Delaware Valley Friends School

Guiding Principles

Delaware Valley Friends School is shaped by two foundational elements: a culture and community based upon Quaker principles and traditions and an academic approach driven by best practices in LD education. These two halves of the school’s identity are profoundly interwoven. Within this framework, our talented faculty, staff and administrators have created a program designed to distinguish DVFS as a leading school for bright and creative students who learn differently. The success of our students is central to our purpose and drives everything we do.

"DVFS’s capacity for compassion and a community oriented team approach to education is remarkable. I can confidently say the students and their families receive a return on tuition dollars many times over."

KATCH, DVFS PARENT

These Guiding Principles reflect the philosophy, culture and community values of the Delaware Valley Friends School. They also help to guide key decisions about our programs and the ways we deliver on our mission to prepare students with learning differences for future work and study.

dvfs.org

UNLOCKING THE POWER TO LEARN*
Inherent Worth
Our Quaker heritage and beliefs compel us to see every individual as a person of infinite inherent worth. At DVFS, we seek out abilities and talents within our students that may have gone unseen or unnoticed in other learning environments and bring them to light so that our students can use them to learn and find success. We embrace our students for their learning challenges and their personal and academic potential. This is the core principle for our school and drives everything else that we do.

*DVFS has instilled in our son a love and pride in himself that was woefully lacking at other schools— he knows he had a different learning style but now it is appreciated and accepted and he has grown like a flower blooming under the sun.*  
BRIDGETTE, DVFS PARENT

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
We are a diverse community of people who can deeply about one another and about issues of equity and inclusion. We welcome all students, regardless of prior learning differences in many forms: race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, physical and learning differences. We engage in dialogue that looks beyond ourselves as individuals and into understanding and celebration of different identities and cultures, and participate in activities that positively impact the lives of others. Our individual experiences and differences are central to our identities and our wide-range enriches our community as a whole. We are one school with many voices, all of which are valued and encouraged.

Leadership
Student-led initiatives have had a significant impact on DVFS, leading to new academic courses, new sports teams, and new clubs. Our student leaders have engaged the school community in thoughtful examinations of important topics around diversity, inclusion and social justice. They have planned exciting social activities, organized meaningful community service projects, and created a mentoring system in which upper school students spend dedicated time with middle and lower school through our chapter of the national mentoring program Eye-to-Eye. DVFS produces a remarkable depth of self-confident, articulate, and passionate leaders willing to offer their gifts and challenge themselves in service of others.

*"DVFS offers an unparalleled quality of education for children who learn differently. The dedicated faculty pursue proven techniques and new approaches while demonstrating a deep understanding of child-specific needs and abilities. I truly believe that only DVFS had the finely honed skill set required to transform my child academically, socially and emotionally. It's a life changing setting where academic success is attainable for any child who struggles."*  
JOEY, DVFS PARENT

Knowledge & Skills
We know that for students to be truly successful beyond DVFS, they need the skills and strategies to become independent learners, and they need the challenging content of a college preparatory curriculum. We teach both in every class, every day. We understand that sometimes, you have to get your hands dirty in order to truly learn. Some of the most profound and memorable learning experiences occur when students are challenged with immersed, hands-on experiences and approaches. We use both direct instruction and experience-based learning in our program because we recognize the importance of both approaches in effective education, particularly for students with learning differences. Providing a variety of opportunities for experiential instruction can reveal strengths and abilities often untapped and unnoticed in more traditionally structured environments. Our ABLE, STEM, culinary and studio arts, music, theater, photography, and internship programs are examples of experience-based learning in our curriculum where students can discover new areas (even future careers) in which they may excel.

We prioritize relationships. Our Quaker principles and practice provide a framework that inspires us to be our best selves — supporting one another during challenging times, and celebrating each other’s successes. Our culture fosters connections with each other and those outside our community. We appreciate the times when we can gather together as a community for meditation, social activities, and shared experiences.

Experience-Based Learning
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Responsive Innovation
We seek out and integrate the best, research-based approaches into our curriculum to help our students make academic progress. If it doesn’t exist, we build on proven methods to develop it ourselves. We are often pioneers of approaches and programming that then become best practices.

Balance
We believe that students and families deserve balance in their lives — and the time and ability to pursue activities, hobbies, and interests related to their strengths and academic pursuits. By integrating effective remediation, skills instruction and engaging content across the curriculum and developing a homework strategy appropriate for each student, we put school and life back into balance. Students are encouraged to play sports, join clubs, participate in the spring musical, learn a new instrument, or pursue activities for which they never previously had the time or energy.

Community
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OUR FACULTY
967 YEARS COMBINED TEACHING EXPERIENCE
AVERAGE 15 YEARS EXPERIENCE LEARN DIFFERENTLY

Knowledge & Skills
We know that for students to be truly successful beyond DVFS, they need the skills and strategies to become independent learners, and they need the challenging content of a college preparatory curriculum. We teach both in every class, every day. Our expectations of our students are high and our course content is appropriately challenging — but with extra time devoted to the remediation and skills-building approaches in effective education, particularly for students with learning differences. The dedicated faculty pursue proven techniques and new approaches while demonstrating a deep understanding of child-specific needs and abilities. I truly believe that only DVFS had the finely honed skill set required to transform my child academically, socially and emotionally. It’s a life changing setting where academic success is attainable for any child who struggles.

Self-Advocacy
Creating an environment where students build their confidence and self-esteem and learn to become effective self-advocates requires trust and collaboration with teachers. We work with students, in age appropriate ways, to help them understand their unique abilities as well as their academic challenges. Together, we identify, evaluate, and ultimately determine the right strategies and accommodations that will help them to be successful now, in college, and in whatever their future endeavors might be. When our students graduate, they go out into the world knowing who they are, how they learn, and how to communicate their strengths, abilities, and needs effectively. They have learned not to let obstacles get in their way as they demonstrate their gifts.

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