



sponsor spotlight:

# the Madeira School

## RANKED #1 PRIVATE SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA

*The Madeira School has been named by Niche.com as the #1 Private High School in Virginia, as well as one of Town & Country magazine's Top 25 Best Boarding Schools in the United States.*

• By Karen Joostema



"Madeira is thrilled to be recognized as the top private high school in the state, and among the finest boarding schools in the country," says Pilar Cabeza de Vaca, Head of School at Madeira. "We are proud of the transformational impact of a Madeira education — from our innovative academics to our experiential learning beyond the classroom — Madeira lays the foundation for a lifetime of leadership and success."

Madeira earned the number one ranking by scoring highly on a variety of factors, including SAT/ACT scores, college data, student-teacher ratio, and reviews from students and parents. According to Niche, a company that specializes in ranking data on educational institutions, the statistical data used in this ranking was obtained from the U.S. Department of Education and analyzed by Niche's team of data scientists to create the rankings.

One of the contributing factors that distinguish a Madeira student in the competitive world of independent schools is their award-winning Co-Curriculum experiential-learning program. For 50 years Madeira has provided student internships, similar to those offered by colleges and universities. Skill building starts on campus during freshman year with emphasis on public speaking, digital citizenship, time management, health and wellness, team building, and diversity, equity and inclusion topics. Sophomores expand their vision by venturing into local communities to serve others at organizations like Special Olympics, Calleva Farm or Kilmer Center. Juniors have the unique experience of interning on Capitol Hill, gaining valuable perspective on how the government operates. And with three years of experience, seniors secure an internship to explore something that might become a career or lifelong interest.



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“Madeira prepares girls both in the classroom and in the real world,” according to Andre Withers, Assistant Head of School. “Students follow a four-year process, where we combine academic disciplines with experiential internships, and they emerge with impressive resumes gained from three distinct off-campus internships.”

Madeira alumnae recognize the impact Co-Curriculum internships have had on their lives and careers. When asked to describe Co-Curriculum, Julia Reed, Madeira alumna and contributing editor at *Elle Décor* magazine responded, “Revolutionary. The effect of Co-Curriculum was profound and life-changing.” Reed credits her Madeira Co-Curriculum placement at *Newsweek* for launching her journalism career.

Confidence was one of the biggest benefits Reed gleaned from her Co-Curriculum placements. “We learned to go in and be comfortable with whatever was thrown at us. We had to pull it together, walk in there and do the job. Co-Curriculum enhanced my self-esteem and gave me such confidence,” shared Reed.

In addition to devoting a five-week block each year to an internship, Madeira’s innovative academic schedule allows a collage-like

approach to focus on in-depth learning, with time to reflect and absorb the material. This focused learning contributes to Madeira’s excellence in STEM education and helped Madeira earn the #4 Best High School for STEM in Virginia ranking. Madeira students are schooled in design-thinking in their 9th grade project-based, interdisciplinary STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) Fundamentals course, and from then on are expected to produce work collaboratively and iteratively.

“One of the best things about our STEAM curriculum is that we aren’t just teaching students about science, technology, engineering, art, or math,” said Sasha Newman, Chair of the Arts Department and Technical Director at Madeira. “We are also giving them a chance to develop project management skills, build resilience every time they fail, and start them down a path of creatively solving problems.”

One of the distinguishing marks of a Madeira education according to Newman is that “Madeira teachers innovate, create, iterate and seek curricular connections. We have discovered that our girls engage best with STEAM projects when they are tied to a larger purpose.” For example, several Madeira students built upon their love of science and engineering to take on the challenge of creating a kayak that was accessible to veterans with mobility challenges. Another group leveraged their study of physics to design an activity and lesson plan to help students in Haiti understand the concepts of physics, using projects such as an electric mobile, a solar oven, and wind chimes.

Madeira plans to build a new facility, The Center for Innovation and Collaborative Learning, to bring the STEAM disciplines under one roof. Supported by state-of-the-art technology, the new center will include high-tech science labs, a Maker Space, Fab(rication) lab, robotics studio, art and perfor-

mance studios, classrooms, independent study and group learning spaces, and gallery space.

In addition to the top private high school and STEM school rankings, Madeira earned the top spot as the #1 Best All-Girls High School in Virginia and #1 Best Boarding High School in Virginia, plus was named the 11th Best Girls Private High School in the United States.

According to Cabeza de Vaca, “The accolades are a testament to the inspiring faculty, motivated students, and wonderful community we share at Madeira.”



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