stepped through doors of opportunity that positively changed his life.

**Learning #4: The spirit in which something is prepared is the spirit in which it is received.**

When Mr. Anderson worked on various products, he learned that process affects product. When we work in unity, the outcomes (products) reflect the unity.

**Learning #5: The Lord is the ultimate example of leadership and does in fact lead His Church.**

Mr. Anderson says the Lord efficiently gets his work done through the efforts of imperfect people, who improve through the process. We are his work. He is continually building us.



LEW CRAMER

On Friday, February 23, 2024, Mr. Lew Cramer—chairman of the Utah Transportation Commission, CEO at Collier’s International Utah, and former CEO of World Trade Center Utah—emphasized the importance of the “decade of decision” (age 14–24), which is when students make major decisions related to studies, mission, marriage, degrees, and career.

Reading his patriarchal blessing often was important to Lew, and he encouraged students to always remember that God has a fabulous plan for each of us.

He encouraged students to learn as much as they can from their AHS teachers and to maintain AHS relationships and other friendships throughout life.

He shared wisdom, such as the “gate principle”, which Ronald Reagan taught Lew when he served in the Reagan Whitehouse. When a gate opens, people flow primarily in one direction for a reason. For example, when the Berlin Wall fell, the flow of people was toward West Berlin, rather than East Berlin.

People flow toward good leadership and freedom. We should be grateful to live in a state and country where there is freedom, good leadership, and opportunities to prosper.



# REAL-WORLD MEDIA EXPERIENCE

## Developing Social Skills with Podcasting

by Megan Buell

During the 2024–2025 school year, the American Heritage School Salt Lake City campus launched a dynamic podcast elective for high schoolers. Every Friday, students interviewed Masterclass speakers, professionals from diverse fields, about their career paths and how The Principles of Personal and Civil Liberty guided their journeys. Students collaborated to craft thoughtful questions and ended each episode with the guest's favorite joke, adding a personal and humorous touch.

Guests included entrepreneurs, educators, creatives, and public servants who highlighted the roles of freedom, responsibility, and integrity in their success.

Student Mary Anderson named Ryan Eggett—an expert on dating and courtship—as her favorite guest. “He told lots of stories that were interesting but also taught something, so we were still learning, but it wasn’t boring. He was really personable.”



Al Van Der Beek (Piano Guys). Photo by Megan Buell.

The class gave students real-world media experience, including scripting and recording the intros and outros, advertisements, and dialogue, while giving listeners an inspiring glimpse into the principles and personal decisions that brought about each speaker's success.

Developing social skills was a focus for students in the podcast class. Those skills included learning to understand, communicate with, interact with, and relate to other people, no matter their profession or area of expertise. Anderson mentioned, “I knew what I was getting into when I signed up: interviewing and developing (inter)personal skills. Sometimes I get scared to talk to adults. I get nervous and self-conscious. It helped to practice through the podcasting class.”

Following each podcast interview, the guest addresses the entire high school student body. When asked who his favorite masterclass speaker was, student Cannon Rockwood said, “I liked how Bryce Anderson (Senior Product Manager at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) was willing to move around the world to help people. I thought that was really inspiring to see how people really focused on others instead of themselves.”

Masterclass speakers represented a wide range of professions, and included BYU law professor Shima Baughman, cardiovascular specialist Dr. Sarah Franklin, global HR expert Bruce DeCaster, and music producer Al Van Der Beek of The Piano Guys.

“I really love the masterclass and the idea of it. Being able to hear different people's stories and apply them to my life. I really like how we end the week strong with these

masterclasses. I've gained so many insights,” Rockwood reflected.

When asked about the Masterclass, student Josh Rohbock noted, “It's unique to the school - none of the other schools I've been to have had masterclass speakers. It's nice to listen and be engaged with different people and professions - you have funny people, business-like people, different walks of life. Some students even go up to meet the speakers and ask them specific questions.” Professional violinist for the Utah Symphony, Sarah Bauman Staples, and Lucid's VP of Product, Jarom Chung, both generously took time after their presentations to answer students' questions specific to their professions.

Durgin Jones recalled a lesson he gleaned from actor Casey Elliott. “One of the best pieces of advice I got from a masterclass speaker was the art of letting go is the art to master acting. There needs to be times when you can't think and stress about the unknown, you just have to give it a shot. And that's in auditions, and in performances and in practices. Take it and give it your all everytime. You just have to give it a shot. It stuck with me, and it doesn't just apply to acting. Don't half-do things. Go for things you'll fail but you'll also succeed at times,” Jones said.

Students enrolled in the podcast elective for the 2025-2026 school year can look forward to diving deeper into podcasting, creating and producing their own podcasts.

Episodes of the student-produced podcast, American Heritage School's Patriot Podcast, are now available on all major platforms, with new episodes coming this fall.





LYMAN  
KIRKLAND &  
SHIMA BAUGHMAN  
ARE INTERVIEWED  
BY THE PODCAST  
CLASS



Carter Anderson and  
Logan Ten Eyck filming a  
Master Class Lecture Series  
presentation.

## A Visual Heritage

by Ricardo Costa

Beyond its ability to communicate instantly, directly, and powerfully, videography serves a deeper purpose: documentation. It captures moments, traditions, and lived experiences for future generations, creating a lasting record of who we were and what we valued. In this way, videography becomes a form of legacy-building—a visual heritage that preserves memory, identity, and meaning long after the moment has passed.

Ever since I came to the United States, I have become an avid visual chronicler. America was, at first, a temporary experience—something I assumed I would one day remember only through photographs or journal entries. I had no idea at the time that it would become home, or that I would raise a family in the Land of the Free.

My calling as a visual historian began with photographs captured on film, carefully developed and preserved, then evolved into digital snapshots, and eventually into moving images recorded with my now-insepa-

rable mobile device. I love film, video, and photography because they capture life—life that is slowly but continuously fading as we age and memories grow cloudy.

It is this visual heritage that I hope to pass along to my students as they learn the language and power of moving pictures. My hope is that they will learn to recognize—and capture—the wonder of being young, of moments that feel ordinary now but will one day feel irreplaceable.

Time flies. Like a film montage, it compresses years into moments we hardly notice while living them. Before long, these years will exist as memories—and as binary numbers stored on a hard drive. If students learn to document with intention, care, and curiosity, their work becomes more than an assignment. It becomes a record of life as it once was, preserving emotion, perspective, and meaning for a future version of themselves and for generations they may never meet.





Photo by Ricardo Costa.

# PATRIOT

## News

SALT LAKE CITY

Patriot News brings the school community together through news, event coverage, and creative student projects. Viewers can watch highlights from choir, orchestra, and drama performances, stay up to date with school news, and enjoy fun segments produced by our talented media students. New content is added regularly, so families are encouraged to subscribe and tune in to see what's happening around campus.

Inaugural Patriot News Crew, left to right: Angelo Hoopes, Logan Costa, Cade Hunter, Lucas Costa, Lia Polanco, Sofia Murillo, Anna Huber & Kaia Copeland (not pictured).



Photo by Ricardo Costa.





Left to right: Coach Ricardo Costa, Jason Penman, Lucas Costa, Jonny Penman, Jordan Larsen, Rachel Huber, Cleo Kirkland, Ana Kirkland, James Marks, Heidi Murillo, Eduardo Murillo & Chandler Eliason.



Judge Kelly Schaeffer-Bullock has been an invaluable supporter of AHS's Mock Trial teams. By graciously allowing students to conduct practice scrimmages in her courtroom, she inspired our scholars and helped instill a deep respect for the law, ethical reasoning, and the pursuit of justice.

# JUSTICE IN PRACTICE

## Training Tomorrow's Advocates

The U.S. Legal System is a tried and trusted system. However, while we place a lot of faith in it, most people never take the time to learn about how their country's Courts function. The Mock Trial program aims to change that. Mock Trial is a middle-through high school competition that, as it says on their website, is "to teach students their rights and responsibilities as citizens." Each year, volunteer attorneys write or adapt a legal case involving issues of interest to youth and send it out for participating teams to prepare.

A typical Mock Trial year will see teams splitting into both witnesses and attorneys to prepare for their case. Witnesses will memorize all the information and come up with a persona relating to a character which they will represent. Attorneys will review all the data and try to build a case for both sides of the argument while coordinating with the witnesses in order to gain confidence with their material. It all comes to head on competition weekend when teams will present their case in a real courtroom to a real judge or practicing attorney. During which teams will take turns questioning each other's witnesses while giving speeches on their argument all while following courtroom etiquette and regulations.

Last year our school's Mock Trial team competed in four Mock Trials twice as prosecutors and twice as defense lawyers. Although our team did not make it to the quarterfinals as it has in previous years when partnering with the American Fork campus it was still a great experience and when asked one of our team members, Chandler Eliason, remarked that his favorite part was "getting to know my teammates better, and learning how a courtroom works."

While being a fun and exciting experience, Mock Trial's main objective is still to teach and educate students about the law. Those participating gain not only the knowledge of courtroom dynamics but also learn public speaking, data analysis, and writing skills, all essential for a successful trial. Another one of our team members, Lucas Costa, remarked that his mock trial experience "helped me become a more confident and aware speaker. By learning the courtroom rules, I was taught important lessons on integrity, responsibility, clever word usage, and time management. Each has boosted my ability to debate and inform in a civil manner both inside and outside the courtroom."

Written by Logan Novak Costa,  
a Senior at AHS Salt Lake City Campus.





The Heritage Youth Choirs began with a simple but profound purpose: to help youth and audiences come closer to Jesus Christ through high-quality sacred choral music. That purpose grew from founder Rob Swenson's own transformative experience singing in the Utah Valley Children's Choir, where the motto "Sing for the Lord" planted seeds that would shape his life's work.

Years later, after beginning his teaching career, Rob felt prompted to start a faith-centered youth choir in northern Utah County. He and his wife, Kristy, worked tirelessly—distributing fliers, searching for space, and recruiting families—to launch what became the Timpanogos Youth Chorus. Their first rehearsal in 2009 gathered only three singers in the old "sticky shoe" theater in American Fork. By the end of the year, membership had grown to only 30, and financial strain left the future uncertain.

At that crossroads, they chose to move forward in faith. Just a couple of months later, Rob was given the opportunity to join the faculty at American Heritage School—a blessing that brought the choir under the school's mission to develop "Christ-centered, principle-based" disciples of Jesus Christ. The organization eventually became the Heritage Youth Choirs.

Today, the program has grown to over 400 singers in AF and SLC, supported by a dedicated team of passionate music educators. The launch of the Extended Choir in 2019 expanded its reach globally, welcoming qualified singers to join the annual musical fireside tours. The touring choir has shared its message in more than 60 Latter-day Saint Stakes across the U.S. and is preparing for its first international tour to Great Britain in 2026.

Through every season of growth, the mission remains the same: to lift hearts to Christ through sacred music, perfectly aligned with the larger vision of American Heritage School.

# LIFTING HEARTS THROUGH SACRED MUSIC

Choral Music That Helps Youth and Audiences  
Come Closer to Jesus Christ

by Rob Swenson

*This article was generated and edited with the assistance of AI. Photo by Leland Anderson.*





## **HERITAGE YOUTH CHOIRS**

**JUNIOR CHOIR**  
GRADES K-1

**CHILDREN'S CHOIR**  
GRADES 2-4

**TREBLE CHOIR**  
GRADES 5-7 AND 8TH GRADE GIRL  
WHO DO NOT WANT TO BE IN THE  
YOUTH CHORUS

**YOUTH CHORUS**  
GRADES 8-12 AND CHANGED-VOICE  
7TH GRADE BOYS





**H**undreds of voices masterfully blending and beautifully testifying of Jesus Christ, filling the air with harmonies that move audiences young and old, Christian and agnostic alike. That is what Heritage Youth Chorus (HYC) delivers at each performance.

From concerts to recording albums to touring across the country—and in 2026 the British Isles—the Heritage Youth Choirs at American Heritage School share testimony through music.

For many, joining the choir begins with simple motivations: meeting new friends, improving musical abilities, or, for some, following a parent's encouragement. But somewhere between rehearsals, retreats, and performances, each member learns that HYC is far more than just a choir—it's a mission.

Its purpose is clear: *to promote enduring faith in Jesus Christ and musical excellence in the lives of members and audiences.* That mission shapes every note sung, every friendship built, and every lesson learned.

A choir only succeeds when its members “listen louder” than they sing. Each voice must blend, trust, and support the others. Beyond the concerts and tours, HYC cultivates habits and virtues that last a lifetime.

Members learn discipline, through the consistency of rehearsal and performance; humility, by blending individual talent into a unified sound; trust and teamwork, by relying on one another through the challenges of travel and performance; and faith, by seeing how God works through ordinary youth to touch extraordinary hearts.

# TESTIMONY THROUGH MUSIC

Performance requires preparation, but as Senior HYC member Peter Anderson noted, the at-home rehearsals are not a chore. “At home practices have been such a blessing! They are such a joy and bring light into my life!” he joyfully declared.

Preparation to sing as a choir is not limited to individual or group practice, but also includes the daily habits of health, rest, and faith. Long tours and sleepless nights can test a singer's voice and endurance. Yet, through it all, each member learns how to sustain their physical and spiritual strength so that every performance is his or her best.

Our talents and purpose are magnified at the retreats for older choir members—overnight rehearsals designed to drill music and build unity. Between long hours of practice and shared meals, friendships are forged and testimonies deepened. These experiences knit the choir together, improving their collective spirit and the joy brought to each performance.

Allie Gillmore, a Junior at AHS and 2025 HYC soloist, said “Choir is so fun and my testimony has grown so much since I joined three years ago. Our concerts are always so fun to sing in, and going on choir tour is an opportunity I'm so glad I get to have. I learn so much, build



Photo by Ricardo Costa.



amazing friendships, and grow my testimony. The directors are awesome, and you can tell they love what they do. Joining HYC was so worth it for me, and I've been very blessed being a part of it."

The Heritage Youth Choirs at American Heritage School include four ensembles to accommodate various ages and skill levels. Each group is led by professional music educators who help students refine their choral technique and deepen their understanding of sacred music.

For advanced singers, the Heritage Youth Chorus serves as the touring ensemble and core performance group. Members of this choir not only perform locally but also record albums and travel to share the Gospel through music nationwide.

## MEANINGFUL COLLABORATIONS

In recent years, the choirs have collaborated with artists such as Marie Osmond, Nathan Pacheco, GENTRI, and Lexi Walker, and have performed frequently on Temple Square.

This wonderful organization of choirs for all ages is not limited to students at the American Heritage School. All K-12 students who would like to participate in their respective age Heritage Youth Chorus choirs are welcome. For those eligible for the advance and oldest student choir, the Heritage Youth Chorus, a wonderful option is joining the Extended Choir, where students from across the country participate in rehearsals remotely and then come together to perform with the Utah-based choir members for the annual fireside in June and travel on Summer tour in person.

Perhaps said best by new HYC member in 2025-2026 and AHS senior at the Salt Lake City campus, Claire Kenney, *"I love the songs we sing because I'm able to feel the Spirit. I always enjoy going to Choir because I leave better than I came. I appreciate how we discuss the deeper meaning of each song."*

For those who are interested in participating in or supporting the choir, please visit [heritageyouthchoirs.org](https://heritageyouthchoirs.org).

Written by Durgin Jones,  
a Senior at AHS Salt Lake City Campus.





**M**y first orchestra teacher, Janice McAllister, is quick to tell a story. Although it's been more than 30 years, she still tells it with a gleam in her eye that I suspect comes from a hint of pride. I started playing the cello in fourth grade at Hillcrest Elementary—no private teacher, just a school-rented instrument and a dedicated music teacher. Our little orchestra program rehearsed before school in a trailer twice a week. The way Mrs. McAllister tells it, we were playing a simple but fun arrangement she had written when, in the middle of rehearsal, I set down my cello, leapt into the air with my hands over my head, and yelled, "This is SO MUCH FUN!"

The truth is, I still feel that way. Music is SO MUCH FUN! And I don't think that I'm the only one who feels that way. So how did I get from that elementary school trailer to conducting at Lincoln Center, performing on PBS, and reaching the top of the Billboard Classical Charts? Now, in my twentieth year of conducting Lyceum, perhaps this is a good time to look back and reconnect with how it all started.

Thanks to amazing teachers like Mrs. McAllister, my love of music grew and grew. By middle school, it was evident that I had a knack for music, and my parents started me with private lessons at age 13. I realize now that 13 is considered a late start in music, but my experience taught me that when you begin matters far less than why you play. Even starting late, God had a plan for my talents and He may have a plan for yours.

Not long after starting private lessons, I was sitting in orchestra class when the teacher reminded us that one requirement of the class was to attend a concert. The end of the term was drawing nigh, and without turning in a concert program the best grade you could earn in the class was an A minus. That night, the Utah Symphony was on tour performing in our town and tickets were cheap. I remember riding my bike to the concert by myself, thinking that if it was super boring, I could always leave at intermission and turn in the concert program for full credit.

I was completely unprepared for what I experienced that night. It was my first time hearing a professional orchestra and my first real exposure to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. As young and inexperienced as I was, it felt as though I were holding out a small cup to be filled, but the water pouring out did not originate from a faucet—it was a waterfall, something akin to Niagara. I was elated and confused. I fell asleep. I conducted the orchestra with a pencil hidden underneath the concert program. I was simply unequipped

for the visceral reaction my body and spirit had to that music.

I still remember walking back to my bicycle at the end of the concert, unlocking the bike lock, and thinking, "How would I even attempt to explain what just happened to my parents or teachers?" The music impacted me so profoundly that I couldn't put words to what I experienced. So I didn't. I rode home and turned the program in the next day to get credit for the assignment. I didn't start practicing more. I never thanked my teacher for the life-changing assignment or sat my parents down to explain how I had been changed forever. On the outside, nothing had changed. None of the adults in my life would have realized that something changed on the inside when I heard that music.

As parents, teachers, and mentors, the true impact of our efforts is sometimes so delayed that we may never fully understand it. It is only as I look back on my life that I recognize how important that concert assignment was. Only in retrospect do I see how God used teachers to prepare me for the work He had for me.

Through my high school years, I continued to play the cello in the school orchestra and take private lessons. I also played football, was the captain of the wrestling team, worked stage crew, and kept my Church leaders pretty busy. While my grades were good, I knew music was my best chance for college scholarships—without which I would really struggle to afford college.

All of a sudden, practicing really mattered. It wasn't just an activity I did to prepare for lessons or concerts; it was the primary means to college and career. My practice hours tripled. I tackled more difficult music and began sacrificing other interests to prioritize my preparation. Miracle after miracle fell into place as I worked and prayed and worked and worked.

I was offered scholarships at every university where I auditioned and ultimately chose to attend the University of Utah, where I received full tuition plus fees and half my housing on scholarship. It was the answer to prayer I had been working towards for months. But this blessing brought with it a life-changing question with eternal consequences.

At the time, I was dating seriously the woman who is now my wife of 25 years, and I feared I would lose her if I chose to serve a two-year mission. I was caring for my ill mother, who staunchly opposed my serving at the time. In addition, nearly every profes-

sional musician told me the same thing: that taking a two-year break from the cello would likely end my promising music career before it even began. On top of all that, I wasn't certain that the scholarship I had worked so hard for would be waiting for me on my return.

"Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep." (2 Nephi 4:19–20) I knew where my blessings had originated, and I was eager to show my gratitude to God by serving. For two years, I barely touched a cello. Once, on a preparation day, I dragged my companion to a music store where they had a cheap instrument that somewhat resembled a cello. On another occasion, we tracted into a violin maker's shop—who, after about 30 minutes, had to kick us out because I wouldn't leave. Don't worry, we left him a Book of Mormon on our way out! While cello playing was placed on the altar of mission sacrifice, the Lord taught me the lesson that would tie together all my years of musical training with my true purpose. He taught me that there is no greater feeling in the world than inspiring another soul.

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15)

On my mission, I developed a love of teaching—no, a love of inspiring. I determined that I would either be a seminary teacher or an orchestra conductor. In many ways, I ended up being both. To me, music is a means of connecting with the Divine even more directly than through study and prayer. As Beethoven put it, "Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the physical." When done with all your heart, there is almost no distance between music and heaven.

When I got home, I married that amazing young woman (YAY!), restarted my cello practice, and set my sights on a career in conducting. I convinced the University of Utah to reinstate my scholarship and worked harder than ever to hone my craft. Like becoming a lawyer or a doctor, you can't major in conducting as an undergraduate. First, I got my degree in cello performance at the University of Utah.

As an undergrad, they allowed me to audit the graduate conducting courses. I begged for permission from the Utah Symphony to observe their closed rehearsals and started spending as much time there soaking up ev-



everything I could learn. I volunteered to start conducting a small adult community orchestra each week and started taking regular conducting lessons with the Utah Symphony conductors.

I applied to conducting programs across the country, but knew that God wanted me at BYU. I received a full assistantship there and completed my master's degree in conducting in 2006. I was immediately hired by their music department to conduct two orchestras and teach cello. That same year, I also started a youth orchestra.

At first, the Lyceum Repertory Orchestra was very small. The music was anything but impressive. But over time, it grew. As we grew we were able to serve more students at more levels. Year by year, more

talented directors, donors, and administrators answered the call. Today, we are perhaps the largest youth orchestra program in the country.

Thousands of students have learned to LOVE music MORE as a result. Hundreds of millions of people have heard our music on YouTube and streaming, with close to two million streams on Spotify this year alone. We have students currently studying at the most respected music schools in the world, including Juilliard. Countless testimonies have been nurtured, and there are even a few students who have echoed my fourth-grade sentiment: "This is SO MUCH FUN!"



# THIS IS SO MUCH FUN!

When Done with All Your Heart,  
There Is Almost No Distance Between  
Music and Heaven

by Kayson Brown





*The Importance of Being Earnest*



# BUILDING CHARACTER ON AND OFF THE STAGE

*Fiddler on the Roof*



## Theatre Is a Training Ground for Humanity, and Ultimately, Discipleship

by Micole Mayfield

**F**or me, theatre has never been just about performances or applause. Theatre is a training ground for humanity, and ultimately, discipleship.

On the stage, students learn how to stand in their own skin, speak truth with courage, listen with empathy, and take responsibility for the energy they bring into a room. It is where confidence is built slowly, through consistency and care. Theatre is where mistakes are not failures, but information. Where vulnerability is not weakness, but strength. At its core, theatre is presence. It asks students to show up, fully, honestly, and bravely. To be aware of others. To work as an ensemble. To serve a story bigger than themselves.

That philosophy shapes the kind of drama teacher I am.

*The Sound of Music*



*A Christmas Carol*



*A Midsummer's Night Dream*







All performance photos by Troy Smith.



I am not interested in creating performers who can only shine under stage lights. I want to help form humans who can lead, collaborate, communicate, and choose integrity, whether or not anyone is watching. Every skill learned for the stage can directly correlate to each student's life. My classroom is built on the belief that great actors and great disciples share the same foundations: intention, humility, discipline, unity, and joy.

I run a high-expectation program. Excellence matters to me, not because trophies matter, but because effort does. Because learning to finish strong, show up prepared, and honor your commitments builds something lasting. I want students to leave my program knowing that discipline is a form of self-respect and that joy and rigor can coexist. Most of all, I see theatre as sacred work.

Stories change people. Stories help us rehearse life. They give us language for pain, hope, repentance, forgiveness, and growth. Onstage, students learn how to step into someone else's experience, and in doing so, often discover themselves.

That is why I teach theatre the way I do. Not to create stars, but to help students build Christlike character on and off the stage.



The Tempest



Anastasia, The Musical



Pride &amp; Prejudice





# ATHLETICS

## High Fives & Higher Standards

by Kevin Ten Eyck

Everyone loves a good high five but for the AHS Salt Lake City High School Pickleball Team, it represents far more than a quick celebration. For us, the “five” stands for **heart, might, mind, strength, and team**. It’s a simple gesture with a deeper meaning and it became the foundation of our culture during the inaugural season of AHS SLC High School Pickleball.

As both an athletic director and head coach, I’m a firm believer in creating opportunities for student-athletes to work hard, grow, and succeed both in school and on the court. So when AHS SLC had the chance to join the inaugural season of the Utah High School Pickleball Association (UHSPA), I didn’t hesitate...we were all in!

With pickleball becoming the first league sport offered at AHS SLC, and with hopes of it soon being sanctioned by the UHSAA, I couldn’t be prouder of our players, parents, and administration for jumping in with full support. What we accomplished as a small school with a very young roster is nothing short of remarkable.

Our 2024 inaugural team included four boys and four girls, six of whom were still in middle school. Yet as the season unfolded, something became clear: not only could our small, young program compete with established high schools across Utah, but we could beat them. Most of the teams we faced had 20–30 times our student population to draw from, yet our players stepped into every match with grit, confidence, and the belief that size doesn’t determine heart.

By the time we reached the state tournament, AHS SLC was ranked #5 in Utah and our girls’ doubles team, the Kenney sisters, entered as the #2 seed, finishing the regular season 8–4. These accomplishments become even more impressive when you consider that prior to tryouts, none of our players even had a DUPR rating, none had ever played in a tournament, and several gave up longtime sports like soccer, lacrosse, and dance, just for the chance to put on the Patriot red, white, and blue and represent their school on a weekly basis.

That dedication helped fuel the momentum heading into our second season. In 2025, interest in pickleball, and athletics as a whole, has grown rapidly at AHS SLC. This year’s team has increased to 12 players, and the UHSPA has expanded to include 40 high schools from across Utah, spanning from St. George to Logan, a sign of how quickly pickleball is rising across the state.

For fellow coach, Dan Maile and me, the most rewarding part of these first two seasons of pickleball has been watching our students grow skill-wise, emotionally, and individually. Sports teach lessons that stick with athletes for life: how to win with humility, how to lose with resilience, how to push beyond perceived limits, and how to accomplish something you once thought was out of reach.

Athletics at AHS SLC opened the fall season with a state championship coached by our new Athletic Director, Kristin Baldwin. In our first year competing in the USSA, our cross-country team won the boys’ varsity state title and our girls’ junior varsity team earned second place. Our mountain bike club is gaining momentum with aspirations of joining the UHSLC for state competition and we’re actively exploring adding soccer in spring 2026. The excitement is real and the momentum is building.

As we continue building athletics at AHS SLC, our mission remains the same: give students opportunities to be healthy, to stretch themselves, and to take on meaningful challenges outside the classroom. With “high fives” guiding our efforts, every day we’re continually amazed by the quality of students who wear the Patriot colors and the standard of excellence they continue to set.

Go Patriots!

Coach Ten Eyck  
Assistant  
Athletic Director



In our first year competing in the USSA, our cross-country team won the boys' varsity state title, and our girls' junior varsity team earned second place.







Right to Left, Fron Row: McKenzie Anderson, Coach Kristin Baldwin & Mary Anderson. Back Row: Wyatt Milar, Peter Anderson, Matthew Shurtz & Will Jackson.





ATHLETICS

HEART,  
MIGHT, MIND,  
STRENGTH &  
TEAM



# Pickleball Is as Much a Mental Game as a Physical One

Pickleball is one of America's fastest-growing sports and is accessible to players of all skill levels. Beginning in Spring 2025, Utah schools formed teams and created a state pickleball league: the Utah High School Pickleball Association (UHSPA). American Heritage School (AHS) in Salt Lake City participated in the inaugural year of UHSPA.

AHS's Salt Lake City team consisted of eight players in its first year: four girls and four boys. It expanded to 12 players in its second year. The team draws members from grades 6 to 12 and competes with high schools from across the state, including schools that are much larger than AHS.

From its first practice, the AHS team embodied its motto: "Heart, Might, Mind, and Strength." Players attend practice with a growth mindset and exert their heart, might, mind, and strength in every practice and match. Not only do the coaches teach the technical skills of the game—they also delve into the heart of the game and the team.

Senior Claire Kenney reflected, "The concept of 'team' has taught me the value of a collective mindset: we practice together, win together, and lose together. I am discovering how to better respond to failure. After missing

**"Because we are a small school, we all know each other, and being on a team has magnified this feeling. It builds extra connection, which is key to having a successful team."**

a shot, I chose to brush it off and try again. Playing with the attitude of heart, might, mind, strength has shaped me into someone who strives to improve in all aspects of life."

Throughout the seasons, players learn to rely on one another, stay mentally strong, and persevere through intense rallies and challenging matches. The simple act of paddle tapping between points becomes more than a nice gesture; it shows our commitment and support towards each other. Charlotte Kenney, a ninth grade pickleball player, observed, "We increase our chances of winning by building team unity. Paddle taps show that we're a team, that we can do this, and we can win. It shows our dedication towards each other."

Another important fundamental of pickleball is the "ready position." Coach Dan Maile commented, "When players maintain a 'ready position' throughout the point, they stand ready to defend, attack, or react to every ball that comes across the net. We coach and reinforce this technique regularly. When players implement the ready position during gameplay, it naturally improves their performance."

Moreover, our players step onto a court they've never played before and learn that pickleball is as much a mental game as a physical one—requiring focus, composure, and strategic thinking.

Multiple players have improved their mental game. Sophomore Matthew Shurtz put it this way, "It's all about mental composure. Don't let missing a shot or losing get to you." As he has focused mentally, his consistency and accuracy have increased. Wyatt Milar, a new tenth-grade scholar at AHS, has also improved his mental game and coordination. With consistency, players learn how to trust each other, and how to challenge themselves mentally and physically.

Not only have our players grown in their accuracy, mentality, and sportsmanship, but they have also become better friends. Athletic Director and former Pickleball Assistant Coach, Kevin Ten Eyck said, "It's fun to see players that otherwise would not have known each other come together for a common goal. By the end of the season, you're brothers and sisters."

Parents and coaches see the team improve throughout the season. Charlotte Kenney observed, "Our team has clicked. Because we are a small school, we all know each other, and being on a team has magnified this feeling. It builds extra connection, which is key to having a successful team." Our players learn how to support one another, how to communicate effectively, how to build team unity, who we are as a school, and what it means to be a true patriot—one who values character, scholarship, and liberty.

Coaches care for the players like their own children. Spring 2025's pickleball team celebration banquet highlighted this, reflecting on accomplishments and celebrating achievements. As the team reflected on participating in the state tournament, they noted that the state tournament had a different energy and atmosphere than the weekly matches. Coach Ten Eyck observed, we were "the little school that could" rise one point at a time. The whole team attended the tournament to support each other and watch David Jackson and Charlotte Kenney advance. Coach Dan Maile observed, "It's been a wonderful opportunity and experience to coach our Pickleball team for the past two seasons. They are amazing student athletes. Go Patriots!"

As AHS in Salt Lake City continues to build meaningful extracurricular opportunities for a wide range of student interests, the AHS pickleball team will continue to be a program that strengthens the hearts, minds, and bodies of scholar-players. AHS helps its scholars grow into well-rounded, confident individuals who "realize their divine potential" (AHS Vision Statement), and pickleball provides a great way to exercise, practice, compete, and socialize together.

As AHS scholars, we express gratitude to the parents, coaches, families, and donors who make our pickleball program possible. We invite scholars in grades 6 to 12 to consider joining the pickleball team—a great way to practice principles of "heart, might, mind, and strength" together!

*Written by Georgiana Elliott and Claire Kenney,  
Seniors at AHS Salt Lake City Campus.*





# ATHLETICS

AHS helps its scholars grow into well-rounded, confident individuals who “realize their divine potential, and pickleball provides a great way to exercise, practice, compete, and socialize together.



*Left: 2025 Pickleball Team Inaugural Year. Left to right: Coach Dan Maile, Tony Maile, Matthew Shurtz, Logan Ten Eyck, David Jackson, Claire Kenney, Charlotte Kenney, Susie Nielson, Charlotte Ten Eyck & Coach Kevin Ten Eyck.*

*Below: 2026 Pickleball Team. Top (left to right): Charlotte Kenney, Susie Nielson, Bennett Anderson, Wyatt Milar, David Jackson, Matthew Shurtz, Elizabeth Larsen, & Coach Kenney. Bottom (left to right): Coach Dan Maile, Claire Kenney, Moleni, Tony Maile, William Jackson & Franki Maile.*





# A CHERISHED TRADITION

## Daily Devotionals & Annual Devotional Program

**D**aily devotionals are a cherished tradition at American Heritage School and serve as a foundation for both spiritual and academic growth. These moments help students anchor their day in eternal truths while strengthening skills of researching, reasoning, and applying principles to their lives.

### WHAT A DAILY DEVOTIONAL LOOKS LIKE

In most classrooms, devotionals begin with:

- A hymn sung together
- A memorization (such as scripture or uplifting text)
- Study and discussion from inspired sources, including:
  - Current General Conference messages
  - Come, Follow Me* resources
  - Scriptures: the Bible (KJV), the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price

### GROWTH THROUGH PARTICIPATION

- **Elementary and Middle School Students (K–8):** Each grade prepares and presents one devotional program during the school year, sharing songs, memorizations, and insights with the school community.

- **High School Students:** As part of their spiritual progression, high school students do not hold daily devotionals in class. Instead, they participate in Seminary each school day. Within the classroom, additional devotional opportunities are incorporated through presentations, displays, and community devotional events.

### WHY IT MATTERS

This daily practice nurtures students' ability to:

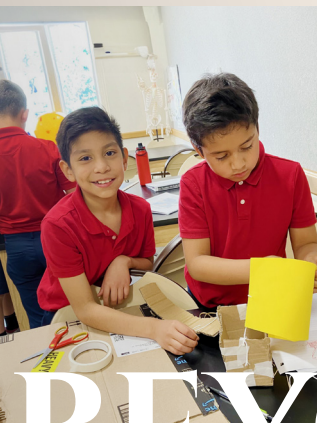
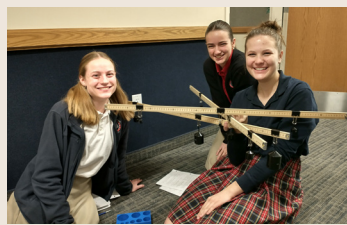
- Research and reason from truth
- Express their faith with confidence
- Apply gospel-centered principles in their studies and daily lives

### ANNUAL DEVOTIONAL PROGRAMS

The culmination of this effort is seen in our annual **Devotional Program**, where students reflect and share what they have learned, providing a meaningful imprint of truth on their hearts and minds.







# BEYOND THE CLASS



SAMPLE OFFERINGS • Engineering in Action • The Human Body: From Anatomy Dissections to Special Effects Prosthetics • Faithful Journeys: Pioneers, Peaks, and Promised Lands • Exploring Astronomy and the Geology of Zions National Park • Men Are Free to Choose: A Study of Liberty, Marxism, and Eternal Truths • From Script to Screen: On-Camera Acting and Reel Production • Cake Wars Academy: Frosting, Fondant & Fun • Body, Mind, Spirit: A Day of Mindfulness & Reflection • Jarred & Ready: Food Preservation Skills for a Self-Reliant Life • Strategy Arena: From STEM Skills to Escape Thrills • Voices in Motion: A Show Choir Day • How to Become a Professional Bowler • Aviation • Coding for Kids • Breadmaking • And more!





# Immersive Approaches to Real-World Learning

by Leland Anderson

Since its opening, AHS SLC has facilitated experiential learning courses for high school students in various topics such as career exploration, astronomy, biology, ballistics, conservation, college preparation, the human body, anatomy, dissections, special effects prosthetics, pioneer journeys, and geology.

Each course carries a small amount of credit toward graduation and is offered for one week between the third and fourth terms. With the downtown Salt Lake City campus as a home base, students gain convenient access to professionals in medicine, media, law, policy, engineering, business, and the trades. In recent years, AHS scholars have enjoyed many learning experiences.

While exploring medical careers, students tried their hand at creating emergency surgical airways in pig tracheas under the direction of Dr. Eric Buell, a pediatric anesthesiologist and AHS parent. The tracheas were provided by Cook Medical. These students then traveled to the University of Utah, where they met Dr. Michael Pulsipher, a pediatric cancer researcher at the Huntsman Cancer Institute. There they learned about chimeric antigen receptor T-cells as a treatment for leukemia. They also learned about Dr. Pulsipher's path to becoming a physician-scientist.

After a quick break for lunch, the students met Dr. Kevin Jones, an orthopedic surgeon and AHS parent who specializes in surgeries to remove sarcomas. Dr. Jones captivated the students' imaginations with stories of surgeries lasting more than 10 hours; innovative rotationplasty surgeries for bone cancers near the knee; and surgeries that require household tools such as hammers and drills to remove tumors and rebuild the skeleton. Dr. Jones told the students he loves his work because of the opportunities he has to use his hands and his knowledge to solve problems and save lives.

Students also interviewed a medical student Andrew Sessions (AHS alum, Class of 2014), who assured the high school students that perfect grades are not required to get into medical school and that while finishing medical school requires a lot of work, it is more achievable than most people think. They then toured an operating room where they learned about machines and tools used to keep patients safely and comfortably asleep while surgeons operate.





Downtown Salt Lake City and the great state of Utah provide AHS students with remarkable and seemingly endless resources for learning.



Students visited media and publishing houses for the Deseret News, KSL, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hal Boyd, Suzanne Bates, Lois Collins, Hanna Seariac, and Doug Wilks of Deseret News and Bonneville Communications told stories that illustrated the power of the press.

Adam Olson, Paul Murphy, and Church Magazine staff such as Noelle Barrus, Bailey Rachel, Charlotte, Cindy, and Martin led discussions about strategic messaging, audience analysis, graphic design, and communication channels, giving practical examples from the production work supporting the Church magazines.

In learning about business consulting, Aaron Andersen and Michael Jensen of Cicero Group excited students with descriptions of business consulting projects.

To provide exposure to law careers, lawyers Zach and Kara Bloomer introduced students to civil and criminal law, as well as IP and privacy law. Russell Shurtz and colleagues Michael Johnston, Julie Kenworthy, and Alayna of Kirton & McConkie provided a panel that answered questions about law career paths, problem-solving, and what it's like to work in a medium-sized law firm, and the importance of work-life balance. And Senators Luz Escamilla and Jen Plumb, and Representative Anthony Loubet taught students about the process of becoming a legislator, and the nature of legislative work during the legislative session and throughout the year.

Electrical engineers Tim Shawcroft and Dr. Kyle Holzer, and civil engineer and AHS parent Isaac Oakeson gave presentations to students on how engineers work to solve problems using math, science, and engineering. The University of Utah Engineering Department wowed students with demonstrations of drone projects and biomedical devices, and Dr. Michael Ware and the BYU Physics Department led AHS scholars through the Eyring Science Center, including BYU's acoustical absorption room, which allows scientists to precisely study vibration in materials and products.

Sam Roberts of Hogan Construction and various experts from Church Headquarters Facilities showed AHS students tools and processes of their trades—building, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, cabinetry and furniture making—and how trades can be fulfilling and profitable.

Director, author, illustrator, and AHS Trustee David Warner shared several personal stories to illuminate how God gives his children experiences, desires, and spiritual impressions to prepare them for a work. People fulfill their work when they organize their experiences and thoughts, prioritize people, and respond to spiritual feelings every day and serve as directed by the spirit. Students, he said, should not pursue a career because they want to look good. In whatever career they choose, they should do many good things and bring about much righteousness (D&C 58:27).

In one group, students dove into the fundamentals of geology, explored the features and formations in Southern Utah's breathtaking national parks, and used photographs captured during the trip to create a digital travel log.

Other scholars immersed themselves in the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through a combination of site visits, field research, historical analysis, and personal reflection, students explored the perseverance, legacy, and impact of the Latter-day Saint pioneers and Church leadership, including a faith-affirming perspective of significant historical events such as the Utah War and the events at Mountain Meadows, emphasizing the importance of historical context and accountability.

In another group, students visited a cadaver lab to learn about human anatomy, performed pig anatomy dissections at Utah State University, participated in a hands-on suture class, and toured local medical facilities, gaining insights into the roles of healthcare professionals. Throughout the week the students created anatomy sketches; created life castings of the hand, foot, and face; and transformed those castings into special effects prosthetics. These young scholars enjoyed learning how anatomy is used in the special effects industry and exploring techniques for molding and casting latex masks and prosthetics.

Still other students experienced the principles of aerodynamics firsthand in simulated flight at iFLY in Ogden, after which they toured Hill Air Force Base to connect classroom concepts with real-world engineering challenges and to foster a deeper appreciation for STEM fields.

Experiential learning activities at AHS such as those described here have proven to be enjoyable, immersive approaches to real-world learning. What young scholars see and do impresses their minds and hearts. Downtown Salt Lake City and the great state of Utah provide AHS students with remarkable resources for learning.



# PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN HERITAGE GRADUATE

## Disciples in Process

**A**t American Heritage School, education is a sacred journey of becoming more like Jesus Christ. Inspired by the divine pattern in Luke 2:52, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,” our graduates are disciples in process—anchored in truth, growing in Christlike character, and prepared to lead and serve in a complex world. The Portrait of a Graduate outlines the spiritual depth, intellectual skill, social maturity, and physical stewardship our students are developing as they prepare to build Zion in their homes and communities.

### SPIRITUAL & CHARACTER SKILLS

- Christlike Character & Integrity: Live with integrity and Christlike love for God and neighbor.
- Growth Mindset & Resilience: Embrace failure as a necessary part of growth and develop resilience through reliance on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- Gospel-Centered Worldview: Students consistently frame learning and culture within a gospel-centered worldview, approaching revealed teachings with discipline and care.

### INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- Critical Reasoning: Think critically and evaluate ideas through revealed truth.
- Historical & Cultural Literacy: Understand and appreciate history and culture, drawing wisdom from the past.
- Creative Problem Solving: Approach challenges through creative problem-solving and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Lifelong Learning: Students gain the discipline and skills to succeed in rigorous university settings, cultivating independent reading habits and a lifelong curiosity for learning.

### SOCIAL, FAMILY, & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SKILLS

- Collaboration, Communication, and Leadership: Communicate clearly, collaborate effectively, and lead with humility and vision.
- Empathy & Citizenship: Engage with empathy and respect for differing perspectives while honoring America’s founding principles and the blessings of liberty.
- Service Orientation: Observe the needs of others and take initiative to serve.

### PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELLNESS SKILLS

- Body-Temple Stewardship: Recognize the divine purpose of the body and honor God through wise stewardship.
- Wellness: Practice sustainable habits for wellness—nutrition, rest, movement, and connection.
- Preparation for Lifelong Service: Maintain physical health that enables lifelong service in building the Lord’s kingdom.



Assistant Principal Caroline McNiven, Lia Polanco, Victoria dos Santos, Evey Jackson & Principal Leland Anderson



# THE GIFT OF GIVING

## An Act of Faith, Stewardship, and Love

---

JENET ERICKSON — TRUSTEE

“It was American heritage school that inculcated in me and my siblings a deep love for America, our heritage, and the cause of Christ. The truths we learned at the feet of consecrated, Christ-centered teachers, and the feelings we shared singing and reciting the truths of our American heritage are a like a golden thread illuminating and binding our hearts as we have drawn on them throughout our lives. Now, nothing means more than watching our own children experience the gifts of American Heritage School in their lives. We can’t help but want every child to experience the same gifts of truth, love and light.”



SHAUNA AND RALPH JOHNSON — DONORS

“Ralph and I are great supporters of the American Heritage Schools! They have all the elements and values I want for children in our country everywhere. There is nothing out there quite like it. When we first read the mission statement and goals of this school I was awed by the dedication to principles and values which are the bedrock of my faith in God and teaches them to understand their civic duty to this country. I have observed that the American Heritage Schools are actively working to teach and build the children. They are happy and love learning. They love their teachers and in its good environment it encourages good peer relationships. Most importantly the school is helping to build testimonies that God is their Father and loves them and Jesus Christ is their Savior.”





# THE GIFT OF RECEIVING

## The Fruits of Generosity, Received with Gratitude

by Leland Anderson

We offer our deep gratitude to our donors for their remarkable support of American Heritage School – Salt Lake City. Since 2021, donors have given approximately \$10M in support of the campus. Their donations have allowed American Heritage School to:

—Transform a stake center into a K–12 school with classrooms, furniture, fixtures, program equipment (computers, weight room, AV equipment), a playground, fencing, improved landscaping, and upgraded HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and safety systems.

—Hire excellent school teachers and leaders who know and love God, know their subject deeply, connect their subject to gospel principles, teach their subject matter in highly engaging and fruitful ways, organize their curriculum transparently, and joyfully communicate and collaborate with AHS peers and parents.

—Recruit, admit, and assist families who embrace the mission of American Heritage School and contribute to the school's culture of unity and family involvement as they attend school events, understand and uphold school policies, and provide service to the school community. Through donating to our annual fund for need-based scholarships, you have assisted families as follows during the campus's first three years:

	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Number of students awarded	88	127	99	89 (after UFA)
Average Award	\$4,740	\$4,896	\$4,861	\$2,843
Total Awarded	\$417,132	\$621,839	\$481,242	\$253,026

—Define and organize mission-aligned learning objectives, tasks, and subject matter in each grade level, subject, and extracurricular program. Refine curriculum and extracurricular programs through ongoing review of course content and teacher training in effective learning methods. Specifically, teachers and administrators are reviewing and refine syllabi, which the school plans to publish (or update) each school year. Help each high school student and their parents plan for post-secondary education and scholarships/funding.

With continuing donor assistance, we plan to expand our Salt Lake Campus facilities, staff, and programs to enroll 600 full-time students.

### THANK YOU NOTES

"American Heritage has been an incredible blessing to our family. We feel so lucky/privileged/honored to be a part of its community. And though we do not have monetary resources, we have time and talents that we will give generously to the school, as another way to say thank you for your generosity. Thank you, so very much, for your gift."

"As we have entered this season of Thanksgiving the things I have realized the most are the things people have done for us and the way they have been answers to our prayers and are so willing to do the Saviors work here on earth with little to no recognition. Please know how much your gift has blessed us and how appreciative we are to belong to such a caring community."

"What a blessing for us to have people like you and our generous donors in our lives! An amazing act of kindness. The generosity of these families means more than words can express. This act lifted a huge weight off our shoulders. It's not just about the money; it's the care and thoughtfulness behind it that touched us deeply. This assistance has made a meaningful difference in our financial situation. This is absolutely a true blessing, and we thank God for placing such kind people and an amazing school staff in our lives."

"Please extend our heartfelt thanks to the generous family who made this possible. We are deeply touched by their kindness. I know that because our child studies here, he is being prepared to become a better instrument in the hands of the Lord, to serve, to love, and to uplift others, just as you all do."



Above: North side landscaping improvements with the installation of new fencing. Right: Cade Hunter (grade 12) appreciates the new speakers, microphones, and lights equipment just installed thanks to last year's generous donations from all of you.

We had 100% participation in the 2024–25 facilities improvement and annual fund campaign. We awarded scholarships, added AV equipment, installed cabinets, improved landscaping, and more! You did that. Thank you!

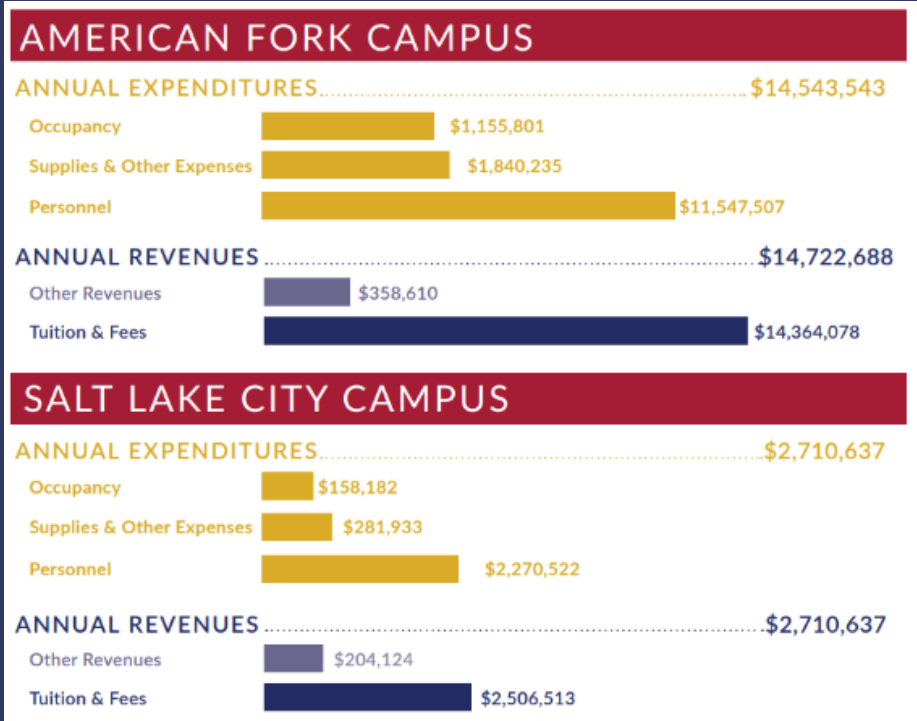


Photos by Leland Anderson.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025





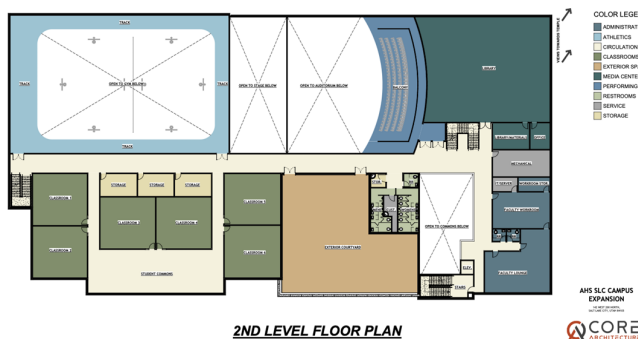
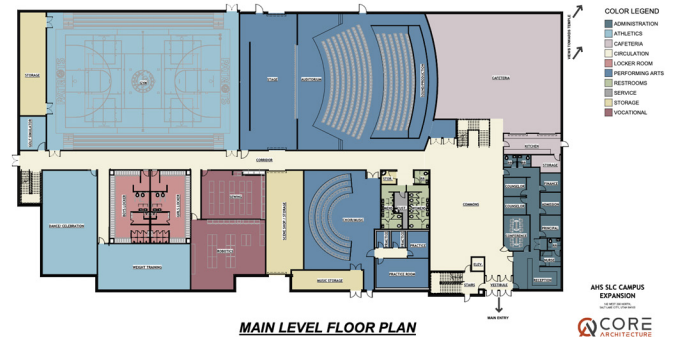
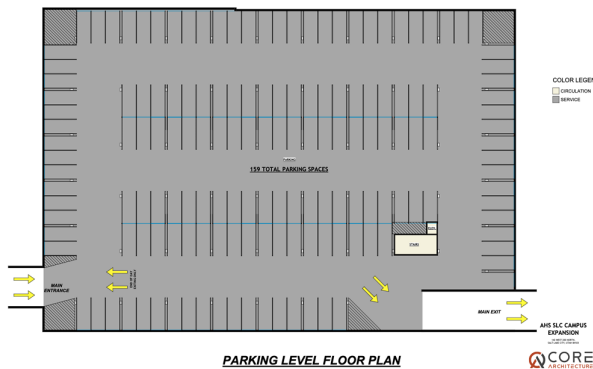
# GROWING IN LIGHT & TRUTH

## Salt Lake City Campus Strategic Plan

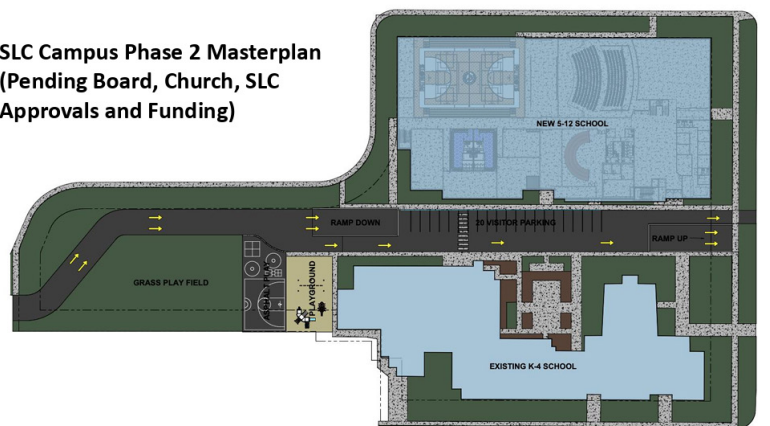
American Heritage School – Salt Lake City aims to achieve its mission to the extent possible in the following ways:

- Better and more comprehensive, **foundation-oriented, onboarding and training** of new faculty, parents, and students.
- **Liberal Arts Focus.** Given facilities constraints for athletic space, as well as the relatively small student population, the SLC campus distinguishes itself as an outstanding liberal arts campus, with excellent academics, including science, music, drama, visual arts, and approximately 12+ CE and AP-level courses.
- **PE and athletics** will be offered as best we can within current facilities constraints, growing/developing after-school athletics programs once we have a significant change in our facilities capacity and enrollment.
- **Campus expansion** is projected to double our capacity from current capacity of 300 students to 600 (construct a new building on current campus, up to \$100M, pending AHS Board, Church, SLC approvals and funding).
- Maintain and develop **strong, strategic relationships** with the Church, SLC and worldwide communities, and higher education.

ALL SUBJECT TO NECESSARY FUNDING AND CONTINUED BOARD SUPPORT



SLC Campus Phase 2 Masterplan  
(Pending Board, Church, SLC  
Approvals and Funding)







# “THANK YOU” TO OUR DONORS

---

“But the assemblage of all this means  
nothing if it cannot be used to bless  
others, especially the rising generation...”

---

In his “statement of educational philosophy,” H. Verlan Andersen, a founding trustee of the school, said that, “The most vital knowledge a student can acquire is an awareness of who he is—that he is a child of our divine Father who loves him, watches over him and wants him to become as He is. Only with such understanding of his self-worth and unlimited potential can the student be properly motivated and aspire to the most worthwhile goals.”

Prior to the 2002 dedicatory prayer of the American Fork campus, Gaylord K. Swim, AHS trustee and chairman, noted the remarkable growth of the school in enrollment, faculty, and facilities. Then he said, “But the assemblage of all this means nothing if it cannot be used to bless others, especially the rising generation. Where this might go is yet to be seen. It is for us to be worthy of it.”

At the beginning of each year, we meet as a Board of Trustees in a room that looks out on the temple. We consider our history and our present circumstances. We consider education data, research, and trends. We review counsel of living prophets. Then, we carefully and

prayerfully counsel about what we feel matters most for the school community in coming years, and we set important and ambitious goals based upon those feelings.

We do not always know exactly how those goals will be accomplished or from whom the resources will come.

“The Lord requireth the heart, and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). We are amazed at how He provides, and especially who He provides, when we surrender to Him these two things.

Our confidence is in Him, and it also comes from YOU. We know that “they who stand with us are greater than they who be against us” (2 Kings 6:16).

With love and gratitude,

AHS Board of Trustees



# A FINAL WORD

FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

---



Why are American Heritage Schools so special? Because we work together with families in developing the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of our students to realize their divine potential.

As our students learn and apply both spiritual and secular truths, and balance charity (love) and virtue (law) in an environment enlightened by the Spirit, they come to know that they are children of loving heavenly parents with a divine purpose and an eternal destiny. That is our goal, and it is the foundation for helping our students cultivate Christian character, transformational scholarship, and responsible liberty.

As a Board of Trustees, we are united and prayerful in our efforts to help fulfill the unique vision and mission of American Heritage Schools, and to convey core principles of personal and civil liberty.

We fully trust and support Grant Beckwith, our wonderful head of school, as well as our inspired and talented principals, administrators, teachers, and staff at each of our campuses. We express gratitude to them and the many families, friends, and other supporters who are helping American Heritage Schools become what would not be possible without your support.

We love you!

We are grateful to serve with this wonderful school community!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "David Andersen".

David Andersen



# THE MAKING OF A COVER

## Capturing Both the Spirit of Where the School Has Been and the Promise of Where It Is Going

by Ricardo Costa



Choosing the magazine cover was a reflective process, guided by the theme *Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future: Portraying the Legacy of American Heritage Schools*. After designing thirty cover mockups, each exploring different visual interpretations of heritage and progress, one image stood apart. It captured both the spirit of where the school has been and the promise of where it is going.

The selected cover features William Jackson, a then 5th grader, dressed as a patriot in the school's annual Patriotic Program—a tradition that symbolizes the values upon which the school was founded. He joined the school during its inaugural year four years ago, and next year he will enter high school, making his journey emblematic of the school's own growth.

Behind him stands the Constitution, representing heritage, principle, and the enduring ideals that anchor American Heritage Schools. Yet the focus is not solely on the past. The composition intentionally places the student at the forefront, emphasizing that while history informs us, it is education that shapes what comes next. The school is not merely preserving legacy; it is actively forming it.

Ultimately, this cover reflects a core truth: the legacy of American Heritage Schools extends beyond buildings, programs, or milestones already achieved. Our students themselves are the true legacy—the living heritage—carrying timeless principles forward into the future.

Our students themselves are the true legacy—the living heritage—carrying timeless principles forward into the future.

Note: AI was used to help draft some sentences on this page.





# EDUCATION FOR THE HEART, IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

Learn by Study and Also by Faith

WE INVITE YOU TO SHARE WHAT YOU'VE READ. INVITE OTHERS.  
COME FEEL THE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL FOR YOURSELF.







“LO, CHILDREN ARE AN  
HERITAGE OF THE LORD...”

— Psalm 127:3