



ALEXANDRIA  
COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

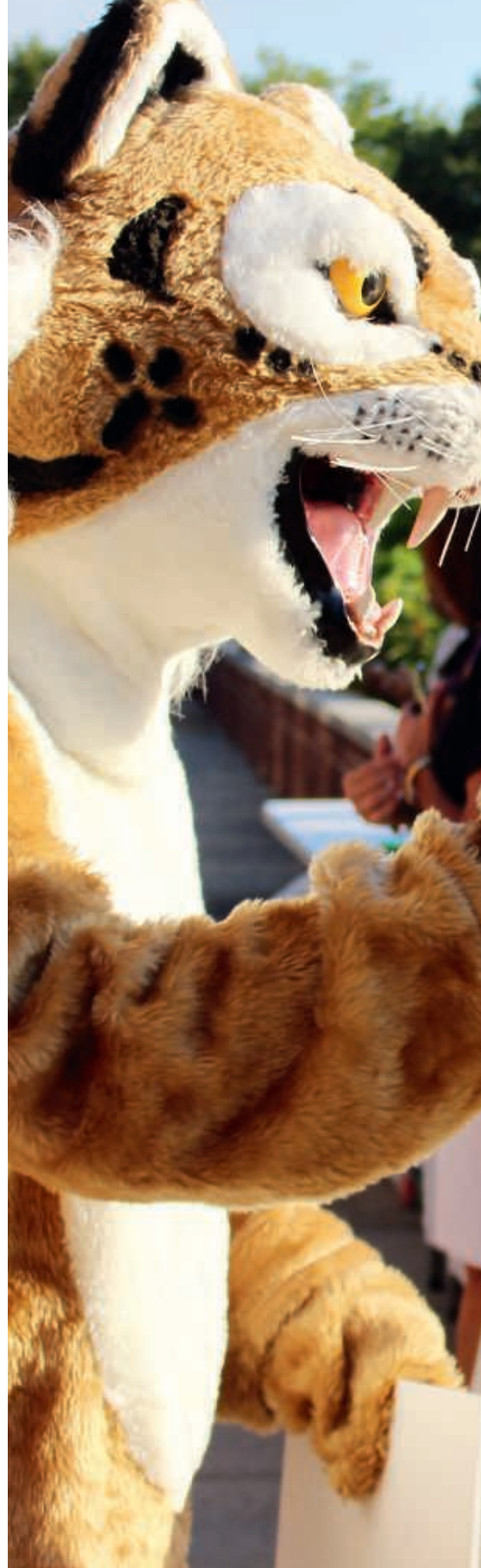
Start Strong. Start Here.



# ACDS

## Where education begins – and lasts a lifetime

Your child's  
kindergarten  
through eighth  
grade years are  
a crucial time  
for developing  
all dimensions  
of their intellect  
and character.







At ACDS, we provide a more personalized experience for your child, which leads to superior preparation for continuing academic and personal success.



Our **curriculum and instruction** challenges top students while meeting the needs of all students by offering flexibility, effective assessment, an array of methodologies, thoughtfully integrated use of technology, and a student-centered approach.

Our unique emphasis on **speaking, writing, and multimedia communication skills** across all curricular areas better prepares students for school, work, and life.







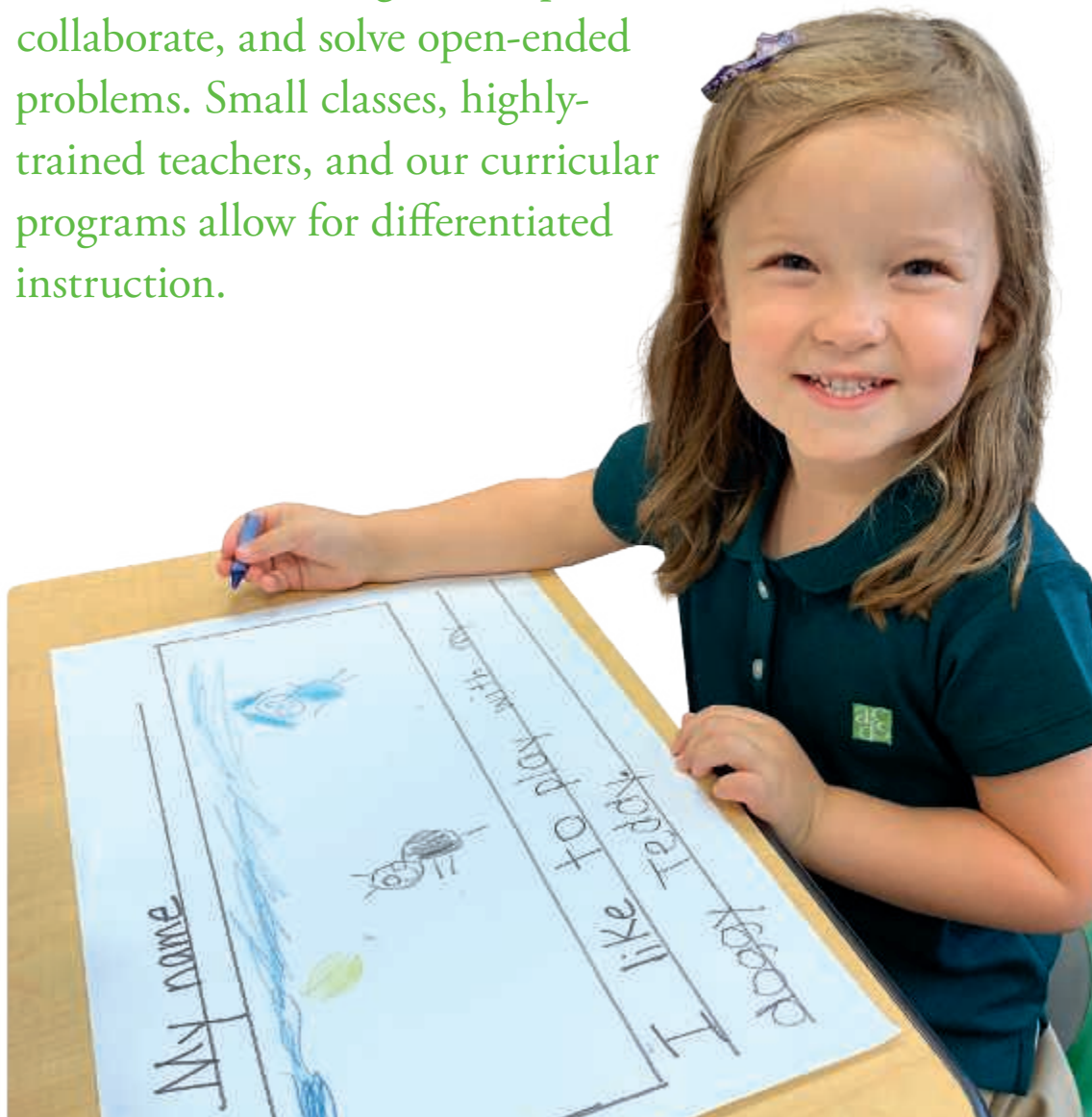
Our **approach to assessment** encourages reflection, self-awareness, and critical thinking, skills that are essential to future academic success. Our students are better able to work with others, ask questions, organize workload, and seek both challenge and support.

Our attention to **balance and social-emotional learning** help our students become kind, empathetic, and community-minded citizens who value diversity, are able to work effectively with others, and know how to engage in respectful discourse.

ACDS graduates represent the type of generous, kind, thoughtful, articulate, and confident person you want your child to become. They are successful at highly regarded independent day and boarding high schools, and in public school STEM, honors, and IB programs.

# Where academic rigor sparks excitement, not stress

ACDS's classrooms hum with curiosity and creativity. Guided by experienced teachers, students are challenged to explore, reflect, collaborate, and solve open-ended problems. Small classes, highly-trained teachers, and our curricular programs allow for differentiated instruction.







Each student is kept challenged at a level that is appropriate for him or her, whether they are academically advanced, somewhere in the middle, or need some support. Hands-on, experiential lessons at an appropriate level of challenge creates a joyful classroom atmosphere where students work hard but are having fun while doing it, and frequent engagement in small group and partner work throughout the day fosters a spirit of collaboration rather than competition within the classroom community.

Whether it's a quick desk-side conference or a more formal assessment, students at all grade levels receive ample and frequent, age-appropriate feedback on their progress from their teachers. Through our thoughtful and forward-thinking approach to assessment, students learn that feedback is part of the learning process and not just a time for high-stakes performance. They come to see evaluation

as essential in mastering skills and concepts and developing strong learning habits. They become skilled at evaluating their own work and providing insightful and constructive feedback to others, and they build the habits of organization, active and thoughtful participation, effort, and perseverance.





## LANGUAGE ARTS

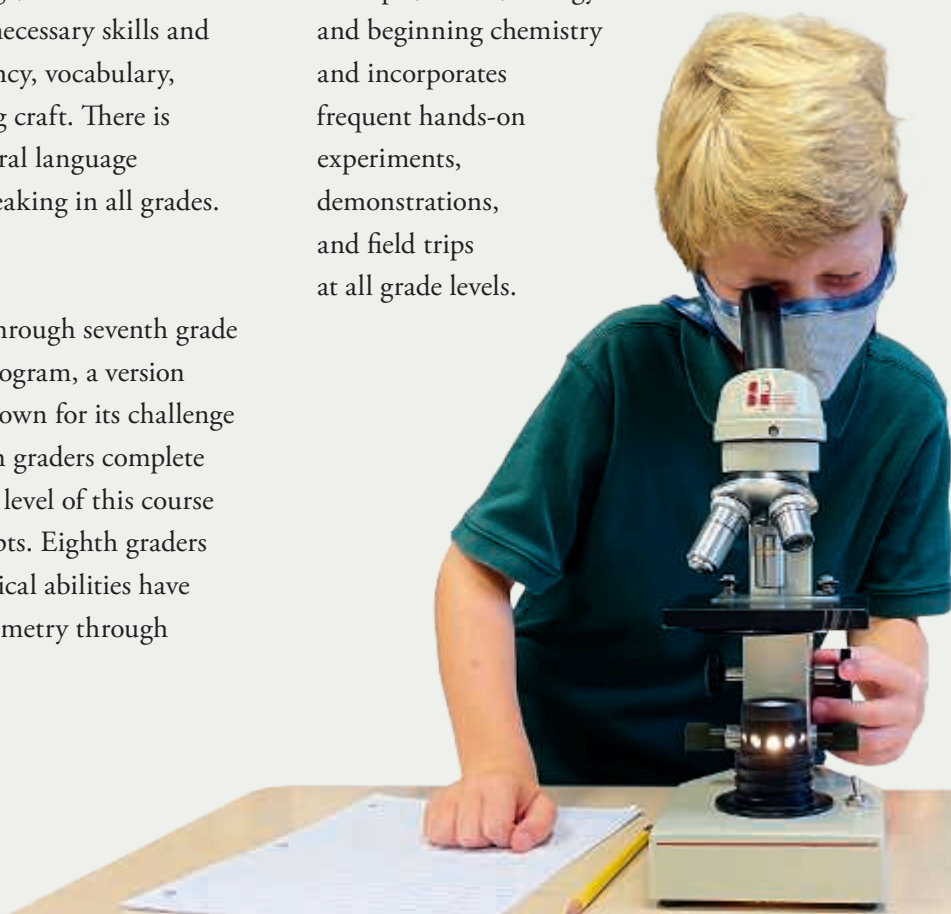
Reading and Writing Workshop, an instructional approach developed at Columbia University's Teachers College, is used to ensure that our students gain the necessary skills and knowledge in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing craft. There is also a strong emphasis on oral language development and public speaking in all grades.

## MATH

Students in Kindergarten through seventh grade follow the *Math in Focus* program, a version of Singapore Math, well known for its challenge and effectiveness. All eighth graders complete Algebra I and the advanced level of this course introduces geometry concepts. Eighth graders with exceptional mathematical abilities have the opportunity to take geometry through an online program.

## SCIENCE

Our science curriculum includes studies of earth, physical, and life sciences as well as STEM concepts, health, biology and beginning chemistry and incorporates frequent hands-on experiments, demonstrations, and field trips at all grade levels.





## SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies classes frequently include interactive simulations, inquiry-based units designed to match the *C3 Framework*, field trips, and current events. Fundamental to the social studies curriculum is the development of critical thinking, tolerance and respect for the self, community, and world, as well as cross-cultural understanding.

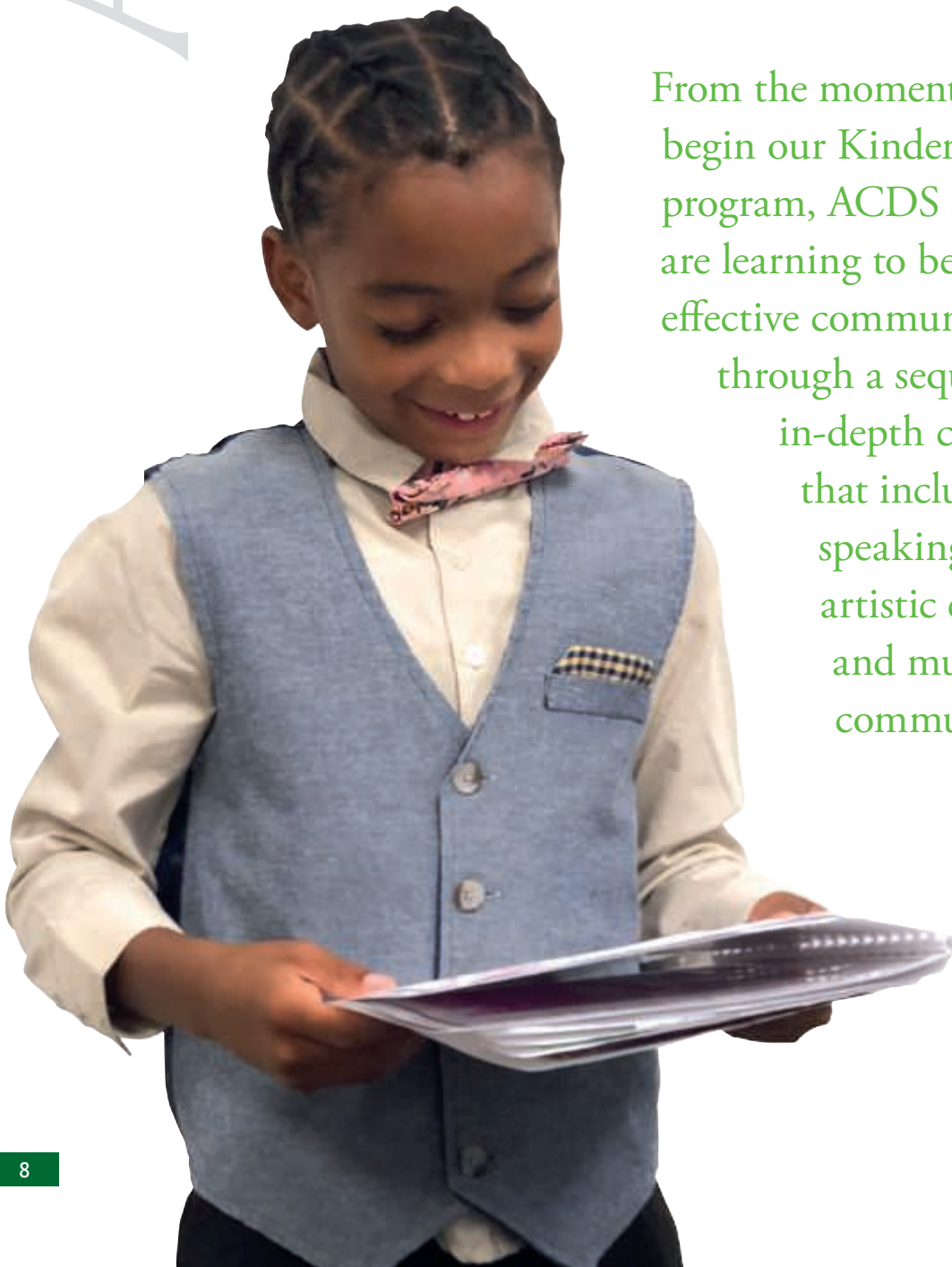
## SPANISH

Students are introduced to Spanish language and culture in Kindergarten. In subsequent years, they strengthen and broaden their comprehension and expression skills, as well as their knowledge and appreciation of cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. By eighth grade, students complete the equivalent of high school Spanish I.



# Where students learn to communicate effectively

From the moment they begin our Kindergarten program, ACDS students are learning to become effective communicators through a sequential and in-depth curriculum that includes public speaking, writing, artistic expression, and multimedia communication.

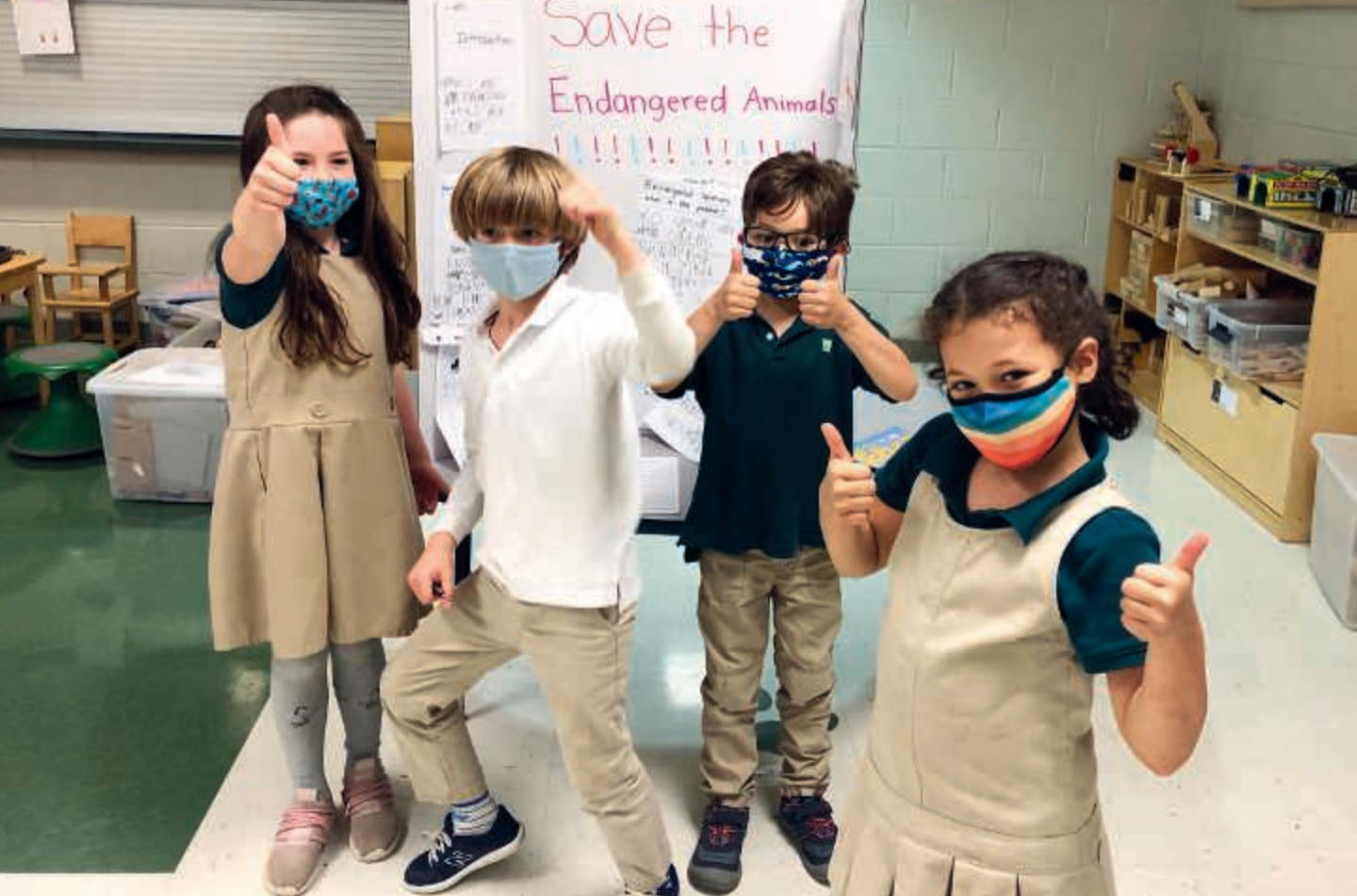




Students explore how to advocate effectively, how to listen, how to evaluate information, how to disagree respectfully, how to engage their audience, and how to root their ideas and opinions in facts. The result is graduates who are uncommonly good at communicating their ideas, listening to others, asking questions, synthesizing ideas, and thinking creatively.

The teaching of communication skills is not limited to language arts class, where writing, reading, and public speaking are the central focus. In science, social studies, math, and Spanish, students are expected to use effective communication skills to work in small groups and demonstrate their understanding of a topic through presentations, essays, videos, visual models, and more. Drama, music, and art classes challenge students to use artistic expression as another powerful form of communication. Library classes focus on information literacy, how to evaluate sources, and how news, advertising, and commentary influence views.





## PUBLIC SPEAKING

Public speaking is woven into every grade at ACDS beginning in Kindergarten with both formal and informal opportunities for students to practice and grow their skills each year. Informally, students regularly share ideas and opinions during morning meetings or advisory sessions and present their work to classmates. Each grade also has at least one more formal public speaking opportunity each year.



### Kindergarten's Save the World Convention:

Working in small groups, kindergartners research a topic such as endangered animals or clean water. They then present their information to parents, teachers, and friends both orally and on a poster board they've created.

**First Grade Author's Tea:** At the end of the year, each first grader selects a piece of their writing for the year and reads it aloud to their parents and classmates in a formal setting.



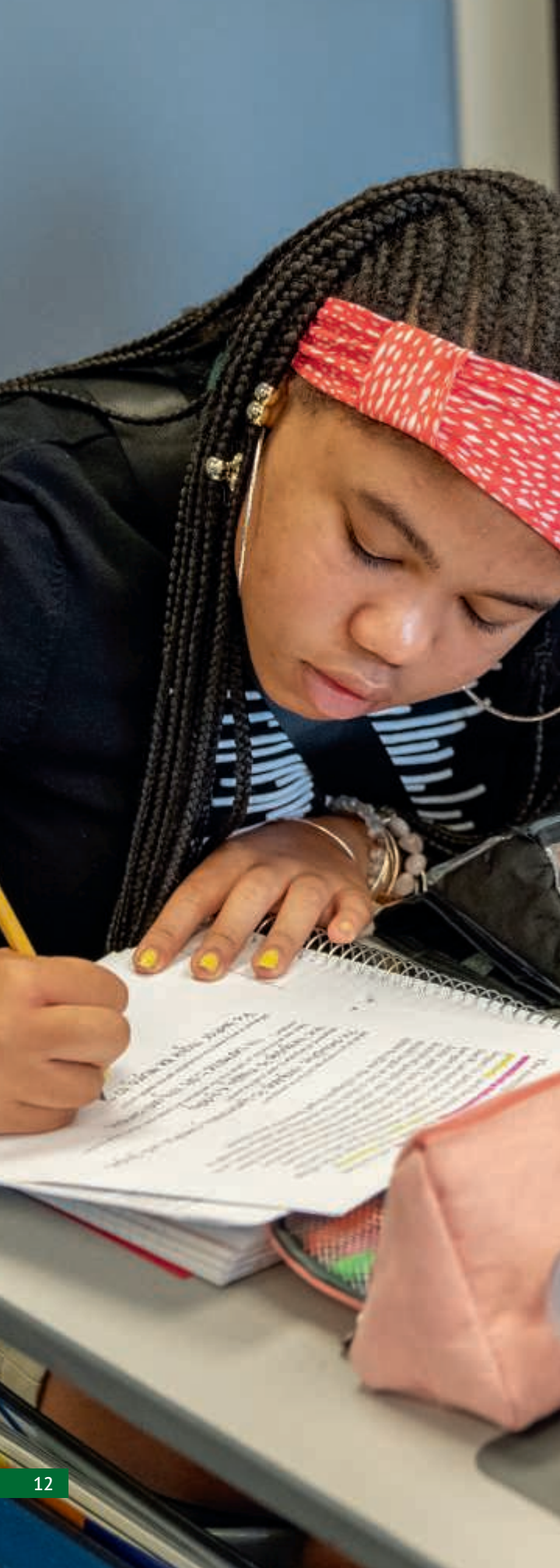
**Hero Day in Second Grade:** After engaging in a discussion about the characteristics that make someone a hero, each second grader selects a hero to study. They do research on their chosen hero and then write and deliver a biographical presentation.

**Third Grade Poetry Reading:** Third graders gather at St. Elmo's Coffee Pub in Del Ray and deliver two original works and one favorite published poem.

**Fourth Grade Play:** Fourth graders take to the stage, exploring character development and how to deliver their lines with expression as they work together to put on a class play.

**Speeches & Sweets:** Beginning in fifth grade, middle school students participate in our annual Speeches & Sweets program. Each year, students get up in front of their parents and classmates and deliver a formal speech. By the time they deliver their eighth grade speech, it resembles a TED Talk in style and quality. Our eighth graders are storytellers and use their voices and gestures to draw in their audience and convey passion for their topics.





## WRITING

The Writing Workshop model, an instructional approach developed at Columbia University's Teachers College, provides the framework for writing instruction in all grades at ACDS. Teachers begin each writing workshop with a short mini lesson in which they demonstrate a particular skill. Students then work independently on their ongoing writing work, drawing on what they have learned that day and in previous lessons. While students write, teachers confer with children individually and lead small groups to provide responsive, differentiated instruction. The workshop closes with a brief group recap — this is a time when the teacher may highlight things that individual students did during the workshop that could benefit all of the others.

Throughout this process students receive continuous and specific feedback designed to develop their confidence as writers, hone their skills, and constantly provide additional challenge that elevates the quality and sophistication of their written expression. Their progress is evident in the many opportunities they have to share their writing, whether with an older buddy, a reflective speech delivered at Grandparents' & Special Friends' Day, at the first grade Author's Tea, or a science fair presentation.





## MULTIMEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

From podcasting to video production, ACDS students gain extensive experience using a wide-variety of communication methods. They are taught to think about their audience and what they are trying to communicate and determine the most effective means for conveying their ideas.

When they go on to high school and beyond, this preparation distinguishes them from their peers. High school teachers and admissions officers frequently comment on how poised and articulate our students are and how capable they are as communicators.

# Where kindness and service to others are valued

ACDS students are encouraged to value diversity and to understand community in both local and global terms. They take an active role in supporting the inclusivity and well-being of the school community as classmates, leaders, mentors, and friends, and they find ways to have a positive impact here in Alexandria and throughout the world.









## A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

At ACDS, the social and emotional well-being of all our students is of primary importance. One simply has to walk into a classroom or see students interacting with one another at recess or in the hallway to feel the nurturing and supportive climate. Character education and building self-esteem are woven throughout the school day through the use of Responsive Classroom in Lower School and Developmental Designs in Middle School.

Lower School students begin their day with a morning meeting during which every child is greeted by name. There is also an activity meant to teach a certain social skill or strengthen the classroom community. In the Middle School, students are assigned an advisor and meet with their small advisory group of approximately 10 students each morning. These meetings employ the Circle of Power and







Respect (CPR) model. A key component of the Developmental Designs program, CPR periods are carefully designed to give students and teachers opportunities to engage in conversations and activities that build character and community. The sessions explore challenging questions our students face as they consider their role in their school, their community, and the larger world around them. Combined with the informal interactions that take place during the day, teachers and students have significant time each day to build strong relationships that help them grow.

The sense of community is also fostered through our buddy program in which older students become mentors to their younger peers. Buddies participate in a variety of activities together throughout the year.



## A COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

The Mission of ACDS includes the commitment to prepare students to thrive in a diverse and complex world, in part by ensuring that they are community minded citizens. This commitment is supported by the belief that children learn best when they are fully seen and valued for who they are and when they are fully included in their school community. To that end, ACDS is committed to building a diverse learning community in which all members are fully included in the life and work of the School. Our curriculum and instruction reflect diverse perspectives and experiences, encourage open and civil discourse, challenge students to think critically, and prepare them to communicate their evolving understanding of the world with conviction and respect. Our purpose is to give our students the skills to think for themselves as independent learners, guided by a commitment to our core values of respect, kindness, and a desire to learn. We strive to hire a diverse teaching and administrative staff that reflects the broader community in which we live. We believe that creating an inclusive environment is a community responsibility and requires open and respectful communication among us all.

— Statement approved by the Board of Trustees



**ACDS faculty and staff** participate in regular professional development sessions using the SEED project framework. SEED was specifically selected due to its outstanding reputation and success in schools around the country in building deeper understanding and inclusivity in school communities.

**Our active faculty & staff Diversity & Inclusivity Committee** meets regularly to look at our curriculum, instructional practices, and school culture through a D&I lens.

**Our middle school Allies in Diversity club** celebrates differences, examines diversity concepts, explores ways to expand upon the inclusivity of our school, and plans educational events.





## A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

Service learning at ACDS is a thoughtful program of investigation, planning, action, and reflection that allows students and teachers to address authentic community needs while deepening their understanding of the world around them. Each grade chooses a theme for the year and begins with an “investigation” stage where they research community needs related to their theme. As they develop and implement plans for action, students share their learning with each other and the school community at large. In addition to these thoughtful and comprehensive student-led projects, there is an all-school half-day of service in November, an all-school service day on World Food Day, and an all-school day of service in April.



# Where balance kindles success

In today's world, children are too often asked to focus on academic achievement at the exclusion of all else. At ACDS, we nurture a balanced approach to learning and to life, providing an exceptional academic program that is infused with ample time for play, artistic expression, and physical fitness.





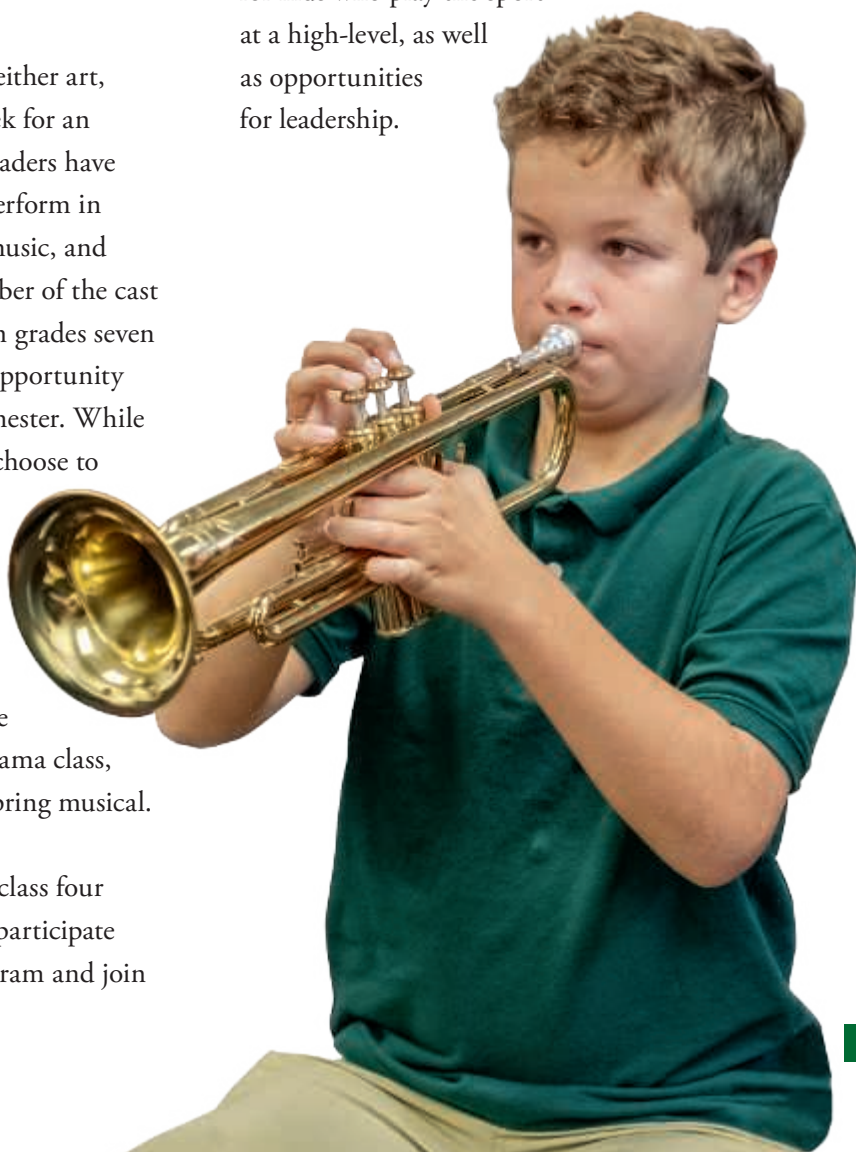


Lower School students have twice-daily “specials” classes that rotate among art, music, drama, P.E., library, and Spanish. They also enjoy a 30-minute recess in the morning and a 20-minute recess in the afternoon. Fourth graders also have the opportunity to participate on our interscholastic Cross Country, Swimming, and Tennis teams.

In Middle School, students study either art, music, or drama four days per week for an entire trimester. Fifth and sixth graders have one trimester of each discipline, perform in the band the trimester they take music, and have the opportunity to be a member of the cast of the fifth and sixth grade play. In grades seven and eight, students are given the opportunity to select their arts course each trimester. While many seventh and eighth graders choose to switch disciplines each trimester, students who have a passion for one area may choose to study that discipline for the entire year. Seventh and eighth grade students have the opportunity to play in the band if they take music, and in drama class, students put on a fall play and a spring musical.

Middle School students have P.E. class four times per week and are invited to participate in our interscholastic athletic program and join

Cross Country, Soccer, Basketball, Swimming, Tennis, Softball, and Ultimate Frisbee teams. Healthy competition and focus on skills and development make sports accessible for all and allow students to try a sport they haven’t tried before. Team sports are grouped by ability, however, so there is good competition for kids who play the sport at a high-level, as well as opportunities for leadership.





# After ACDS

ACDS works closely with each eighth grader and his or her family to facilitate the high school admissions process and find the best school for the student.

Our current high-school-aged alumni are attending over 35 different independent, public, Catholic, and boarding schools, including:

Alexandria City High School  
Bishop Ireton High School  
Episcopal High School  
The Field School  
Georgetown Visitation  
Gonzaga College High School  
Maret School  
Mercersberg Academy (PA)  
National Cathedral School  
Phillips Exeter Academy (NH)  
The Potomac School  
St. Albans School  
St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School

For a complete list, go to  
[acdsnet.org/about-us/high-school-placement](https://acdsnet.org/about-us/high-school-placement)





**Zoha '15 (second from right) opens a school library in Pakistan.**

## ZOHA SIDDIQUI '15

As an ACDS seventh grader, Zoha chose to research and speak about girls' education in Pakistan for her Speeches & Sweets speech. That speech, along with a passion for service nurtured at ACDS, inspired Zoha to continue to further her understanding of the challenges facing girls in Pakistan and take action. During her high school years at Sidwell Friends School, she started an organization, HER, to support girls' education around the world and built 13 libraries in girls' schools in developing countries. Zoha is currently a 1683 scholar at William & Mary University.

## ANDREW VALLASTER '11

A graduate of the University of Chicago with degrees in mathematics and computer science, Andrew developed his love of learning, especially in mathematics, during his nine years at ACDS. The foundation he built at ACDS, both academically and socially, allowed him to thrive during his high school years at St. Albans. Continuing his love of mathematics and science, he was captain of the J.E.T.S. team, a competitive physics and chemistry team, that won States each of his four years. He was also a successful member of the school's math team. As a double varsity athlete in cross country and rowing, he helped lead the St. Albans rowing team to a Stotesbury Gold his senior year. Andrew is currently working as a Trading Associate at Peak6 Investments.



**In 2014, Andrew '11 was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout in a ceremony held at ACDS.**



**Dana '94 (middle) poses with Founding Head of School Joan Barton and retired teacher Anne Sullivan on a visit to ACDS.**

## DANA FRANTZ BENTLEY '94

An accomplished educator and author, Dana attended St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School for high school and Georgetown University after her time at ACDS. She then received a Masters degree from Harvard University and a Doctorate of Education, Art and Art Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. A preschool teacher and researcher at Buckingham, Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge, MA, and the author of *Everyday Artists: Inquiry and Creativity in the Early Childhood Classroom*, Dana returned to ACDS in November 2014 to speak to current and retired faculty and staff. In her speech, she thanked her teachers for inspiring her career path and for teaching her to ask, "What might be possible?"

## Contact Us

For more  
information  
or to schedule  
a tour, please call  
703-837-1303  
or visit  
[www.acdsnet.org](http://www.acdsnet.org)

Alexandria Country Day School does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial aid, or any other school-administered programs.









# ALEXANDRIA COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

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## OUR MISSION

Challenge students intellectually; inspire their confidence, curiosity, and creativity; and prepare them to thrive in a diverse and complex world by ensuring that they are independent learners, effective communicators, community minded citizens, and balanced individuals.