



Seen & Heard

A magazine about
**GERMANTOWN
FRIENDS SCHOOL**



Rooted in a neighborhood that represents Philadelphia’s rich history of hope and progress, **Germantown Friends School is a place of compassionate integrity, thoughtful service, intellectual curiosity, and true community.** In this magazine, we proudly share our stories—our experiences, our reflections, our brilliance, and our Light.

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Snap

The Light Lesson

Lower School science teacher Jeffrey DeHart understands the importance of letting his students explore. “I like to follow the students’ questions and interests, looking at the natural world around them and seeing how they play a role in it.”

One of his favorite lessons is about exactly that: looking. Light is such an obvious part of our lives, it can be easy to overlook. One way to see it—to really study it—is to change our familiar surroundings. “In this lesson, I close the shades and darken the room. Then I bring out different types of natural and artificial light: candles, Christmas lights, toys. Suddenly light looks different, and students are excited to explore the way it works.”





on the SPOT

Burning questions,
answered

Isaac '23

What makes for a world-class soccer team?
Cohesion. A good team is one where you know the strengths and capabilities of each of your teammates, and everyone works on the same wavelength.



Miya '24

Who are some of your favorite artists?

It's hard to choose! This year I did research on three Black female artists: Augusta Savage, Elizabeth Catlett, and Lois Mailou Jones. They are so inspiring.



Vienna '32

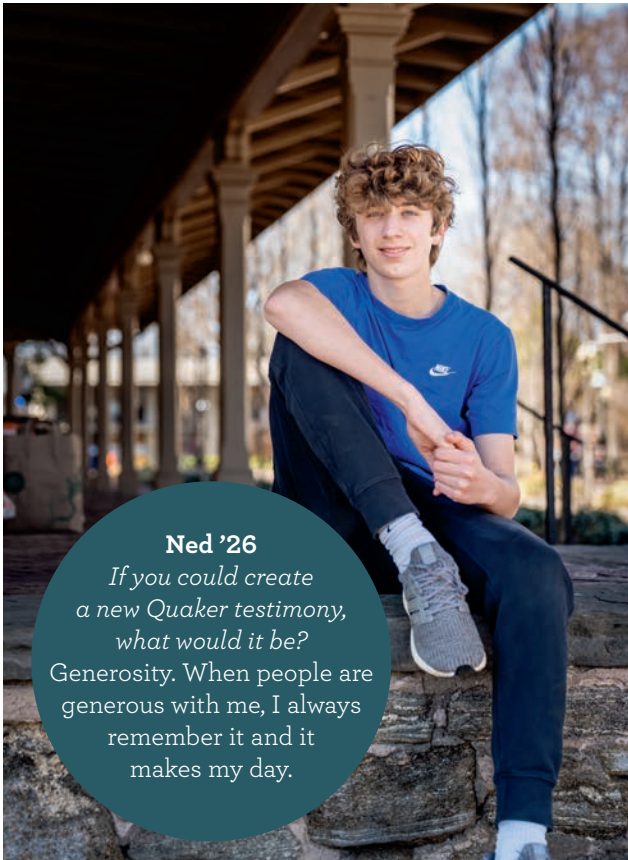
If you could be any animal, what would you be?
I would want to be a monkey so I can swing through the trees and eat mangos every day. Mangos are my favorite fruit!



Ned '26

If you could create a new Quaker testimony, what would it be?

Generosity. When people are generous with me, I always remember it and it makes my day.



Why This Class Worked

Two students and a teacher
break down the elements of a successful
eighth-grade science project

Jessa Werner: This is a project that students take home and study on their own. Each student has their own jar where they try to form an ecosystem. Each jar has an atmosphere, a lithosphere, a substrate, water, plants, and animals. Through the lab we studied photosynthesis, cellular respiration, water quality, the carbon cycle—everything that needs to exist to support life.

Fern '26: In our ecosphere, we used a plant called moneywort, and we used water from Jessa's aquarium instead of Wissahickon pond water. We have two snails in it, a baby and an adult.

Jessa: Everyone gets a snail, or multiple snails, to regulate the carbon cycle. One group had surprise snail eggs, so now they have six teeny-tiny snails.

Talia '26: I love watching the snails—ours are named Scrappy and Alaska, and they're both doing great. This lab is one of my favorite things to do because it's so interactive.

Jessa: When students take responsibility for their learning—for an entire ecosphere!—amazing things happen.



Indomitable

The GFS Girls Varsity Soccer team takes a run at the Friends Schools League title

After a year fraught with uncertainty due to a global pandemic, the GFS Girls Varsity Soccer team decided it was time to stop worrying about what was ahead and focus instead on the present.

“We concentrated on each moment, rather than numbers or results,” says team captain Annie ’22. “That helped us to stay grounded. And it gave us the freedom to put everything out there.”

The new outlook worked. The team won the Friends Schools League Championship, and attacking-forward Margaret ’23 was named to the All-State Girls Soccer Team.

“Talent only gets you so far,” says coach Manolo Sanchez ’10. “Chemistry and commitment matter, too. These players are so close—they work hard for each other.”

“We’re a goofy team,” says Margaret. “Every practice is so fun. That’s made us play well together.”

Sanchez remembers that indomitable spirit from his time as a student at GFS. “There’s strength in the way we work together,” he says.





That Meeting Moment

Students talk about
the meaning of
Meeting for Worship

Tessa '26: I love hearing the messages people share in Meeting for Worship. Meeting is a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing their feelings. It brings the community together in such a perfect way.

Grayson '25: Standing up and putting your thoughts into the world can be nerve-racking. But when a message resonates, it becomes empowering. Last week was one of those moments. One person stood up and spoke about perseverance, inspiring others to speak as well. It was the most thought-provoking Meeting I've attended.

Laxmi '22: When I'm in Meeting, I try not to think about anything. It's hard! I'll often end up going over my day or planning the work I have to do. But I try to clear my mind, focus on breathing, and stay in the present.

Taaj '27: For me, it's a time to think about something calming. Whether it's about someone I love or something I love doing, thinking about these things during Meeting for Worship puts my mind at peace.

Noah '28: I don't go into Meeting for Worship with specific thoughts or ideas. Sometimes people say things that are interesting, funny, or unexpected, and it's great simply to listen.

Madison '23: I remember one year a first grader stood up and said that the day before was a really good day because her mom let her eat ice cream before dinner. Hearing that reminded me to appreciate the little things that can make me happy.



In the Meetinghouse, left to right:
Tessa, Grayson, Laxmi, Madison, Taaj, Noah.



Have a Seat

The story of the beloved,
often life-changing experience
known as the Chair Project

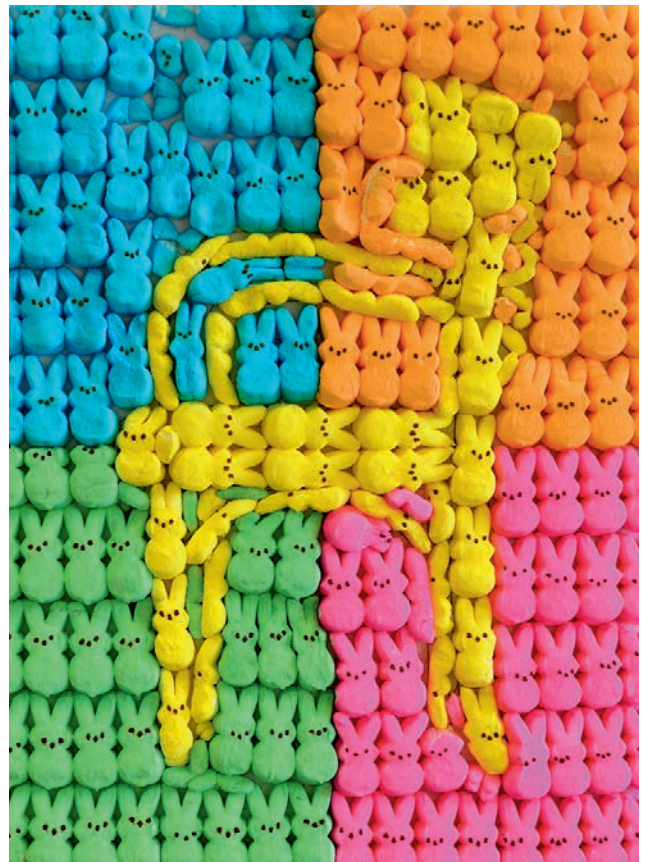
Heather Chu Marvill, Middle School Art Faculty:

The Chair Project is one of those assignments that kids loved so much, it became a tradition. Now our eighth graders see it as their graduation from Middle School art. It's the culmination of all the skills they've learned, from formal observation to conceptual development.

Megan Culp, Art Department Chair: At this stage in their development, students are ready to get more sophisticated. And they have a strong drive to express themselves. The Chair Project lets them do both.

Heather: They start with a chair that's been at the school for many years—and then they challenge themselves to represent it in a new way. One student made a chair song—which became the soundtrack for the exhibit we put on at the end of the project. One student programmed a robot to draw a chair. One made a chair out of ice cubes and filmed a time-lapse video of it melting into nothing.

Megan: Our school culture holds art close. We see it as a vital part of our education. As an art teacher, this is as good as it gets.





The Van Cleves



The McToos



The Cornejos



The Joneses

Family Portraits

Four families, four GFS journeys

The McToos

For Ginny Too and Emily McNabb, looking into GFS for their twins Jack and Clara '34, now in Kindergarten, might have been a matter of geography (it's a 10-minute walk!), but convenience quickly turned into something more.

"We fell in love with the community," Emily says. "We were impressed by how the teachers take a personalized approach to teaching."

"It's been an incredible experience," Ginny adds. "We feel so good sending the kids to a place where they're loved."

The Van Cleves

GFS is more than a school to Kathy Van Cleve. It's her support system. "When I was sick last year, all the parents rallied around me," Kathy says. "Honestly, my closest friends are the parents I met when the boys"—Jackson '22 and Emerson '24—"were in Kindergarten. Every morning we meet in my garage to work out."

Kathy and Emory volunteer at GFS, teaching screenwriting and production workshops at the annual, student-run Philadelphia Youth Film Festival (both are professors at the University of Pennsylvania), and have seen remarkable work from GFS students—but they're most impressed by the school's values. "The school runs on the idea that everyone deserves respect," says Kathy. "The boys have really absorbed that. This is a culture that develops good humans with integrity."

The Joneses

"I trust this place with my family," Brandon Jones '00 says. With a 25-year history at GFS—first as a student and standout basketball player, then as a coach, assistant athletic director, admissions director, and director of alumni relations—Brandon's affection has been well earned. "GFS is a home away from home," he explains. "I can be myself here."

Brandon's three children already feel the same way. "They are so excited about GFS," Brandon says. "My son comes home and immediately wants to share what he's learned that day. My daughter gushes about the community and the people. My youngest—well, she hasn't started yet, but I know she'll love it all the same."

The Cornejos

For Rebecca and Luis Cornejo, choosing GFS was easy. "We wanted academic rigor, but also a school that focuses on the whole child," says Rebecca, "and GFS has a unique way of making education different for each student. They respect students for the individual contributions they make to the community, and allow them to be their authentic selves."

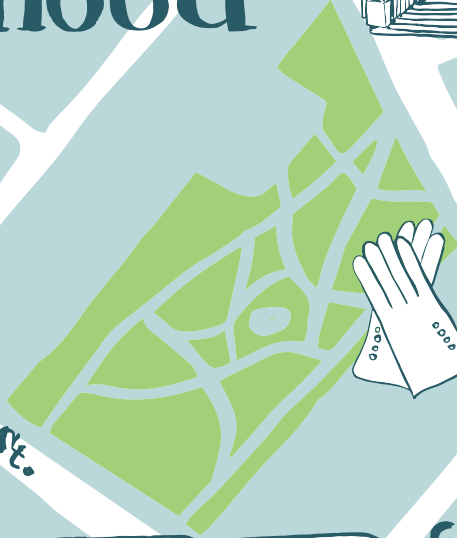
It's a choice that has led to immense growth in the Cornejos' daughters, Leah '24 and Rachel '27. Says Rebecca: "They're so much more organized, have better study habits, and have an admirable amount of self-awareness. I wish Luis and I had had these skills at their age. We are so grateful to GFS for fostering these vital life skills."

Welcome to the Neighborhood



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Greene St.

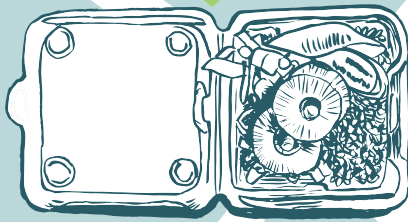


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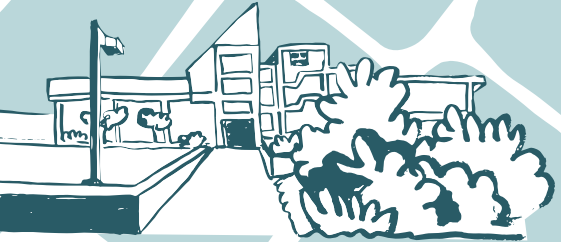
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W. Chelton Ave.

W. Schoolhouse Lane



8

Wayne Ave.

2

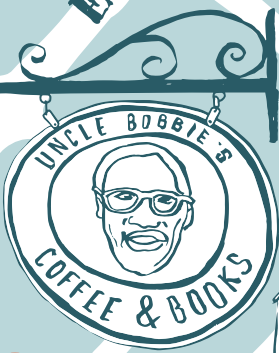
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7



11 13 ↑

E. Armat St.



22

Germantown Ave.

16

10

Fabrics

15



5



14



21

THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM, WE COLLABORATE ON PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES WITH OUR GERMANTOWN NEIGHBORS

- Covenant House:** A shelter for homeless youth and survivors of trafficking, GFS provides hats, socks, and gloves for the residents.
- Cradles to Crayons:** Spearheaded by the GFS Parents Association, we donate diapers, clothing, and books.
- Face To Face Germantown:** GFS provides snack and toiletry kits to this community center, which also serves as a primary site for our seventh-grade service and community engagement project.
- Germantown Community Fridge:** We help clean, organize, and provide food donations.
- Holsey Temple:** GFS students and community members serve hot meals to those in need, and donate food monthly.
- James Logan Elementary School:** Through the Community Schools program, we support strategic partnerships that promote wellness, stability, and learning opportunities for students.
- John B. Kelly School:** Upper School GFS students tutor K-fifth graders here during January Term.
- Mastery Charter School Pickett Campus:** GFS students partner with classes and collaborate on projects.
- Pennsylvania School for the Deaf:** GFS students take sign language classes as part of our DIS program.
- St. Luke's Church:** Along with monthly food donations, students volunteer to organize the food pantry and create bags of groceries for those in need.
- Stenton Family Manor:** During the winter holidays, GFS organizes a toy drive for the residents of this homeless shelter.
- Whosoever Gospel Mission:** Providing aid for homeless men and women, GFS donates food every month.
- Wissahickon Charter School, Awbury Campus:** Young students receive tutoring from GFS' Upper School Education Justice Club.
- Wister Elementary Mastery Charter School:** GFS students partner with classes and collaborate on projects.

A FEW FAVORITE LOCAL BUSINESSES

- Gaffney Fabrics
- Uncle Bobbie's Coffee & Books
- Germantown Espresso Bar
- Bistro on the Mall
- Giovanni's Pizzeria
- K & J Caribbean American Diner
- Bargain Thrift Center
- iMPeRFeCT Gallery



A Year in Ancient Greece (and Beyond!)

Two teachers talk about refining and expanding the fourth grade’s yearlong exploration of the past

De-Sean Fennell: Why does history matter? We have to hear the first part of the story to understand the next part. When we have the whole story, we can relate it to our lives, our families, our traditions. We know more about ourselves and about others. We can correct our mistakes and create a more empathetic culture.

Sarah Pacifico: GFS has always had a strong Classics program. Our fourth graders usually study Ancient Greece in an interdisciplinary humanities experience. In recent years, we’ve widened that lens, learning about other cultures and looking at different ways to study the past.

De-Sean: We tie in everything that GFS stands for, all the Quaker testimonies. We might ask students: How did this culture form community? How did they act with—or without—integrity? And as teachers we’re always asking: What’s the best way to present this material?

Sarah: Teaching at GFS is a constant innovative process. I love finding ways to learn by doing. The other day,

students made god and goddess baseball cards. We recently did a monster project, where students created 3D replicas of monsters from Greek and Hindu mythology.

De-Sean: We give students as many tools and resources as possible, then let them bounce ideas off each other. They discover that they can use multiple strategies to tackle a project. And they become more willing to collaborate, even as they gain a sense of ownership over their work.

Sarah: The past is around us every day. It’s infused in everything. What captivated humans long ago still captivates them now.

De-Sean: This morning, my students and I listened to “The Hill We Climb,” by Amanda Gorman. We talked about how there’s been progress, but there’s still so much more to do. Humans aren’t perfect, but when we share our stories and collaborate with others, we can get where we all want to go.



Skillshare

Lower School art teacher Khaleel Adger on how to make art

1. Look around.

Look at art, look at the world around you. I get inspired by watching people, walking around the neighborhood, being in nature. As you're looking, ask yourself: What does this make me feel? What am I wondering about it? All that looking and asking will lead to an idea.

2. Do research.

In my classes, we always study art history. We look at reference books—I have a big library in my classroom. And we look at examples of the things we want to draw.

3. Make sketches.

I ask my students to do more than one. You may think your first idea is the right idea, but you never know until you try something different.

4. Get feedback.

Ask friends or family members to look at your sketches with you. What do they notice? What gets them excited? From there, you can decide which sketch to work with; or maybe you combine different sketches.

5. Draw a more developed sketch.

Even if you're making something three-dimensional, you'll want a finished drawing.

6. Stop.

You almost never finish. But at some point, you decide to stop. Maybe you'll come back to it later, like da Vinci did with the *Mona Lisa*. Art is a process. You can always learn more, see more, keep improving.





365 Days of Research in 60 Seconds

Three students give a whirlwind tour of their
Directed Independent Study

American Sign Language

Cece '23

My DIS is a class of three students and our teacher. We've been studying ASL together for three years. We practice vocabulary, grammar, facial expressions. At the end of class, we'll often have off-script conversations in ASL.

In third grade, I saw pictures of the ASL alphabet in my classroom. I thought it was beautiful. Two friends and I decided to start learning the language; one of those friends is now in the DIS!

I think it's important to be able to communicate with the people in my community. GFS is right next to the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, and we have deaf faculty members on campus. Learning ASL is a way to connect with the people around me.

Sewing & Garment Construction

Andrew '23

I'm learning to design and create clothing from start to finish. I get to explore my creativity and learn new abilities in a focused, personal way. The whole experience has shaped my understanding of art and clothing.

My faculty advisor has decades of experience in costume design. She's been an incredible mentor, brainstorming projects that stretch my skill set. Currently, I'm working with her to design the costumes for the ninth-grade musical, *Coraline*.

This is the first show I've costumed, so I'm learning through experience. Incorporating historical references, working on a budget, translating a character's personality to their clothes, applying what I learned about composition and color theory from art classes—it's all coming together.

Investment

Will Bishop '92 (advisor), Gabe '23

Gabe: When I had extra time during the pandemic, I became interested in finance and investing. So I was really excited to find out that GFS had an Investment DIS. In the class, I was able to create a portfolio consisting of funds that I had personally researched. Then our class used the research to create an investment plan. I was happy to contribute to the class with work I had done on my own and I felt like the teachers really valued my opinion.

Will: I came to GFS almost 15 years ago to teach a class on financial literacy as a way of preparing seniors for college and the real world. That led me to teaching Investment DIS, which I treat as an open forum for discussion as we all work together to cultivate ideas for investment. I love hearing younger perspectives on the world, so the class has been incredibly rewarding.

“We Hold Each Other Up”

A visit with the co-founders
(and faculty advisor)
of the Girls Who Code Club

Amelia '22, co-founder: Girls Who Code is about more than technology. It's about making a difference. Last year during a hackathon, we created a website that helped students track their physical and mental health. It was really rewarding.

Alessandra '23, co-founder: We started with 10 members and are growing from there. Some of us have won awards from the National Center for Women & Information Technology. But we're not just here to win awards. We hold each other up.

Eva Porter, science department head and faculty advisor: When I went to high school, we didn't have a computer science club, let alone one run by girls. These girls do everything—plan the agenda, make the lessons, book the guest speakers. They're motivated, reliable, and sharp. It's inspiring to watch.



Snap

Upper School orchestra rehearsal

“Danzón No. 2, by Arturo Márquez, is a frenzy,” says violinist Beier '22. *“In each rehearsal, I'd feel so many different things at once.”*

“When you play music together, you're essentially resonating together,” shares the director of orchestras. *“You're connected by a common frequency.”*





Where I Went and How I Got There

Six GFS alumni on the past, their present,
and your future

John Relman '75
civil rights litigator

"GFS played an enormous role in my decision to devote my life to social justice work. With the Vietnam War raging and racial justice issues at the forefront of the news, we debated the issues of our time in class, offered our thoughts and views in Meeting for Worship, and discussed with classmates and teachers what our contributions as citizens should be to making the world more just. We talked about what it meant to share and live Quaker values—to see and love the good in each person."

Olivia Fiechter '14
professional squash player

"I played on the GFS squash team for five seasons, and it was one of my most cherished experiences. But the greatest lesson GFS taught me was how to enjoy the process of learning and to look at the world through a lens of curiosity. I was encouraged to become an empathetic, thoughtful, and enthusiastic participant in the world."

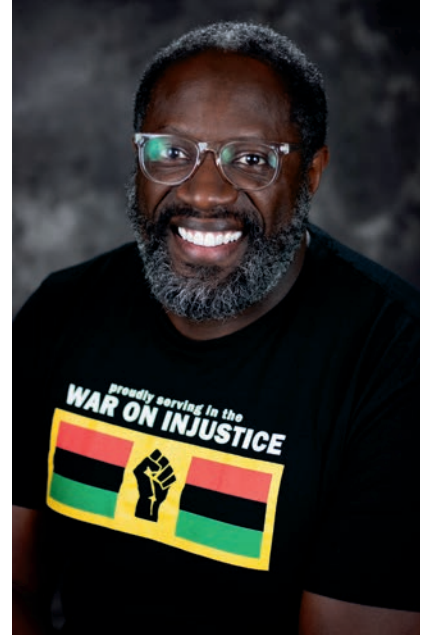
André Robert Lee '89
filmmaker, teacher, and activist

"At GFS, my mind was awakened. My teachers pushed me to think in new ways, opened my heart, and encouraged me to do my best. Meeting for Worship was especially important in centering myself on a consistent basis. I learned how powerful it is to stop everything for a moment and just take in the world. When you take the time to reflect on it, the world is expansive and beautiful."

Kristen Welker '94
**NBC Chief White House correspondent and
Weekend TODAY co-anchor**

"My passion for politics and journalism is in many ways rooted in my upbringing in Philadelphia and in my education at GFS. Philadelphia is where I first learned about the power of being an active participant in the democratic process. At GFS, I learned the importance of caring about your neighbors, giving back, and trying to make the world a better place. I try to bring those lessons to my career as a journalist and am excited to pass them on to my daughter."

Clockwise from top left: John Relman, Olivia Fiechter, André Robert Lee, Abby Maxman, Jeff Marrazzo, and Kristen Welker.



Jeff Marrazzo '96

Co-founder and Former CEO of Spark Therapeutics

"At GFS, I was challenged by both my teachers and classmates, particularly in subjects that didn't come easily. Through music I found avenues to expand my creative capacity. On the athletic field, I attempted to lead others for the first time. And through independent study and Junior Project work, I discovered the joy of hands-on scientific discovery. But most of all, GFS instilled in me a compassion for others and the confidence to make a difference by creating my own path."

Abby Maxman '84

President and CEO of Oxfam America

"My commitment to service was instilled early on through the gift of my GFS education. I encourage today's students to keep a critical mind, challenge their assumptions, and never stop learning. I continue to learn every day—about my behaviors, assumptions, leadership, and perspectives. And I continue to give love and light to others in the way I want it to shine on me."



A Few of My Favorite Things

A short list of things that matter to Head of School Dana Weeks



Favorite place on campus

Wherever there are kids. Right now I'm seeing Lower School students in the graveyard outside my office. I know: How many schools have a dead graveyard? That's what we call it: The Dead Graveyard. It's kind of absurd, which is why I like it.



Favorite book

I read poetry every morning: Mary Oliver's *Devotions*. No one is up in my house, no lights are on, and I sit on the couch and read by the flashlight on my phone. I open the book and read whatever poem happens to be there. What I love about Mary Oliver is that she saw the world in a way I never see it. There's always something new to me in her work.



Favorite mentor

Joan "Penny" Colgan-Davis. She was a Quaker, the former head of several Quaker schools, and the clerk of the Germantown Monthly Meeting. I had the good fortune to work with her when I first arrived at GFS. I had never seen a woman command a meeting like she did. She was so empathetic, such a great listener, so strong in the face of conflict. She had earned respect and power, but she didn't carry herself that way. She was a weighty Quaker, as Quakers would say. I try to channel her as much as I can.



Favorite way to relax

OK, this one stumped me. I think I need to relax more. Oh! I swim. And I love it. When I'm underwater, no one can talk to me. I count my strokes—2,500, about three-quarters of a mile—and then I'm done. I only learned how to swim nine or 10 years ago. I saw some friends swimming in a lake and I thought: "If they can do it, I can do it." So I got some pointers from videos online and jumped in.



Favorite GFS moment

Our Upper School put on a play called *Every Brilliant Thing*. It starts with a boy whose mother dies by suicide. As a coping mechanism, he makes a list of every brilliant thing on earth he's grateful for. It was originally a one-man show, but our director—Jake Miller, who's truly genius—cast it in multiple roles, with multiple casts. The students did a school-wide gratitude project; every item on the list of brilliant things came from our community. The kids were so proud, so present. I burst into tears many times. It captured something special about this place. When we give students the tools and the permission, they're capable of doing extraordinary things.

Workbook

What we're making right now

Fall

As in weather, going back to school, endings, something fast and unstoppable.

I love repeating vowel sounds.

There were so many balloon years,
 Years like a deer in the stream.
 Years of the thrifted blazer,
 Patch pockets, perfect shade of green

This phrase had been in my head for ages.

I really own this!

With buttons to match. Unclear
 Thoughts could seize me then-
 The crushing happiness of days, or
 The brand-new joy of a brand-new pen.

Lost the pen? or happiness?

So hard to find a rhyme for "blazer".

A short sentence to break up the rhythm -

I've lost it now. The long time smears
 Strangeness around. But once I lay,
 Loved my own breathing, loved it all:
 The sun, the sinking, the decay.

only line that has no rhyme. I wanted to end on a slightly off note -

Repetition echoes beginning.

I love this word. I knew I wanted to end with it from the start.

This poem by Bluma '22 is about everything she has loved at GFS and will leave behind. "Poetry is a way to make sense of complicated moments," she says. "I've been at GFS since Kindergarten. This place has meant so much to me. But you know what? I'm going to enjoy the sunset while it lasts."





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