



Head of School Position Statement
Green Acres School
North Bethesda, Maryland
July 1, 2020



THE SCHOOL

When you step onto the idyllic 15-acre wooded campus of Green Acres School, you feel the genuine welcome, the warmth and the energy of this special oasis for children and families. This is a school that holds a unique position in the world of progressive PK-8 education. Families choose to send their children here because Green Acres lives its values and embodies a joyful, healthy, and expansive home for young and mature alike. The School is characterized by a dynamic academic program that is balanced with unequalled dedication to serving children ages 3 through grade 8. There is an unmistakable intentionality and authenticity with meaningful connections as students, staff, and parents come together in a remarkably close-knit and caring educational community. Green Acres nurtures young learners and produces graduates who thrive in the competitive greater Washington D.C. region.

Green Acres School is a non-sectarian, 501(c)(3), fully-accredited, coeducational, independent day school for children, ages 3 through grade 8. The School embraces its strong progressive and whole-child heritage, and is authentic in its commitment to ensuring that children are understood, respected and empowered. Here, students can be themselves, as they tackle new challenges, learn from mistakes, and come to appreciate the importance of working and playing collaboratively. Green Acres is a school poised for continued educational excellence. Its early childhood through middle school program is deeply rooted in well-researched teaching and learning principles and practices, including an extraordinarily well-articulated commitment to social and emotional learning, diversity and inclusion, and whole-brain and body development.

THE MISSION

The heart of Green Acres lies in its efforts to keep the joy of learning alive by filling children's days with wonder, play, laughter, connection and discovery. Its mission is clear:



Green Acres School challenges and inspires students to live and learn with intellect, curiosity, determination, joy, and compassion.

The Green Acres "Way" is based on holding the utmost respect for children, honoring their individuality, understanding their learning styles, and guiding them to become the best possible version of themselves. Children are given time and space to grow, to wonder, to question, and to mature. A deep understanding of the developmental stages of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth informs the curriculum, pedagogy, and practice. Carefully designed learning experiences are integrated across subjects, drawing on powerful, relevant content and student interests to strengthen internal motivation and confident voices.

Active learning and questioning are encouraged at Green Acres and students are expected to utilize their knowledge and skills creatively. High expectations are coupled with appropriate scaffolding throughout the entirety of the program, so students receive the optimal amount of challenge and support. In this way, Green Acres expertly prepares students to be innovators and achievers who have the flexibility, skills, and inclinations to solve problems, new and old, and take responsibility for thoughts, beliefs, articulations and actions.

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THE POSITION

The School now seeks an energetic and accomplished leader to partner with the Board of Trustees and the staff in building upon the School's history and reputation for providing a well-rounded and excellent educational experience. The current Head of School, Neal Brown, has chosen to leave in June 2020 presenting an exciting opportunity for a new leader to embrace all that Green Acres stands for, to continue its 85 year legacy as a leader in progressive education, and to share with others a vision for its development, growth and effective service to the community.

schools for the elite and students performed well on a variety of tests." In contrast, Alice wanted to create a school where boys and girls of all races and social backgrounds formed a community to learn from experiences and make connections between school and the larger world. She passionately believed that all children have ideas that others should listen to and respect – a concept that was virtually unheard of in schools in 1934.

Alice died in 1984, on the eve of Green Acres' 50th anniversary. The founder's spirit of innovation and genuine "joy for teaching and learning" are common threads in the School's history, growth and development. Eighty-five years later, this philosophy still guides and distinguishes the school. Every day, Green Acres teachers think outside the box and explore fresh ways to engage and challenge their students.

"The principal goal of education should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive, discoverers."

– Jean Piaget

THE HISTORY OF GREEN ACRES

Green Acres was founded in 1934 by Alice Mendham Powell who, like her Barnard College classmate, Margaret Mead, wanted to change the world. John Dewey, the ground-breaking educator, had a profound influence on Alice's thinking about progressive education, and she was convinced that education was the engine of social change. Nursery schools in the 1930s focused on learning manners, listening to the teacher and standing in line properly. Students were never to get messy. Independent schools were "prep



THE PLACE

Very few schools can rival the unique location and ambience of the Green Acres campus – a gem on Danville Drive. Nestled among the trees, the School combines the vibrancy of a natural environment in the midst of a beautifully wooded residential neighborhood with purposeful programming for active learning. This includes expansive outdoor learning spaces that act as an extension of the classroom, an all-school outdoor gathering space known as the “gully”, open and natural playscapes, as well as a stream running through the property. With distinctive playgrounds nestled among the 15 acres of trees, and time outside a repeated part of each day, Green Acres is a warm and welcoming home for students and school families.

The School's facilities are well maintained and complementary to the surrounding area. Student art graces the hallways and common areas and celebrates the strong commitment to creativity, diversity, inclusion, social justice and individual expression. The indoor and outdoor spaces are intentionally constructed and maintained to provide age-appropriate learning environments, reflect the wonderful nature of the program, the clear spirit of welcome and the distinctiveness of child-friendly spaces, which promote optimal teaching, learning and engagement. These spaces include:

- Light-filled classrooms,
- Sky-lit hallways and common areas,
- Three art studios,
- A photography darkroom,
- Monarch Butterfly Waystation,
- Science and computer laboratories,
- A welcoming and book-filled library,
- Reading and meeting areas adjacent to classrooms,





- A beautiful gymnasium,
- A multi-purpose hall complete with stage,
- A swimming pool,
- A greenhouse,
- Inner courtyards and distinctive play areas (including the "Castle Playground" with its whimsical dragon, bridge and maze, as well as the Woods playground where imaginations soar, and the "GAS station" area for older students), and
- A large natural field where families, parents and guests congregate at all times of the day.

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

There is palpable warmth, charm, and energy at Green Acres. Whether in the classroom or on an outdoor adventure or a community service project in partnership with a local or regional non-profit, there is a purposeful agenda that both students and adults at Green Acres fully embrace. Members of this learning community are united in their dedication to the mission of the School.

The Students

The School serves a student body of 200+ students, many of whom arrive as curious three year-olds, and who leave ready to tackle high school confidently, prepared in their academic and personal growth to join the most rigorous area schools.

Strong intellectual engagement and academic growth are evident at all grade levels. Learning through inquiry finds students asking questions, investigating, gathering data, considering possible outcomes, and determining viable conclusions. Small class sizes and flexible groupings encourage interaction, conversations, and collaboration. A hallmark of the School is the constant hum of exploration and engagement that emanates from the halls, classrooms, meeting and play areas.

The Staff

Experienced, energetic, insightful, caring, intentional, and innovative. These are words that characterize the staff at Green Acres. Staff believe in the mission of the School and are dedicated to the notion that a "hands-on" and collaborative learning environment can empower children to

"I can't think of a more political act than helping to raise children with empathy, children who know and respect the great diversity in the world, who understand the natural world and its fragility, who stand up for themselves and others, and who understand that we need their participation, all in their own ways, to heal the world."

– Nan Shapiro, Green Acres Teacher, Retired

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actively discover, question, understand, innovate, and succeed. With an emphasis on self-advocacy, staff create an empowering community for students, developing highly valued skills that make Green Acres students valuable members and leaders of their high school communities.

All teachers hold bachelor degrees and a majority of staff members have earned advanced degrees. Steeped in child development, teachers are dedicated to developing solid habits of mind in their students, and have a thorough understanding of the research underlying this field, integrating best practices into everything they do.

Staff consistently model the School's commitments to respect, social justice, inclusion, and human rights. There is a mutual respect for all, and students and staff are known and addressed by their first names. As such, staff and students are partners in teaching and learning.



The Administration

The School's administrative team is talented and dedicated. The Head of School is supported by:

- Three academic leaders who are pedagogical facilitators in the areas of early childhood, elementary and middle school,
- A Director of Operations,
- An Admissions Director,
- A Director of Institutional Advancement,
- A Director of Technology,
- An Athletic Director,
- A Camp Director, and
- An Extended Day Director.

This team works hand-in-hand with the Head of School to manage the day-to-day schedule, activities, operations and programming.

The Board of Trustees

The School's 21 trustees are a dedicated and diverse group of parents, staff, community members and alumni parents who love and appreciate the School, its program, and its people. Board members are committed to implementing best practices in independent school governance, while maintaining strong connections within the school community.

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Trustees maintain a dynamic relationship with the Head of School, characterized by shared purpose and clear boundaries. Singularly apparent is trustee dedication to the School's mission. The commitment of trustees is remarkable and is evidenced by their generosity of time, talent, and resources through monthly board meetings, committee meetings, and special initiatives.

The Families

Families select Green Acres for the priority placed on social-emotional student development and quality teaching and learning. Many parents make a personal sacrifice for the cost of independent education and also devote volunteer hours to the School. Parents clearly understand that Green Acres is dedicated to making each child's early childhood, elementary and middle school experiences rich, diverse, personalized, challenging, and focused on the outcomes that will serve them for a lifetime.

Parents, grandparents, and special friends are often seen in the halls of Green Acres reading with children, helping in classrooms, and

planning events for the entire school. While no parent is required to volunteer, many do, and the School's programs are made richer for their participation and generosity.

The Green Acres School Parents' Association, GASPA, is an active volunteer organization that plans and hosts events and programs throughout the school year. From the Back-to-School Picnic to Community Restaurant Nights to the December Book Fair to the annual Family Heritage and Traditions Fair and myriad activities throughout the year, parent involvement is paramount and very important to the life at School.

"Today, I tackle social justice issues and community issues from an academic perspective, but all of these different threads began with the mindset I learned at Green Acres."

– Mohona Siddique, Green Acres '02, Sidwell Friends '06, Wellesley College '10, University of Pennsylvania '18



CURRICULUM

The curriculum at Green Acres embraces a philosophy of valuing and addressing differing rates and styles of learning, while striving to develop basic skills, critical thinking, self-awareness, and respect of self and others. Truly incorporating the tenets of John Dewey and his belief that “education is the process of living and is not meant to be the preparation of future living” (Dewey, 1897), the program reflects progressive education at its best. Staff work collaboratively to create risk-friendly environments where every child is encouraged to develop their unique interests, motivations, and powers. Students are given every opportunity to succeed and to garner confidence in their undertakings and their interdependent relationships. Mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies are core subject areas that students explore through project-based modules throughout the grades. In addition, physical education, music, visual arts, Spanish, library



studies, outdoor, experiential learning and social-emotional learning activities are also integral parts of the curriculum throughout all grades.

The subject matter studied at Green Acres comes alive from the ECU through Middle School because students are engaged, connected, and affirmed in their quest to establish independence, interpersonal skills, and identity. Students tackle increasingly sophisticated concepts and questions at each grade level, while acquiring critical content-area knowledge and skills. Individual, small group, and whole class activities cultivate intellectual curiosity and inventiveness, foster empathy and independence, encourage perseverance, and nurture self-confidence.

Lower School

The Early Childhood Unit, comprised of preschool and kindergarten, is a dynamic and exciting introduction to the world at Green Acres. Children take seriously their imagining, questioning, experimenting, and discovery. The superior program ignites curiosity, problem solving and creativity. Caring staff ensure a warm and nurturing environment. Outdoor play, social development and experiential learning are paramount as the youngest children on campus question and process the world about them.



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A peek into an ECU room will warrant smiles and appreciation because the children are clearly engaged in their many activities such as:

- Learning how plants grow through the sprouting of the bean and studying trees and animal habitats around the campus.
- Masterful collaboration in building of gigantic flower box gardens in Pre-Kindergarten.
- Kindergarten students' yearlong STEAM investigations in such areas as Water, or Light, as well as thematic units on Family, Reptiles, Birds, and Food which weave through all subject areas.
- The teaching of math, collaboration and negotiation through the Kindergarten Store.
- Artistic expression, team work, and planning expressed through woodworking.
- Dancing in creative movement while learning about respect for each other's personal space, coordination, and balance.
- The pure joy of Stuffed Animal Day.



The Lower School program exposes students to exciting investigations that allow them to wonder and refine their thinking. A combined focus on learning collaboratively, while also building on the individual skills of students, helps them solidly grasp age-appropriate concepts. In addition, Green Acres follows a developmentally appropriate and research informed policy of no homework until third grade.

In Grades 1-4, students are developing fascinating theories about their world while honing their skills through purposeful learning across disciplines. An intentional climate of inquiry encourages children to take risks as a natural part of the rich academic experiences.

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"Everyone plays and everyone engages at Green Acres!"
– Derek Edwards, Athletic Director

Thus, students in the Lower School celebrate curiosity, questioning, and joy while engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, relationships, and understanding. Writers' workshop teaches children to engage in all of the processes that real authors use, including generating ideas, creating drafts, editing, conferencing with peers and teachers, and "publishing" books on subjects that interest them. Other areas of study come alive through:

- First and second graders spending 6-8 weeks focusing on a thematic arc such as migration, Ghana, oceans, weaving, or India, across all subject areas.
- Fourth graders encouraged to create and take risks by developing and performing a mini-musical.
- The third grade study of early American settlements, which makes history come alive via hands-on field trips like sailing on the Sultana schooner in Chestertown, MD, and visiting St. Mary's City, the first capital and colonial settlement in Maryland.

Finally, service learning is an integral part of the curriculum. The kindergarten coat drive and the second graders collecting vegetables to make a hearty soup for the homeless in the School's kitchen are just two examples.

Middle School

The Middle School, Grades 5 through 8, offers increasingly sophisticated concepts across subject areas—deep mathematical thinking, challenging literature, scientific experimentation, world studies, US government, Spanish, physical education, arts, music and purposeful opportunities to engage the world creatively. Teachers partner with students as they investigate, analyze, question, debate, experiment, reflect, and collaborate.



Just a few glimpses of the Middle School program show:

- Fifth graders learning about state capitals not just through rote memorization, but interrogatively. For example, students query the need for a capital, and why Annapolis is the capital of Maryland.
- Sixth graders learning about Haitian poverty through their literature studies, acquiring knowledge and information, but also sponsoring service projects that can assist and improve conditions.
- Seventh and eighth graders learning to photograph, not only to develop prints (both digital and film in an actual dark room), but to learn to see with a camera—to understand why people make art.
- Every seventh and eighth grader participating in the spring musical, whether building props, creating the sets, designing the program, running lights and sound, or performing.

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- Eighth graders evaluating and debating issues confronted by the United Nations General Assembly, and learning how difficult it is to resolve the world's conflicts. The year culminates with a Model UN where students debate multiple resolutions as seventh graders take notes in their role as press, and parents and staff observe.

Student-led conferences deepen self-analysis and self-awareness for fifth through eighth graders. Each student assesses progress and sets goals for their own future growth. The gift of self-discovery and understanding empowers Green Acres students, providing opportunities for growth and reflection that help each become more honest and successful in their quest for meaningful change, maturity, and growth in an uncertain, complicated, and diverse world.

Middle School athletics reflect the School's progressive values. A no-cut policy encourages all students to play regardless of athletic ability and to take risks in a supportive, team-focused program. Middle School students compete in soccer, basketball, track, and softball in the Capital Athletic Conference against other independent



schools and have brought home conference banners—as well as frequent sportsmanship awards.

In the Green Acres tradition, several years ago, middle school students decided on their own way of showing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. Rather than a day of silence, middle school students started a Day of Action. Day of Action is now an annual event hosted by Green Acres and brings together students from area independent schools to listen, learn, and collaborate on ways to make schools and communities more inclusive of LGBTQ+ students. Two years ago, middle school students again became agents of change by re-writing the School's gender-specific dress code for graduation and by designating certain restrooms on campus as gender neutral. These are but a few examples of how Green Acres' students are taught to take risks, advocate for others, and make a difference.

After School, Auxiliary Programs and Summer Camp

Green Acres has a strong commitment to serving students and families who need professional care and enrichment beyond the normal school day. Extended Day programming, available until 6 pm each school day, includes free play, activities, and healthy snacks. Also during this after school period, optional mini-courses and enrichment classes provide students with a



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variety of exciting and alternative learning experiences (e.g. Studio arts, Hands-on Science, Chess, Martial Arts, culinary programs, etc.)

Green Acres also hosts summer camp each year and it is open to all children ages 3 through 12. A Top Vote Getter for "Best in Bethesda" by the Bethesda Magazine for 2017, 2018, and 2019, summer camp at Green Acres is filled with enthusiastic youngsters. Distinct activities such as rock band, woodworking and snap and shoot provide moments for campers to break out of their comfort zones and plunge into new skills and interests. From swimming to science adventures to after camp care and transportation to and from home, this Green Acres offering has been continually been accorded the "Best in Class" Camp and "an exciting and great value for children and their families" by Bethesda Magazine.

School Traditions and Community Service Opportunities

During the course of the year, many special traditions make the Green Acres experience unique. Numerous all-school events and cultural activities encourage entire community participation and range from the whole school Thanksgiving lunch, where students help to serve the food, student performances, hayrides,

potlucks, movie nights, a school fundraising auction, grade-level science fairs, and the highly anticipated end-of-the-school year Olympics, where all cheer on their teams named after ancient Greek city states and the Head of School dons a toga to light the torch at opening ceremonies.

Numerous field trips and service learning opportunities take advantage of all that the East Coast and Northeast have to offer. Fourth through eighth graders engage in overnight field trips to complement their outdoor and service learning education. Eighth graders travel to New Orleans not only to learn about the city's rich culture but also to continue and broaden their service learning through a specific service activity.



THE SCHOOL FINANCES

The School's current annual operating budget is approximately \$6 million. Tuition ranges from \$15,870 for half-day preschool to \$38,730 for grades 2 through 8. The School provides nearly \$2 million in need-based financial aid that benefits over 45% of students and their families. Tuition is supplemented by a variety of fundraising activities, including proceeds from the School's Annual Giving and the School Auction.

The Finance Committee of the Board works closely with the School's administrative team to budget properly and control costs, in order to ensure the School's financial sustainability and success.



THE STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

The new Head of School will benefit from many strengths, including:

- Eager, motivated, active, and happy students who thrive academically, socially, morally, physically, and emotionally and who exhibit a strong love for their school;
- Caring and dedicated teachers who are skilled in teaching and learning, and versed in current best teaching practices, including banner progressive education practices, development of the whole brain, social/emotional learning, critical thinking skill development and active-learning knowledge. In addition, all staff intentionally promote and mentor mutual respect and emotional literacy among the students;
- A talented administrative team that is willing to go the extra mile in making the School operate smoothly and effectively;
- A devoted parent community that strongly supports the School's mission and philosophy;
- A hard working and dedicated Board of Trustees that partners with the Head of School, understands independent school governance, thinks strategically, and acts as stewards of the School;
- A highly intentional and well-developed curriculum that provides clear guidelines for learning goals while allowing flexibility in teaching methodology;
- A beautiful campus and well-maintained facilities, as well as being a Maryland Green School;
- A long history of inclusion and equity stemming from being the first racially integrated school in Montgomery County, MD; and
- A school fully accredited by the Association of Independent Maryland Schools (AIMS), having recently completed a successful 10 year AIMS accreditation process, and the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington. Green Acres is also a member of the National Association of Independent Schools.

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YEARS AHEAD

In its commitment to sustaining excellence, Green Acres faces certain challenges. Like many independent schools in America today, the School is faced with the need to grow its financial base to ensure its continuing ability to attract and retain outstanding staff, to remain accessible and affordable for a broad range of families, and to sustain its progressive educational program. At the same time, demographics, cost, and other educational options (including a good public school district and many private school choices), have combined to impose increased competition for preschool, elementary, and middle school-aged children in Montgomery County.

*"I love my school and I like my friends.
My teachers are my friends, too."
– First Grader*

Furthermore, Green Acres may not be as well-known as some of its peer independent schools in the Washington, DC, area, due to its outside-the-Beltway location and low-key style. Its record of educational excellence and its history of successful placement of graduates to the area's top high schools are not widely recognized. The language of progressive education has become trendy as more and more independent schools market to millennial parents. Actively and creatively promoting the School to the larger community as the original leader in progressive education and making a public case for the School's unique and unparalleled educational experience are key opportunities.



THE QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

The next Head of School at Green Acres must demonstrate the following skills, values, and experiences:

- Love and respect for children;
- Commitment to highest quality early childhood, elementary, and middle school education in the progressive tradition;
- The ability to lead and mentor an experienced team of educators dedicated to nurturing children's development, fostering academic excellence and maintaining the highest ethical standards;
- Compelling communication skills, the ability to captivate others with the School's story and bolster visibility in the area;
- A proven record of effective budgetary leadership, responsible fiscal management, fundraising skills, and development success;
- An ability to develop strategies and formulate proven marketing and branding approaches to optimize enrollment and curtail attrition;
- A proven record of finding, attracting, motivating, evaluating, supporting, and retaining outstanding diverse staff;
- An ability to strike the right balance between maintaining a warm, approachable presence and being a clear, visionary, and decisive leader who can also manage difficult conversations and work through differences of opinion; and
- A sense of humor and the energy and optimism necessary to find joy in the leadership of a dynamic school community and to propagate that joy throughout the entire community.

THE SEARCH

Green Acres has retained Doreen S. Oleson, Ed.D., from Resource Group 175 to lead the search. To apply, qualified candidates may apply online at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

Deadline to apply: November 1, 2019

For more information about the search, email Doreen Oleson: doreenoleson@gmail.com.

Green Acres welcomes and encourages applications from diverse candidates. Green Acres does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national or ethnic origin, or other legally protected status in admission of otherwise qualified students or in providing access to the rights, privileges, programs, or activities generally available to all students and their families, including educational policies, scholarship and other financial aid programs, or athletic, extra-curricular, and other school-administered programs and activities.