



## New Private School Opening in Silver Spring, MD

*The Siena School will serve bright, college-bound students with language-based learning differences*

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, July 18, 2006 – The Siena School (“Siena”) is announcing its plans to open in September 2006. The school will serve bright, college-bound students with mild to moderate language-based learning differences, such as dyslexia. Siena’s staff and board of advisors (attached) include distinguished national, state and local education leaders and professionals.

Starting this fall, Siena will serve students in grades 5-9. The school will add one grade per year, growing to serve grades 5-12 by 2009. Siena’s program is designed for students who are experiencing a discrepancy between their academic abilities and achievement level in one or more areas such as reading, writing, oral expression or math.

“We are establishing The Siena School to meet overwhelming demand in the community for a school serving bright kids who learn differently,” said Erik E. Heyer, Siena’s founder and executive director. “At present, these families have very few public or private school options available. Siena will provide a specialized, multisensory instructional environment that meets the unique learning needs of our students.”

“There is a significant need in the Washington D.C. area for a new school serving bright students with mild to moderate learning differences,” said Ruth B. Spodak, Ph.D. a local educational psychologist and consultant specializing in learning disabilities. “These are kids who can be very successful in the right environment and from what I have seen Siena is creating a highly effective program.”



Siena will deliver an individualized educational program featuring small class sizes; research-based and multisensory instructional methodologies; a well-trained faculty; and an educational environment specifically designed to meet the needs of bright students with language-based learning differences. Estimates on the number of people with learning differences/dyslexia range from 5-15% of the population.

In its first year, Siena expects to enroll approximately 30 coed students. The average student-teacher ratio will not exceed 10:1. For the 2006-2007 academic year, the school will be conveniently located at the Montgomery Hills Baptist Church, 9727 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring, MD across from the Forest Glen station on the red line Metro.

### **About The Siena School**

The Siena School is an outstanding new private school in Silver Spring, MD serving bright, college-bound students with mild to moderate language-based learning differences, such as dyslexia. Siena's staff and board of advisors include distinguished national, state and local education leaders and professionals. The school is opening fall 2006 to serve students in grades 5 – 9, and will grow to serve grades 5 – 12 by 2009. Siena's program is designed for students who are experiencing a discrepancy between their academic abilities and achievement level in one or more areas such as reading, writing, oral expression or math. Siena delivers a unique and individualized educational program featuring small class sizes, research-based instructional methodologies, a well-trained faculty and an educational environment uniquely designed to meet the needs of our students. For further information, The Siena School can be contacted at (301) 592-0567 or on the web at [www.thesienaschool.org](http://www.thesienaschool.org).

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## The Siena School – Staff

**Erik Heyer, founder and executive director**, is a highly respected education leader. Mr. Heyer was on the founding team and management committee of Victory Schools, a national leader in the charter school and public education reform movements. Victory's schools have been recognized for their outstanding academic quality by the U.S. Department of Education, *TIME* magazine and numerous national and local leaders. Mr. Heyer also helped to create nationally recognized partnerships to reform low-performing public schools in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Wilmington, DE. In 2003, he was awarded a Broad Fellowship in the Broad Foundation Superintendents Academy, one of the nation's most prestigious education leadership training programs. He began his career in finance with Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, before joining the founding team of New Mountain Capital, one of the nation's premier private investment firms. Mr. Heyer holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. in Systems Engineering with high honors from the University of Virginia. He currently serves on the professional advisory board of the Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center and is a trustee of Calvert Education Services, one of the nation's oldest homeschooling organizations.

**Jillian Darefsky, school director, English language arts teacher**, is an experienced educator and school leader, having previously served as a founding school coordinator. In this role, Ms. Darefsky oversaw all day-to-day school operations and administration. She has implemented highly regarded curriculum and instructional models, with a focus on language-based learning disabilities. Ms. Darefsky has special expertise in the use of assistive learning technology. She is a member of the National Association of Special Education Teachers and the International Dyslexia Association. Ms. Darefsky earned a B.A. in English Literature with Psychology from the University of Surrey, a Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia from Hornsby International Dyslexia Centre and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from Canterbury Christ Church University College. She holds a Masters in Specific Learning Difficulties from Middlesex University.

**Barbara Kaplan, Ph.D., assistant head/director of admissions**, has over 30 years experience in educational leadership, academic administration, curriculum development and teaching. Dr. Kaplan was previously associate dean for academic affairs at Villa Julie College where she was responsible for providing all faculty professional development, assisting with daily academic operations, developing and implementing academic policies, and maintaining the college's accreditation and academic standards. She formerly served in a variety of leadership and teaching roles over a 20 year period within the University of Maryland system, including: founding executive director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (University College campus); founding executive director of the Program in Science, Technology and Society Studies (College Park campus); senior instructional designer of the Center for Instructional Development and Evaluation (University College campus); and graduate and undergraduate instructor. She has received numerous awards and honors in her career, including *Faculty Woman of the Year* at the University of Maryland (Baltimore County), a University of Maryland Fellowship and a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship from the Smithsonian Institution. She has authored two books and a variety of articles on teaching and learning. Dr. Kaplan holds a Ph.D. in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine from the University of Maryland (College Park), and a M.A. in History and a B.A. in Political Science/Psychology from the University of Chicago.



## The Siena School Advisory Board

- Robin Church, Ed.D.** Assistant Vice President for Education and Executive Director of School Programs for the **Kennedy Krieger Institute**
- Margaret R. Harrington, Ed.D.** Chief Operating Officer, Victory Schools and former chief executive of school programs and support services for the **New York City Public School System**
- Pearl R. Kane, Ed.D.** Director, Klingenstein Center for Independent School Education and Associate Professor of Education, Teachers College, **Columbia University**
- Katherine K. Merseth, Ed.D.** Director of Teacher Education Programs and Senior Lecturer, **Harvard University Graduate School of Education**
- Matthew Moyer** Photojournalist, currently on assignment for **National Geographic**
- Claire Nissenbaum, M.A.** Founder, **Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center**
- Lou Salza, M.Ed** Head of School, **ASSETS School**
- William Stixrud, Ph.D.** Director, **William Stixrud and Associates**
- Nancy Streim, Ph.D.** Associate Dean for Graduate and Professional Education and Senior Research Investigator, **University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education**
- Janet Wintrol** Director, **The Ivymount School**