## Making Non-Traditional Education A Tradition

*The Siena School leads the way as schools across the nation embrace authentic, multisensory instruction.*

Schools with more creative approaches and student-centered learning are thriving and yielding happier, more inspired, and less-stressed students — and it is catching on.

A 2017 report by Dell Technologies estimates that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet. Teaching transferable skills in the classroom allows students to adapt to future jobs. By learning through discovery, students learn to communicate with confidence, collaborate on projects, and navigate professional discussions, which will aid them in college and the workforce.
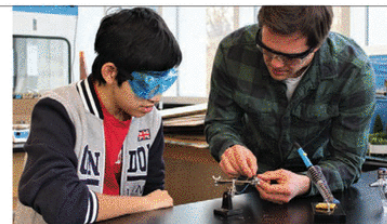
Can a school teach innovative skills in the classroom while still providing a rigorous education? The Siena School in Silver Spring, MD is an example of a new tradition of non-traditional education. For thirteen years, Siena has served bright, college-bound students with mild-to-moderate language-based learning differences. Through individualized education, Siena has helped their students improve their reading, writing, organization and study skills, and learn tools and strategies to address their executive functioning. As a result, they head off to college and the workforce with confidence, joy, and the skills needed to thrive in society.

How does it all happen at a school like Siena? And why are more traditional schools beginning to adopt the model that schools like Siena use as their foundation? With current research about how students' brains work, there is more information about how to help students learn. Schools like Siena have implemented many cutting edge strategies for helping students engage with complex content through:

- Advocacy
- Simulations
- Internships
- Engineering
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Multi-modal teaching

"We are finding that all students — not just students with learning differences — benefit from these approaches," explains Clay Kaufman, co-Head of School. "Schools for students with learning differences seem to be more willing to break with traditional teaching, and other schools are following suit."

What about getting into college and preparing for life afterwards? Parents are thrilled that students in non-traditional programs are being accepted and receiving scholarships from mainstream colleges. Students, in fact, are realizing that writing, research, and organizational skills are equally important to their adjustment to college. Reported one Siena graduate, "The


*Siena student engages in robotics lab.*

adjustment to college was actually easier for me than for some of my friends who don't have learning differences. They kept asking me where I learned all these important skills, and I told them it was at my high school!"

The Siena School — with its non-traditional approach — has become a resource for other schools in the DC area, conducting workshops and trainings at area public and private schools, providing academic summer options, hosting educational workshops for parents and academic professionals, and they will be leading an upcoming colloquium on "Authentic Assessments" next fall.

Through multi-modal teaching, Siena breaks from the traditional mold and allows its students to make discoveries in the classroom and learn the necessary skills required to transition into college and the workforce. With a non-traditional approach, Siena students refine their gifts and reach their full potential. Learn more at www.thesienaschool.org.