

College Prep Doesn't Start in Ninth Grade

Many parents think that college preparation begins in 9th grade. After all, that is the beginning of high school and the first year that grades go on a student's transcript for eventual submission with college applications. But the reality is that college preparation begins much earlier – not in middle school but in elementary school, and especially in early childhood programs serving 3, 4, and 5-year-olds.

At Moorestown Friends School, with a highly integrated, 15-year curriculum from Preschool through 12th grade, we find that the earliest years are a critical part of the development of students who, more than a decade later, will be preparing for admission to the nation's most selective colleges.

The early years are formative in a number of ways:

The development of *good* habits.

We adults know how hard it is to break bad habits. But sometimes we lose sight of how hard it is to break *good* habits, especially those that are formed when we are very young. The habits of attentiveness, industriousness, openness, respect, and kindness - all crucial to later success and fulfillment - are hard to shake when formed at an early age.

Association with studious peers.

When one's peers in Preschool, Prekindergarten, and Kindergarten are kids who are ultimately all bound for college, a sense of joyful purposefulness permeates the classroom. Yet children in the early childhood program at MFS are "real kids." They do things and make mistakes that are developmentally appropriate. That's how they learn.

A close connection with teachers and other authority figures. A hallmark of independent schools, and especially of MFS, is the trusting relationship that develops between students and teachers. Kids learn early that teachers are warm-hearted and approachable.

Embracing diversity. At MFS, students experience much greater ethnic, racial and religious diversity than they would find in most area public schools. Overall, students of color make up nearly one-third of the student body. Comfort with diversity is important preparation for college and the work world and ideally starts when children are very young.

The influence of passionate teachers.

Teachers in the early years at MFS have diverse backgrounds and are exceptionally well-educated. With degrees from colleges like Brown, Stanford, Harvard, Penn, Wesleyan, Penn State, Virginia - even the Universities of Saskatchewan and North Dakota - they have a passion for working with young people.

The fostering of creativity. At schools like MFS, providing opportunities for young children to express their innate creativity is of fundamental importance. Outside-the-box thinking, wildly creative art, new ways of answering (and asking!) questions are encouraged and celebrated.

These formative experiences - learning to trust adults, embracing diversity, celebrating creativity, and working joyfully and purposefully - are the best imaginable preparation for college, professional success, and personal fulfillment. And it all starts early at independent schools like Moorestown Friends.

MFS | 1785

Moorestown Friends School
Celebrating 225 years