Principal’s letter
Childhood is a journey, not a race

Littlebrook School is a community of learners pursuing academic excellence and the development of creativity, responsibility and respect. We recognize the importance of today’s essential aptitudes for living successfully in a global society. We also believe that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum and that children learn best in a setting where they are known and valued. Diversity within our school provides students with opportunities to recognize and to use each others’ strengths while reaching for success and happiness.

Littlebrook’s beloved giraffe mascot, Ravioli, reminds us all of the importance of sticking our necks out for others by being caring and kind. Each morning, the day begins with a Morning Meeting, where students in every classroom greet each other with sincere words and eye contact and make personal connections through sharing and a group activity.

Critical thinking skills and creativity are taught through every discipline—literacy, mathematics, visual and performing arts, technology, the sciences, and physical education. Our goal is to create life-long learners who use their knowledge and individual strengths and talents to fulfill their personal mission.

We welcome visitors, volunteers, and questions. Please feel free to call or email us.
Discovering Littlebrook…

Littlebrook’s staff and parents, in a positive, ongoing partnership, offer broad, deep, and integrated educational experiences to a diverse pupil population. Our integrated approach to education, which presents art, computers, health, language arts, library skills, mathematics, music, physical education, science, social studies, and world language through their connections rather than in isolation, is a hallmark of Littlebrook School.

Littlebrook values literacy. In our media center and classroom libraries we have collections of quality children’s literature reflecting our commitment to diversity and multicultural values. Our Language Arts program is literature based and balanced with appropriate word work. Frequent formal and informal assessments monitor student progress and inform instruction. The multiple instructional approaches we utilize reflect current research and allow us to meet specific needs and different learning styles of our students.

Littlebrook students explore mathematics with concrete manipulatives that build concept understanding. They use multiple strategies for solving mathematical problems, including real-life applications, and they practice procedural computation for speed and accuracy using a variety of algorithms. Mathematics lessons involve multiple instructional approaches to better meet the needs of a diverse student body. School-based, teacher/student centered professional development opportunities, offered regularly, keep the teaching staff abreast of new strategies and methods for teaching mathematics.

The Social Studies program invites students to integrate reading and writing through the use of historical novels and other trade books, while the studies of geography and economics overlap with mathematics lessons. Our fifth graders become historians and hone their research skills by examining and analyzing primary documents such as the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, speeches and photographs. Study of U.S. history culminates with a trip to the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg and an overnight in Gettysburg. Fourth graders experience hands-on learning at a 1900’s New Jersey farm as part of New Jersey history, third graders re-live aspects of Colonial Princeton history, and second graders participate in a unit on communities that encompasses Princeton’s multiple and diverse constituencies. Our first graders focus on Then and Now studies, learning about the olden days and our kindergartners learn all about themselves and their families through songs and stories.

There are two aspects of science education at Littlebrook. The first is in-class instruction by the home-room teacher that follows a standards-based district curriculum. This instruction is supplemented by skills-based instruction led by a science specialist. The science specialist uses the school’s science and computer labs, the environmental trail, and the school gardens to create genuine hands-on, minds-on science investigations. Littlebrook students generate real-world data, evaluate scientific methods, and recognize that scientific inquiry leads to more questions. Our goal for all our students is scientific literacy: the ability to understand, evaluate, and apply key science concepts and processes.

Every year, we have artists and historians working with our students in science, social studies, storytelling, and music. The entire student body participates in a dynamic Artist-in-Residence program. Professional poets work with each class of students, teaching them techniques for generating ideas, telling stories through poetry, and revising writing for clarity, interest, and meaning. From our youngest writers to the oldest, personal stories are written and shared with the language and design of poetry.

A second residency has bridged Princeton with Madagascar. A former Littlebrook teacher, who lived in Madagascar and worked in a Children’s Home/School there, returned to Littlebrook to teach our students about the land, the people, and the culture of Madagascar. This residency culminated with an evening presentation for students, parents, and community members to raise money for the children of Akany Avoko.

In May, our PTO supports a Science Expo with the theme, “How I Changed the World.” Scientists from the Princeton area, many of them Littlebrook parents, present to children in their area of expertise. The students explore questions like Sea Slugs – plant or animal? Is Pluto a planet? What things affect memory? What germs are living on your hands? What aphids are found in local trees? Science in the real world comes alive for students as questions lead to more questions and interest soars.

Each year, we also celebrate our ongoing relationship with local senior citizens, connecting generations with our kindergartners and their Grandpals reading together. Our school also participates in family activities with Family Creativity in the Arts evenings and Family Math evenings.

Above all, our students, staff, and parents value the community of learners we have formed in our pursuit of academic excellence and the development of a sense of responsibility and respect for all. We believe that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum and that children learn best in a setting where they are known and valued. We begin each day in every classroom with a Morning Meeting where every child is greeted, has an opportunity to share, and participates in a group activity designed to build community. Morning Meeting fosters responsive interactions of sharing, listening, inclusion, and participation, and teaches the skills needed to be a responsive member of a classroom and school through daily rituals and patterns. Our beloved giraffe mascot, Ravioli, reminds us all of the importance of sticking our necks out for others by being caring and kind.

Littlebrook School has developed a meaningful, productive service-learning program. All grades participate in service activities that relate to a curriculum focus and in a community service theme. The students identify a need, work to fill that need, and then reflect on their experiences in a journal that follows them through their six years of elementary school.

In addition to the grade-level service learning projects, students help our recycling efforts by collecting printer cartridges and using appropriate bins for disposing of recyclable trash.

Littlebrook School has joined the school district in raising money for victims of natural disasters. Each grade selects a fundraising project to encourage donations and the staff presents an evening concert for families. Four staff bands played and the newly formed Littlebrook Staff Choir sang a rendition of “We are the World” during the Haiti relief efforts.

Our Garden Club, a group of interested student and parent volunteers, continue to grow our courtyard into an outdoor learning experience, complete with flower and vegetable gardens, a pond, and a classroom area.

The PTO is a valued partner in all we do. They support special events, field trips, and residencies for the school throughout the year. Our “Joe Fund,” a memorial fund named in honor of a beloved custodian, provides scholarships to children for extracurricular activities like drama, dancing, gymnastics and music lessons. The Joe Fund reflects the spirit of Littlebrook.
At a Glance
Fast facts about Littlebrook

Mission
The central mission of Littlebrook School is to provide a learning environment that stimulates all aspects of the intellect and responds to the diverse needs of the entire school community. We believe that the best learning takes place in a setting that is secure, physically and emotionally. This learning takes place within a coherent, child-centered curriculum and with respect for a variety of teaching and learning styles. We are connected by our desire for our students to grow as learners and responsible members of our community. Our environment is a harmonious one in which there is mutual respect, caring, and support among students, staff, and parents.

Head Administrator
Anna Gonzalez Kosek, Principal

Curriculum

Curriculum Enhancements
Developmental Counseling, Accelerated Intervention Services, English as a Second Language, Special Education, Adaptive Physical Education, Speech and Language Correction, Occupational Therapy

Enrichment Programs
Family Math evenings
Family Creative in the Arts evenings
Service Learning Projects

After-School Clubs
Music After School
Chess Club
Drama Club

Special Programs
Hands-on Science Labs for Students
Edible Gardens, Herb Gardens
Artist-in-Residence Programs

Student Enrollment 335
Average class size 17.6
Student/Faculty Ratio 8.7
Chiara Goldenstern, Fourth Grade

What would Chiara tell students new to Littlebrook? "Don't be afraid to try new things and get to know people," she says. One of the new things Chiara has tried is the Girl World program, run by guidance counselor Jennifer Walters. Girl World gives girls a chance to talk about life from a girl's perspective, and the chance to discuss friendships, cliques, self-esteem and other relevant issues. Chiara gives Girl World a big thumbs up. "There are a few different groups -- a blue group, an orange group, a green group. My group meets Wednesdays during lunch recess and I am really liking it!"

Chiara's academic subjects include writing, math, reading, science, social studies and Spanish. Right now science is one of her favorites. "We are studying geology and learning all the different types of rocks, including sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic," she explains. "And we have been studying the continents and how they formed and learning about Pangaea."

The school year is punctuated with field trips. A trip to the Kidsbridge Tolerance Museum at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), part of Littlebrook's character education and anti-bullying program, made an impression on Chiara. "And we studied living history at Howell Farm," Chiara adds.

Another high point for Chiara during the year is the Character Counts week. "It's one of my favorite things," she says. "It is based on the Six Pillars of Character so we focus on respect, trustworthiness, caring, responsibility, fairness and citizenship. I like the Good Citizenship silly hat day. It's great seeing everybody's hat."

Chiara has been at Littlebrook since kindergarten and finds the school lives up to its reputation as a place that stimulates the intellect but is also caring and relaxed.

"The kids at Littlebrook are friendly and people always let you join in," she says.

"This year has been great and I am looking forward to fifth grade," says Chiara. "In fifth grade you get to do the fifth grade Shakespeare play and you get to go to Gettysburg!"

Sarah Schwimmer, Fifth Grade Teacher

Sarah Schwimmer brings two decades of experience to teaching at Littlebrook. Part of what has kept her happily teaching is the friendly dynamic between students, staff and parents. "One of the strengths of Littlebrook is that we are a small school and we are very inter-connected as teachers, educators and staff. We like each other and we share ideas. It's a very collegial atmosphere and the kids feel it. There isn't any ego -- it's all about the kids."

Many of Mrs. Schwimmer's students have been looking forward to the perks of fifth grade since they first entered Littlebrook. One of the traditions is that every fifth grader is assigned a buddy in kindergarten. "If you ask high school students who attended Littlebrook to name their fifth grade buddy, most of them remember exactly who it was," says Mrs. Schwimmer. "It's a special connection for the students."

The Littlebrook student population is diverse. In addition, Littlebrook educates children whose parents have fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton and these students frequently are from a different part of the country or a different part of the world. "We really value our International Nights," says Mrs. Schwimmer. "We try to make all the connections"
The Littlebrook PTO wishes to extend a warm welcome to all families. The mission of the PTO is to enhance the education of our children through cooperative efforts involving both the staff and the parents.

The PTO supports community outreach programs, supplements assemblies and residency programs, sponsors family events, after-school clubs and performances, and provides additional school services and teacher support. There are many ways for families to get involved and we hope that you will be able to find a satisfying way to participate or volunteer.

Littlebrook fifth graders perform a Shakespeare play every year, another highlight. "At Littlebrook the whole school watches the Shakespeare play all the way through each year so it has to be appropriate for kindergarteners," explains Mrs. Schwimmer. "As the kindergarteners move up, they see a new play every year, so by the time they become fifth graders they know some Shakespeare and there is a point of reference."

Another special tradition is the overnight trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that the fifth graders take to complement their American history studies. "For many students it is the high point at the end of their Littlebrook career," says Mrs. Schwimmer.

Please consider joining our efforts in whatever capacity is appropriate for your family. We hope each year will be a rewarding and exciting one for you. Please contact us at any time with questions or suggestions and we look forward to working with you!
As we strive each hour to serve approximately 3500 pupils from Princeton and Cranbury Township well, we do so knowing that the work in our classrooms, on our courts, fields and stages and in our offices matters deeply in the individual lives of each child. We are preparing students for a complex and challenging world in which they can be both successful and joyful. Our children have the benefit of exceptional curricula, the most talented teachers and a strong support base of resources, specialized facilities and community partners which tremendously influence their academic success. From pre-school through senior year, our learners are also well guided in their abilities to make good decisions, to serve their fellow human beings, and to contribute in meaningful ways to our society. “Live to Learn, Learn to Live” is not about numbers of credits or scores on standardized tests; it is about a lifelong gift that the Princeton Public Schools gives its pupils and alumni. That is what makes Princeton Public Schools one of our nation’s finest educational systems.

It is a combination of high standards, great expectations, rigor, care and passion that creates the positive conditions for our learners’ successes. Our exceptional results can be measured statistically by state tests, by Advanced Placement exams, by reading and math benchmarks, by graduation rates, by college acceptances and by many other tools. By every indicator we are certainly a district of high performing students. It is our job to also be a high performing district in which our children can thrive. Analyses of our processes, patterns, and beliefs are just as important as test results and for that evaluation we turn to the Tri States Consortium of which we are a member. Asking peer districts to observe our work, to offer critical recommendations and to assist us in benchmarking standards for the 21st century is a strategy that is serving Princeton Public Schools well.

Our Board adopted four key areas of focus as the foundation of the district’s strategic plan:

- We will have an expectation of professional excellence leading to the best possible outcome for every student.
- We will ensure that all students meet high standards of verbal and analytical competency, recognize their individual talents and potential for excellence, and are prepared socially, academically and physically to engage confidently in their future endeavors.
- We will have a communications system to inform and engage students, parents, families, residents, faculty, staff and community partners fostering a web of mutual trust, respect and action that supports an optimum environment for student achievement.
- Student learning will be enhanced using 21st century technological skills so that students will be better able to communicate with, collaborate with, and excel among their global peers; and students will be able to use technology in constructive and creative ways in a variety of situations.

Our community, faculty, staff and Board will be diligent in making each goal a reality so that Princeton Public School’s children continue to thrive.

Judith A. Wilson, Superintendent

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