
RESOURCE GROUP

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CONSULTANTS FOR LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

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The Children's School

ENRICHING MINDS AND INSPIRING DREAMS

HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2013

The Children's School, located in Midtown Atlanta directly across from Piedmont Park, is a

coeducational elementary school committed to nurturing children in a rigorous academic program and atmosphere of diversity, compassion and personal development. This nonsectarian school, which was founded in 1970, enrolls approximately 400 children in grades pre-primary through sixth grade. The program is in the finest tradition of progressive education with the well-being of the child at the heart of the school. From its inception, The Children's School has focused on the importance of encouraging its students to find their

strengths and passions as individuals in an atmosphere of warmth and respect for each other.

Members of the community are on a first-name basis with children, parents, faculty, administration and staff.

The school has benefitted from outstanding leadership in the administration and board of trustees as well as faculty and staff. Parents are involved and supportive. The Children's School is a national model of exceptional elementary education with emphasis on academics, creativity, culture, and multiculturalism.



The Children's School is located in the heart of Midtown Atlanta.

THE MISSION, VISION AND PHILOSOPHY

The mission of The Children’s School is “to enrich minds and inspire dreams.” It is the vision of the school to provide the highest standard of early childhood and elementary education in an environment rich in academics, diverse in community, nurturing in its approach, and focused on development of character and values.

The Children’s School philosophy is based on strong interrelationships among students, faculty, parents and the community. The purpose is to prepare the children to become independent individuals who will be able to manage their lives in a complex global environment. A basic tenet of the TCS program is to embrace a multicultural approach to teaching and learning to encourage students to value and learn from differences and ultimately to become responsible and involved citizens.

The school embraces the thought that children are whole beings and focuses on the fullest possible development of the child: intellectually, socially, physically and culturally. The curriculum is integrated into a program, which ranges on a continuum from concrete example to abstract

understanding. Open and honest communication is incorporated into the culture of the school; all members of the community are encouraged and expected to be engaged fully in all aspects of the life of the institution.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The strategic plan of 2011 for The Children’s School defines the importance of providing opportunities for students to develop individual and group leadership skills in addition to the rich academic education. There is an emphasis on executive function through instruction and modeling to ensure the growth of the students. Learning to interact with others in a respectful manner is integral to the culture.

Inclusivity of all types is essential to the school’s belief system, which honors everyone in the community. Enhancement of both extra and co-curricular opportunities for each child is important as well. There is a clear *Statement of Behavioral Expectations* for the students that is fully integrated into the life of the school.

The sixth graders who were interviewed love their school, attach great value to the learning and the curriculum and give enormous credit to the faculty and administration. They are a happy and bright group who feel well-prepared to go on to a new school situation, in academic preparation as well as in all other aspects of school life. They are confident, articulate, and bright. They look forward to coming back often to TCS as alumni/ae.

The students experience character education through *Building Character and Community*, curriculum designed and created at TCS. Students learn effective communication, conflict



Sixth graders receive hands-on, experiential instruction in the garden.

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resolution, and flexibility, and acceptance of difference. As one sixth grader said, “no one ever feels alone.” The students stand out as excellent problem solvers, kind and loving friends, and self-advocates.

TCS works in an interrelated community of faculty, administration, parents, and most of all, students, to provide strong, connected character education. The values focused upon include honesty, cooperation, humility, peace, patience, courage, creativity, environmental awareness and freedom.

The daily curriculum is enriched by the *ECEP (Extracurricular Education Program)*, which includes enrichment courses and activities such as band, drama, chorus, dance, and chess, to name only a few. *Discovery* is a child-centered after-school program, which serves three additional public elementary schools in addition to TCS students. A summer program is offered as well as an exciting outdoor education experience.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum and the supporting programs at TCS are strong and fully developed. Teachers value the academic freedom, which they have as well as the structure that makes their lives easier.

The academic program is developmentally appropriate with

opportunities for enrichment after school as well as during the day. Students who need help or guidance with curricular and academic issues are able to access their teachers and get extra assistance. Students are encouraged to stretch academically and given support as they need it from a resource specialist.

The curriculum is designed to reflect current theory and practice as well as to address a variety of learning styles. It is a hands-on, student-centered approach to teaching and learning in a rich, challenging and diverse environment. In the belief

**“There is no limit to who you can be.”
--- A student at The Children’s School**



Play is a big part of The Children’s School curriculum and teachers often join in on the fun!

that the best program is self-evaluating, the school regularly reviews all aspects with an eye to enhancement and revision as is deemed necessary.

Dynamic and responsive, the school’s curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the students and works to inform and collaborate with parents.

Language Arts in the lower grades provides a balanced approach including multi-sensory approaches. In the upper grades, the program is literature-based with skills and techniques incorporated across all levels. Writing occurs daily along with workshops at each level.

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Families are encouraged to participate in community service together.

The **Mathematics** program is based on the Curriculum Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTE). *Math Their Way* is used in pre-K and kindergarten while *Everyday Mathematics* continues math instruction through sixth grade.

Science is introduced by the faculty through exploration of the natural and physical world. The program uses a hands-on investigative approach, and the science lab allows interactive experience.

Social Studies is designed to further the mission of global awareness as well as responsible and ethical leadership while introducing historical topics. Six themes are presented: Cultural Studies, History, Civics, Geography, Economics as well as the combined topics of Science, Technology and Society.

The Arts include visual and creative activities in various media. There is an eclectic approach to music instruction with classroom activities and classes taught by a music specialist. There are also extensive after-school programs in the arts including productions.

Physical Education includes creative movement, games and life sports; classes meet twice a week.

Health is included in classroom discussion and focused units of instruction.

Foreign Language begins with the teaching of Spanish to the youngest children in pre-primary and continues through grade six. Speaking, writing and reading skills are presented as well as exposure to culture.

Technology is integrated into the subject areas throughout all grades. A technology specialist works with teachers to offer training and support. Computers are in classroom centers and in a computer lab. As in many schools, it is a challenge to find the time to provide teachers the advanced training needed to implement new technology, both hardware and software. An acceptable use policy is in effect.

The Media Center is active and well-appointed, and the librarians focus on literacy skills and appreciation of literature. Coordination with classroom teachers is integral to the program and is effective.

Outdoor Education is unique in that TCS is the only Atlanta elementary school, which offers such a broad program. Beginning in grade 3 and continuing through grade 6, overnight trips are taken to parks and nature centers in the greater Atlanta area. Camping skills are learned along with introduction and inclusion of environmental studies. Trips are integrated into classroom study and on-site activities.

Resource, Testing and Homework: The Resource Program is designed to assist students who have varied learning styles as well as to provide support for teachers with strategies which can be employed in the classroom to work most effectively with their students. Strategies range from support to enrichment. Testing occurs yearly in grades 3-6 (although grade 3 is not scored and reported). The results are considered one measure of learning and assessment. Scores are interpreted with the assistance of the Guidance Counselor and Assistant Head. Homework begins in first grade and continues through grade 6 as a means of reinforcement of classroom activity.

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

The Children's School has 55 teaching faculty members, 17 of whom hold advanced degrees. It is apparent that both faculty and staff are deeply committed to the mission and program of the school; engagement with the students is very high in all grade levels, with faculty demonstrating enthusiasm and creativity. The average teacher retention rate is 97% and 45 teachers have more than ten years of experience. TCS is a school that knows its students and their families well. It is a collegial place, and teachers spoke of their respect for and enjoyment of their colleagues. The faculty expressed their appreciation for the curricular autonomy which they have and respect for the leadership of the head of school and the administration. It is important to the faculty and staff that their voices continue to be heard.

There are currently 91 full and part-time employees of the school including administration, faculty and staff.

The administration in 2012-2013 will be led by an interim head of school and will include an upper school principal and a lower school principal. The administrative leadership is experienced and highly knowledgeable in all aspects of the profession. Several have had long tenure in the school and bring valuable institutional memory to their work. A Business Office Manager works with the head of school and the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. A Director of Development and a Director of Marketing and Communications are integrally involved with the external function and fundraising as well as communications in the school.



The Children's School takes a child-centered approach to learning.



The school maintains a low student:teacher ratio.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees is exceptional in its commitment to the school, its understanding of the mission and values, and its depth and diversity. Numbering 20 members, the Board has worked closely with the head of school and with the entire community over the years. The members are primarily parents or past parents who know the school well. They are engaged in the life of the school in appropriate ways and bring enthusiasm and perspective. A strategic plan has been created under the Board's leadership with input from all key stakeholders, and will serve as a helpful and clear dashboard for the new head of school. Board leadership is strong and involved, sensitive to the needs of the community in this time of transition. The board chair has reached out to the community to inform them of the search process and models the transparency of the search, recognizing the anxiety that might be inherent after long and successful leadership of the head. She has welcomed input from the faculty and other members of the TCS community. As one faculty member said, "The board chair gets the culture of the school." The Board is willing and eager to support a new head of school and will work closely with him or her during the transition and beyond.

It is important to note that the composition of the board reflects the diversity of students and parents.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PHYSICAL PLANT

The Children's School enjoys a balanced budget, which is overseen and directed by the Business Office Manager, the Head of School and the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. Revenue is primarily from tuition and fees with additional revenue from interest income and programs such as ECEP. Salaries are competitive with other similar schools in the Atlanta area. Regular financial reports are provided to the Board. The endowment is relatively new and modest at \$1.5 million and currently no draw down exists. Outstanding debt was approximately \$600,000.

The school's financial condition is very strong. Annual Giving is not budgeted; depreciation is budgeted and a PPRSM account is in place. Tuition is comparable to similar schools at \$16,590 for all grades for the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, the Discovery Program is \$2610 annually. The tuition for 2012-2013 will include a 4% increase. The Board is committed to maintenance of a sound financial base and continuation of the balanced budget. A five year financial plan will include strategies to hedge against economic downturn, support socio-economic diversity, continue to have well-maintained facilities and prepare for capital needs in the future. In addition it is important to have a sound investment program in order to grow the endowment.

Financial aid is provided to approximately 12% of the student body. Full time faculty receive tuition remission once employed for one full year.

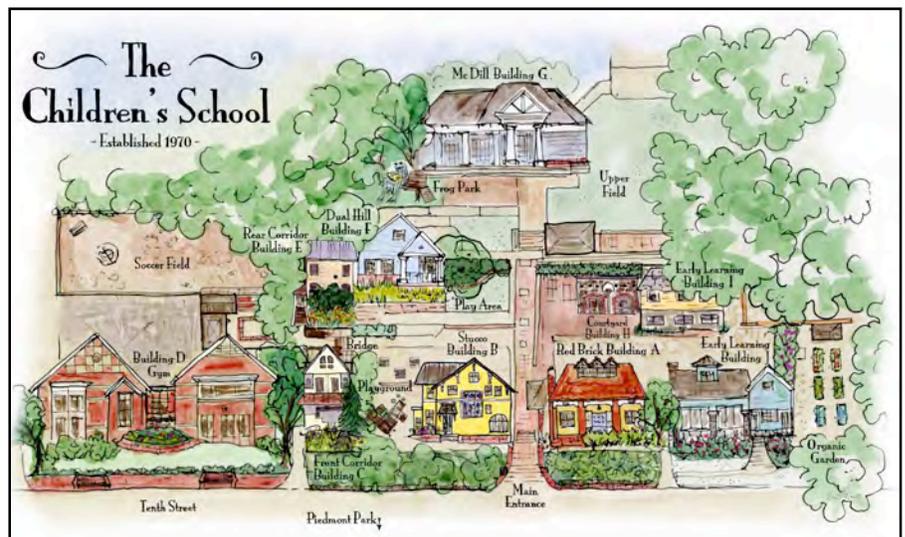
The Children's School has 10 buildings on 2.8 acres in the heart of Midtown Atlanta. There are five play areas and Piedmont Park is directly across the street. The campus includes a media center, music room, computer and science labs and a



The McDill building is named for our founder, Lila Bost McDill.

gymnasium. The facilities are exceptionally attractive and well-cared-for throughout the campus. The landscaping and signage is well-conceived and adds to the appearance of the campus, including an organic garden. There are no dining facilities; classes eat lunch in their rooms.

Procedures are in place to ensure safety and security of all students and employees. There is a master site plan with ideas and goals for future facilities. Not unlike other independent urban schools, there is a significant issue with parking. The Board of Trustees is working to address this issue.



The school has 10 buildings on nearly 3 acres.

THE COMMUNITY

Community at The Children’s School is integral to the mission of the institution and means a number of things to the constituencies. Faculty, administration and staff, as well as parents, value the sense of a family school, which embraces diversity of all types. Parents are involved and enthusiastic about the school and describe their children as “happy and excited about TCS.” There is a Parents’ Association that supports numerous activities.

A family feeling exists for all members of the community. Adults and children alike are addressed by their first names and treated with respect.

The Children’s School is committed to a strong and active community service program. Recent activities include The Atlanta Community Food Bank, the Ronald McDonald House and Green Fest. Parents and children alike are encouraged to develop activities, which will enrich the community. An example is the “40 for 40” initiative for families encouraging TCS families to give 40 hours in honor of the school’s anniversary.



Students are encouraged to dress casually and comfortably.



The campus is enhanced by beautiful trees throughout.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Children's School is a well-run and highly respected elementary school in Atlanta, which enjoys stability and strong programs. It has had more than two decades of strong and dedicated leadership in the work of Marcia Prewitt Spiller, Head of School. The next head of school will find a school which is open to possibilities for the future while presently financially stable and clear in the mission. TCS is truly an exciting opportunity for the professional educator who is focused on early childhood and elementary education.

The school is seeking an energetic, skillful and intellectual leader who is respected in the profession and who can be an academic leader. Multiculturalism and diversity are at the heart of this school's mission and the next leader must demonstrate an understanding and proof of a willingness to help the school continue this philosophy and practice.

***"Thank you, Mom and Dad, for sending me to this great school."
--- Graduating sixth grade student***

The new leader will be expected to continue the excellence of the academic program and the commitment to the individual child. New ideas will be welcomed in the appropriate context and timeframe although there is no need for immediate change. It is important that the individual can develop a vision for the next decade and beyond as well as lead the implementation of the strategic plan. The visibility of the school in the greater Atlanta community and the further development of the brand will

be a major responsibility of the new head of school. Internally, the head will be the leader of the faculty and must be able to offer support and guidance in all aspects of school life. He or she will be the voice of the school for the parents and must be a highly visible and approachable leader who will work quickly to get to know the community. He or she will have the opportunity to lead the school in a number of important areas:

- Ensure the continuation of the mission.
- Enhance the academic program while maintaining the commitment to nurturing and support for all children in the progressive tradition.
- Continue and ensure the diversity and multiculturalism of TCS.
- Support the ongoing character education program.
- Work effectively with the Board, administration, faculty, staff and parents to begin the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Develop relationships with all constituencies and be accessible.
- Oversee and support ongoing strong financial management systems.
- Lead fundraising efforts to enhance programs and support faculty.
- Implement fundraising initiatives to grow the endowment.
- Oversee the maintenance of the physical plant and work with the Board to develop future capital initiatives to address such issues as parking, theater space and other needs.
- Work with the neighborhood to ensure good relations.
- Support ongoing community service efforts.
- Continue the co-curricular programs such as ECEP, performing arts, Discovery, summer camp and outdoor education.
- Understand and review the technology needs of the school and lead the development of a technology plan.
- Be accessible.

THE CANDIDATE

Professional Background

- M.A. or the equivalent
- Understanding of early childhood education and independent schools; Teaching experience preferred
- Successful administrative experience
- Experience with multicultural and diverse communities in schools

The successful candidate will demonstrate the following personal qualities:

- Intellectual leadership and curiosity
- Practical visionary, big-picture thinker
- Innovative approach
- Personable, possessing good marketing skills
- Comfortable in an urban environment
- Strong decision-maker, willing to make difficult decisions and explain them
- Diplomacy
- Comfortable with and supportive of technology
- Global thinker
- Highest integrity and honesty
- Committed to diversity (and inclusivity) in all forms
- Approachable, good listener
- Speaks the truth and hears the truth
- Warm, nurturing but not “soft”
- Sense of humor, authenticity
- Professional demeanor
- Creativity and an adventurous spirit
- Affirming, inclusive and supportive approach to all members of the community
- Flexibility
- Comfortable with “hugs”!

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should send an electronic cover letter, resume and statement of educational philosophy to:

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