

**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
July 1, 2015

**DELAWARE VALLEY FRIENDS SCHOOL**  
Paoli, PA



## HISTORY and MISSION

DVFS was founded in 1987 to serve the needs of secondary-school students who have average to above average IQs and language-based learning differences in a Friends School setting. One of its founders was Irene McHenry who became its first Head and went on to be the Executive Director of Friends Council on Education. Since its modest start, DVFS has experienced extraordinary growth and success over the past 27 years. Beginning with 21 students on the campus of Harcum Junior College, it now enrolls 156 students in its own building in Paoli, PA. The school now includes students in grades 6 – 12.

*The mission of Delaware Valley Friends School is to prepare students with learning differences for future work and study.*

*The school develops those personal strengths, which enable students to succeed in its college preparatory*



*curriculum. The school also recognizes that it has a responsibility to share its expertise with teachers and students beyond the school community.*

*Delaware Valley Friends School carries forward the Quaker heritage of compassion and justice. We acknowledge that of God in everyone and nurture the unique personal worth and potential good inherent in each individual.*

The school is governed by an independent Board of Directors and is under the care of the

Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Much of the success of DVFS is the result of the powerful synergy between the mission to serve students with learning differences and the Quaker approach to education, which honors and celebrates the creativity and uniqueness of every individual.

## LOCATION and CAMPUS

In 1997 the school moved into a former elementary school in Paoli, PA, which is west of Philadelphia on the historic Main Line. This central suburban location provides access to major highways and to public transportation, which many of the students use daily to get to school. Set in a quiet residential neighborhood, DVFS enjoys a small, yet serviceable campus that includes a modern turf field that is shared with the Tredyffrin-Easttown Soccer Association.

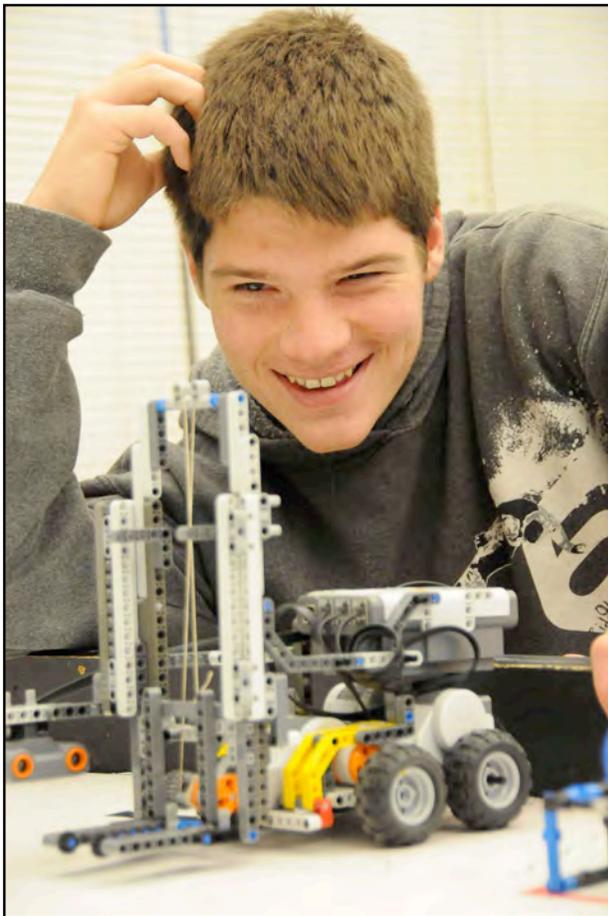
The school's current building was thoroughly renovated prior to relocating in Paoli. It is attractive, welcoming, and functional and includes a large number of classrooms of various sizes, science labs, art studios, media center, lunchroom, meeting rooms, and gymnasium. Technology pathways are built into the infrastructure of the school.



## PROGRAM

Delaware Valley Friends has an extraordinary academic program to meet the needs of its students, virtually all of whom have language-based learning differences and some of whom may have additional challenges in the areas of attention and executive function. The school has developed an Orton Gillingham based curriculum called The DVFS Adolescent Literacy Program. This curriculum and the Teacher Training Center are certified by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC) and the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). Distinguished for exceeding IMSLEC standards, this language-based curriculum is employed in the core language-arts program that is taken by all students. The school is duly proud of this research-based approach and actively works to ensure that it continues to reflect best practices and current research. DVFS instruction is diagnostic and prescriptive and the teachers are innovative and forward thinking in their approach to students and to teaching.

Classes are very small, ranging from about 6 to 12 students per section, depending on the subject and needs of the students. This low faculty to student ratio ensures that the academic program can be highly individualized to meet students' needs. The specific approach to language and learning differences permeates the curriculum



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and supports the students' success in math, science, social studies, and English classes. Students may elect Spanish or American Sign Language in the Upper School but not all students do so, preferring to concentrate on the core subjects and achieving success in them. The program is distinctly college-preparatory and rigorous – students report that the classes are both challenging and engaging.

There is a rich selection of co- and extra-curricular activities including first-rate arts and athletics programs, service learning, senior internships, and extensive travel opportunities. Many of these programs are of special note, including an adventure based experiential education program (ABLE), trips to Costa Rica and Peru, and a strong tradition of service learning opportunities.

Meeting for Worship is an important part of the weekly routine at the school, as are opportunities for student self-expression and leadership. Student government is organized on

the Quaker model. There is an active summer program to support students with learning differences and both DVFS and non-DVFS students avail themselves of this excellent 5-week program each year.

The school is proud of its recognition by the International Multisensory Language Education Council (IMSLEC) and by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) as a center for teaching and teacher-training excellence. The Teacher Training Center is an important part of the school. Each summer teachers from the local area attend classes and participate in practicums with the goal of becoming certified in the DVFS Adolescent Literacy curriculum as an Orton Gillingham trained teacher. Becoming certified is a two-year process requiring practicums, mentoring, monthly seminars and passing a national exam.

For more specifics about the DVFS program, please visit the school's website: [www.dvfs.org](http://www.dvfs.org).

## COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

### Students

The DVFS students express enormous respect and affection for their school, recognizing that for most of them it has been a transformational experience. Some may have attended elementary schools with strong LD programs but many did not and come to Delaware Valley Friends having experienced frustration and the commensurate low self-esteem that accompanies perceived failures. The school takes students “where they are” especially in reading and language skills and, using a highly personalized approach, makes significant progress with each of them.

A friendly and relaxed atmosphere pervades the school and is in keeping with the Friends philosophy that all people are equal under God. Students are on a first-name basis with the adults on the campus, including the Head of School, reflecting the Quaker values of equality and community. There is a notably high degree of support, tolerance, and respect for differences among the students. There are strong relationships between varied age groups and classes. Diversity is important at DVFS, which serves students of varied race, ethnicity, background, and geography: many students come from great distances to enjoy the unique benefits of the DVFS experience.

Most importantly, students at DVFS develop extraordinary self-awareness about their learning strengths and needs and learn to advocate for themselves in ways that benefit them long after graduation.

### Faculty

The DVFS faculty members are the backbone of the school. They are fiercely loyal to the mission and the students, are well trained in their subject areas and in the school’s unique methodology, and appreciate the strong sense of community typical of Friends’ schools. There is a healthy mix of young and



veteran teachers. The student-teacher ratio is very low, as is appropriate for the program. A strong summer training program introduces teachers new to the school to the Adolescent Literacy program. There is considerable time and attention paid to on-going faculty development. Teachers are expected to remain current with research and practice regarding learning differences and are supported in doing so through attendance at conferences and in-school professional development programs.

The faculty are extremely caring, both of one another and of the students. There is a strong culture of collaboration and of mutual support

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among the teachers and staff. Faculty go out of their way to be helpful to each other and, especially, to the students. These are essential characteristics of DVFS.

### Administration

In addition to the Head of School, there is an Associate Head/Academic Dean who works closely with the faculty, students, and department chairs, a Dean of Students who also serves as Middle School Director, Admissions Director, Director of Development, Director of Language and Literacy Remediation, Director of Marketing and Business Manager. Academic, communications, development, admissions, and marketing professionals support these offices, as do staff members as needed. The administration is efficient, competent, and appropriate in size and scope for the mission of the school.

### Parents

Many of the DVFS parents describe the school as having made an enormous difference in the lives of their children. The fact that so many commute from a significant distance is testimony to their loyalty and appreciation. There is not a formal parents' association but parents participate in many volunteer activities to support the school as well as in a successful Annual Fund.

### Board

The Board of Directors consists of 16 individuals, many of whom are alumni parents and 25 percent of whom are members of the Religious Society of Friends, per the school's by-laws. The board is active and committed to the mission of the school and has a healthy and appropriate relationship with the administration and the governance of the institution.



## OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

Delaware Valley Friends has matured significantly as an institution over the years and is in excellent condition, both in program and finance. There is a healthy endowment for a young school, manageable debt, a balanced budget, and strong management. Nonetheless, as with all independent schools moving forward, opportunities for growth and stability present themselves.

### Enrollment and Sustainability

The current enrollment is 156 students and these tuitions support a balanced budget. However, this is down from an all-time high of just over 200 students in 2006. In addition to the recession that followed in 2007-2008, other factors influencing the enrollment include increased competition from other independent schools in the area, DVFS' relatively high tuition, and the public schools reluctance to fund students in programs outside their walls. (Roughly one dollar in six at DVFS comes from public districts that send their students to the school.) It seems clear that the school needs to create a "sweet spot" for enrollment and tuition that will ensure its sustainability into the next decade. DVFS has begun to work to get the word out more broadly about its excellent program but needs to amplify and continue those efforts to compete effectively with other programs in the area. The next Head will need to be the face of the school, both internally and externally.

### Program

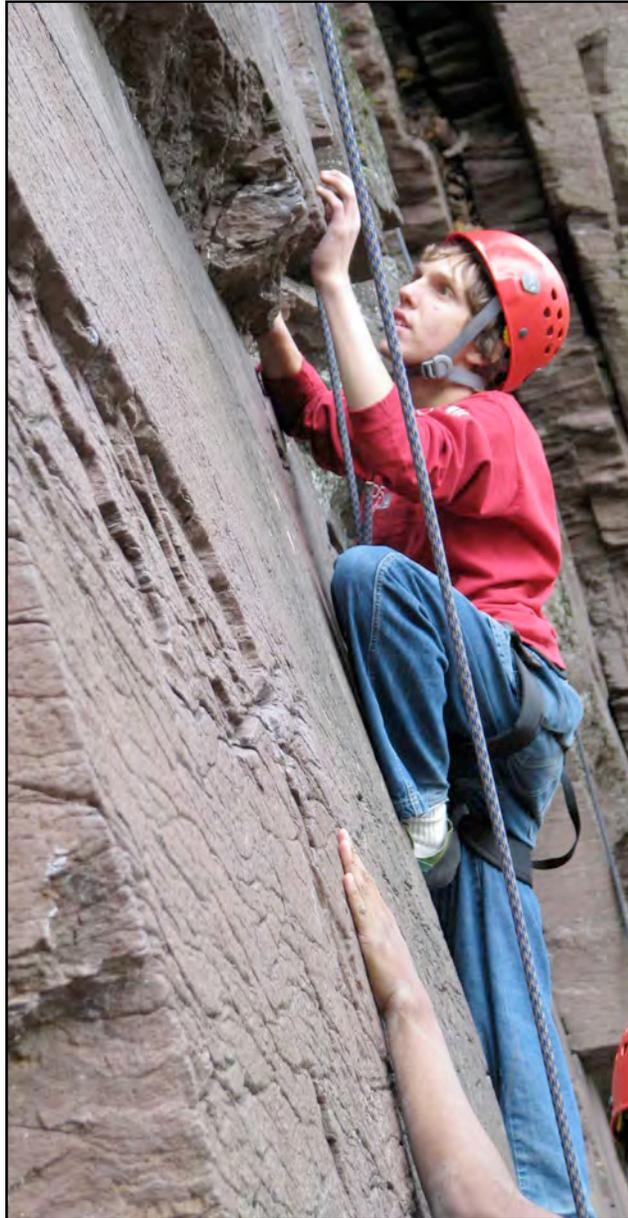
DVFS is rightly known for its excellent work in developing curriculum that supports bright students who have language based learning differences. It is always striving to strengthen its language instruction across the content areas. Additionally it is currently working to advance the so-called STEAM areas in ways that are just as strong as the language areas.

As with all the programs at the school, these need to be research-based and to be proven highly successful with the population at the school. The next Head of School will work closely on these areas of program development.

### Fund-raising and Development

While the school has raised significant funds in recent years, the need for more development and fund-raising is evident, especially in leadership gifts. With a relatively high tuition that may be approaching a ceiling, DVFS will have to rely even more heavily on non-tuition revenue to sustain itself. A rejuvenated development office has begun some of these efforts and it is

clear that the next Head of School will play a central role in seeking funds for annual and capital purposes.



## THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate for Head of School will possess a unique mix of experience, expertise, and personal attributes. While no candidate is likely to possess all of these, the Search Committee and Board will be looking for:

### Professional Experience

- Work in a school whose mission is to help bright students with learning differences
- Training and expertise in the field of language based learning differences
- Experience in a Friends school or a school with similar values
- A strong background in administration
- Management of faculty
- Strategic institutional thinking and leadership
- Fund-raising and financial management experience

### Personal Qualities

- Obvious warmth toward and connection to students
- Empathy for Quaker values
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Strong business and management skills
- “High touch” leadership
- High degree of emotional intelligence
- Desire to be visible in the school and community
- An ability to tell the story of the school and its students
- Reflection and patience
- Personal integrity and loyalty to the school and its mission



## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should send a cover letter, résumé, and personal statement via electronic means to:

**Clay V. Stites**  
**Resource Group 175**  
**clay.stites@comcast.net**  
**508-636-4984**

## FAST FACTS

Enrollment:	156
Faculty/Staff/Admin:	63
Budget:	\$7 million
Endowment:	\$6 million
Annual Appeal:	\$750,000 (2013-14)
Colleges:	98% go on to college and universities
Memberships:	PAIS, NAIS, ADVIS, FCE, IDA, IMSLEC

