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Private Schools

August 2011 Special Supplement to The Gazette



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For Those Who Learn Differently

Different Teachers

Nature, Community as Educators

Different Classrooms

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Students at The Siena School in Silver Spring. Cover photo courtesy of The Siena School

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Different Schools for those who Learn Differently

BY KAREN FINUCAN CLARKSON



Everyone learns in their own way. Some rely more heavily on visual images to absorb information; others need to hear verbal explanations; and then there are those who prefer physical exploration. Some students are analytic, while others are intuitive. Some like concrete examples; others are drawn to the abstract. While most are able to succeed in a traditional classroom setting, some benefit greatly from programs that use a multisensory approach. Several schools in Montgomery County cater to nontraditional thinkers, some—but certainly not all—of whom have learning disabilities or attention issues.

The Nora School (est. 1964)

“There is no typical kid here,” said Dave Mullen, head of school at The Nora School in Silver Spring, “but what they all have in common is that they are bright and college-bound.” With 60 enrolled in grades 9 through 12, Nora provides an enriched educational environment “for students with learning disabilities, those with special needs who don’t need a high level of service, or kids from big public schools who were getting lost in the shuffle.” The school’s size precludes cliques or self-segregation, Mullen said.

Small class sizes of six to 10 students allow teachers to “get to know students as individuals—their strengths, weaknesses and passions,”

Mullen said. “Most importantly, kids here are known and have a voice.”

At Nora, students are encouraged to step outside their comfort zones. At some point in their high school career, students play on a school athletic team. They also perform community service once a month. “Students get to know each other and their teachers in different ways when they’re not in the classroom,” said Mullen.

A five-minute walk from the Silver Spring Metro station, Nora sends students on field trips to historical and cultural sites such as the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Newseum and Arena Stage. Wednesday assemblies feature guest speakers or interesting activities that build on what students are learning.

The Siena School (est. 2006)

With 75 students in grades 4 through 12, The Siena School in Silver Spring incorporates multisensory learning into its curriculum. “Using all five senses makes things more vivid for a kid, more real,” said Clay Kaufman, co-head of school. “For example, if we’re studying the Vietnam War, we’ll bring in guest speakers to talk about their experiences, watch a movie or video, create art, and take a field trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to see the wall and talk to people. We wouldn’t just read a speech in a book, we’d watch it.”

In addition to monthly field trips, Siena—which caters to students with mild to moderate language-based learning differences, such as

< DIFFERENT LEARNERS, continued on 40 >

▲ Art students from The Siena School sketch sculptor Philip Haas’ Winter (After Arcimboldo) during a field trip to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.



PHOTO BY ELI TURNER STUDIOS, COURTESY OF TLC-THE TREATMENT AND LEARNING CENTERS

▲ Katherine Thomas School offers occupational and physical therapy.

ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL



-Need-based financial aid

-Accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools; Association of Independent Maryland Schools

-Open Houses: Friday, Nov. 11 (upper school); Friday, Nov. 18 (lower school); Saturday, Dec. 3 (upper school); Saturday, Dec. 10 (lower school)

-Known for (according to website):

Comprehensive coeducational college preparatory program offered in an inclusive environment that embodies the faith of the Episcopal Church. Programs that serve students of varied interests and abilities who are capable of achievement in a challenging academic environment.

Sandy Spring Friends School

Co-ed

16923 Norwood Road,
Sandy Spring 20860

301-774-7455; www.ssfs.org

-Quaker

-\$50,700, grades 9-12 boarding 7-days;
\$40,500, grades 9-12, boarding 5-days;
\$27,500 grades 9-12, day only; \$24,800,
grades 6-8; \$22,400, grades 1-5; \$19,900,
kindergarten; \$450-\$625 books/fees; \$100-
\$2,800, upper school intersession program fee

-Need-based financial aid

-Open House: Saturday, Oct. 15, 10 a.m.-noon

-Known for (according to website)

Nurturing learning community, with Friends testimonies and meeting for worship being central to student life and vitality. Challenging academic curriculum, enriched arts program, inclusive athletics and service opportunities that promote intellectual excellence and strength of character.

Spencerville Adventist Academy

Co-ed

2502 Spencerville Road, Spencerville 20868

301-421-9101; www.spencervilleacademy.org

-Seventh Day Adventist

-Uniforms required

-\$14,000, grades 9-12; \$11,050, grades K-8; sibling discount

-Known for (according to website):

Challenging students, staff and community to achieve excellence

Curricula that motivates students to reach their full potential in the pursuit of excellence and to think for themselves rather than to reflect others' thoughts

Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart

Girls

9101 Rockville Pike, Bethesda 20814

301-657-4322; www.stoneridge.org

-Catholic

-\$25,200, grades 9-12; \$22,750, grades 7-8;
\$21,400, grades 5-6; \$20,250, grades K-4

-Need-based financial aid. Merit scholarships available.

-Uniforms required.

-Accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; Sacred Heart Network

-Open Houses: Sunday, Oct. 16, 1-4 p.m. (upper school); Friday, Nov. 11, 9 a.m. (all school); Wednesday, Dec. 7, 9 a.m. (all school); Thursday, Jan. 12, 9 a.m. (all school)

-Known for:

Faculty that provides a holistic learning environment that challenges girls at each grade and developmental level

Fostering a community environment where all students are encouraged to become leaders and where they feel a strong sense of family. Emphasizing an active faith life and commitment to social justice.

Washington Christian Academy

Co-ed

16227 Batchellors Forest Road, Olney 20832

240-390-0429; www.washingtonchristian.org

-Christian

-\$16,898, grades 9-12; \$15,498, grades 6-8; \$13,998, grades K-5; \$6,999, half-day K

-Need-based financial aid

-Uniforms required

-Open Houses: Monday, Oct. 10, 9:30 a.m.; Friday, Nov. 11, 9:30 a.m.

-Known for (according to website):

Encouraging faith and critical thinking. Academically serious schooling in the historic Reformed tradition.

County-designated rural location that provides unique learning opportunities.

< see next page >

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www.thesienaschool.org

THE BULLIS SCHOOL



Holton-Arms School

Girls

7303 River Road, Bethesda 20817

301-365-5300; www.holton-arms.edu

-\$32,388, grades 7-12; \$30,957, grades 3-6

-Need-based financial aid

-Uniforms required

-Accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; Association of Independent Maryland Schools

-Open House: Sunday, Nov. 6, 2:30-5 p.m.

-Known for (according to website):

Education not only of the mind, but of the soul and spirit

Rigorous traditional academics, the fine and performing arts, athletics

Welcoming young women of diverse backgrounds in a setting where they can take risks, learn from mistakes, pursue opportunities for leadership and build lifelong friendships

Landon School

Boys

6101 Wilson Lane, Bethesda 20817

301-320-1067; www.landon.net

-\$31,027, grades 6-12; \$29,935, grades 3-5

-Need-based financial aid.

-Dress code

-Open House: Sunday, Nov. 6, 2-5 p.m.

-Known for (according to website):

Committed faculty with an average experience level of 18 years

Challenging academics, daily arts and athletics, and promotion of strong values refined to adapt to the 21st century

The Siena School

Currently grades 4-12

Co-ed

9727 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring 20910

301-592-0567; www.thesienaschool.org

-Language-based learning differences school

-\$31,148, grades 9-12; \$29,806, grades 4-8

-Need-based financial aid. Distributes about 15 percent of its tuition income each year in grants covering up to 75 percent of tuition/fees.

-Tours available every Wednesday at 9 a.m.

-Known for (according to website):

Program for bright, college-bound students who are challenged by language-based learning differences, such as dyslexia

Focus on student's individual learning strengths

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Elementary Schools

Academy of the Child Montessori School

Grades K-6

Co-ed

19711 Waters Road, Germantown 20874

301-601-0991; www.academyofthechild.com

-Montessori school

-\$9,860; 5 percent discount for second student

-Dress code

-Known for (according to website):

Guiding children individually, according to their own developmental abilities and needs

Encouraging cooperative work with other students of various ages, and enabling each child to learn at the child's own pace, free from competition, under-stimulation and anxiety

The Children's Learning Center

Grades K-5

Co-ed

4511 Bestor Drive, Rockville 20853

301-871-6600; www.clcmd.org

-\$1,570 per month for elementary school

-Known for (according to website):

Flexibility, its size and resources, and its dedication to individualized education

Developmentally appropriate curriculum that helps educate children through fun and play

Concord Hill School

Grades K-3

Co-ed

6050 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase 20815

301-654-2626; www.concordhill.org

-\$22,038

-Accredited by Association of Independent Maryland Schools

-Known for (according to website):

Educating the whole child—academically, socially, physically and emotionally

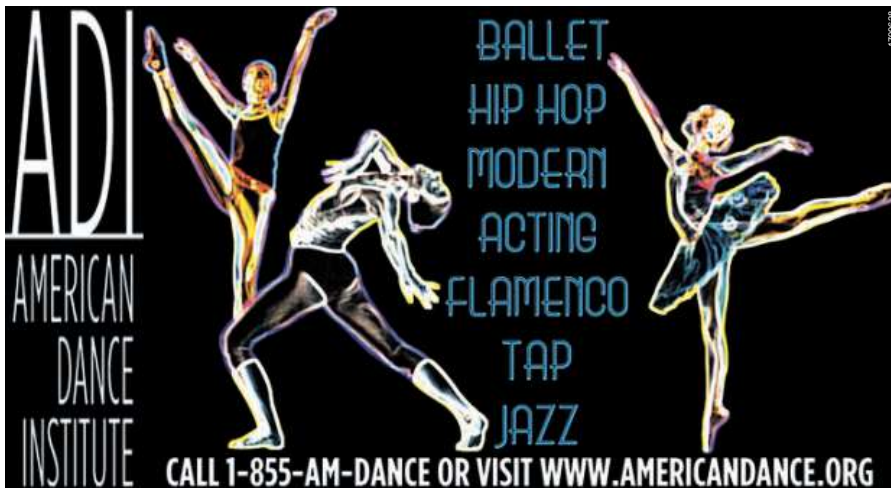
Small student-to-teacher ratios to best respond to each student's learning style

Covenant Christian School

Grades K

Co-ed

< see next page >



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< DIFFERENT LEARNERS, CONTINUED FROM 5 >

dyslexia—employs simulations and role-playing. For example, students studying World War II might imagine themselves as advisers to President Truman and argue in favor of or against the dropping of the atomic bomb. “This is our approach all the time—every day in every single subject,” Kaufman said.

Siena helps students understand their learning styles and gives them strategies to succeed. “Parents often come in with a list of accommodations and ask, ‘What are you able to provide?’” Kaufman said. “All of it. That’s how we function. Our students need and deserve those accommodations. There’s never a battle or process to go through.”

Siena embraces any existing individualized education plan and immediately provides the necessary accommodations and then looks to see what else might be needed.

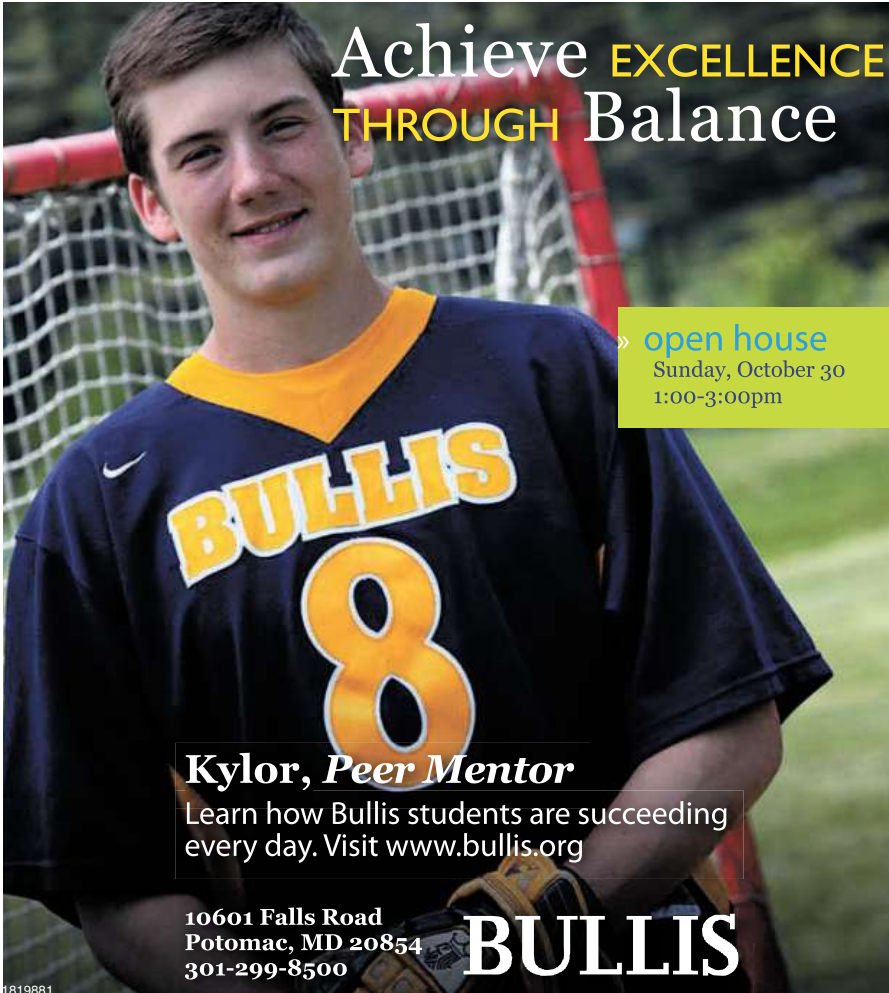
Understanding that students and parents are looking for a well-rounded school experience, Siena hosts a prom and has several sports teams. The school could more than double the size of its student body over the next several years, as it is in the process of purchasing a larger building.

The Diener School (est. 2007)

Featuring a “collaborative, integrated, therapeutic program,” The Diener School in Potomac owes its success to experiential learning, said Lois McCabe, head of admissions. Diener serves students in kindergarten through grade 6 with “language-based learning disabilities or sensory-processing, attentional and executive-functioning problems or social-pragmatic language issues.”

Many of Diener’s programs take place outside the classroom. Bi-monthly field trips are integrated into thematic social and academic lessons. Students also learn through movement. Activities such as jumping or clapping may be used to help students remember certain concepts or principles, as rhythm and cadence promote fact retention.

Themes enhance the curriculum. “It’s wonderful having an entire month to delve into a topic and made it rich,” McCabe said. Younger students studying landmarks



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