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# Chester **LIFE**

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## THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL

*Extraordinary New Building Aligns with Best-for-Boys Education*

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The Haverford School recognized the need for modernization of its Middle School building. The School made the decision to demolish the existing two-story Middle School and replace it with a state-of-the-art three-story building, nearly doubling its size and providing a 52 percent increase in square footage use per student.



# THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL

## *Extraordinary New Building Aligns with Best-for-Boys Education*

BY JULIA KRUMENACKER

Conventional education used to involve classrooms that all looked much the same – a teacher at the front of the room presenting facts to students seated at desks. But for educators preparing students for life and success in the 21st century, this picture looks much different. Today's most innovative teaching methods cannot be sustained in a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter classroom – particularly when it comes to meeting the needs of boys. The Haverford School is employing best practices in design and education to ensure its students are equipped for a changing future.

Its cutting-edge approach to providing the highest-quality education is what led The Haverford School to revamp – actually, completely rebuild the Middle School

building. The school has proudly unveiled plans for a new state-of-the-art Middle School, slated to open in the fall of 2020. The 30,000-square-foot, \$18 million building will house 18 classrooms, a Learning Commons, and dynamic maker-space, robotics, and STEM areas as well as communal spaces that will support the School's forward-thinking learning environment.

A college-prep school for boys in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, The Haverford School provides a supportive and nurturing community in which boys develop a passion for learning, creative problem-solving, and good decision-making. The School's mission is to develop men of character, intellect, and compassion who will transform our world. The Haverford School is a place where the unique needs of boys are embraced and

fulfilled, at every stage of academic and emotional development.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL: THEN & NOW**

During the 50s in the United States, educators recognized the need for more of a transition between primary school and high school. They realized that during the period from 11 to 14 years old, students experience varying but sizable levels of physical and cognitive growth. The Middle School movement came about with the creation of a “school within a school” for sixth through eighth grades. This system called for flexible learning opportunities and curriculums that featured interdisciplinary content, rather than simply grouping students by chronological age.

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"Middle School boys have a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm," noted Marion Jacob, Sixth Grade Science Teacher. "They are extremely creative, very visual, and hands-on. There is a lot of collaboration and peer review. They learn from one another and through trial and error. They realize there is never simply one way to arrive at an answer to a question."



our former Middle School in 1957,” explained Dr. Jay Greytok ’83, Head of Middle School. “It was clear at that time there was something different going on with kids in this age group. Science has shown that the adolescent brain goes through the second largest physiological change (next to infancy) in human development from ages 11 through 14, in Middle School. Middle School is a time of extreme transition for boys. By the time they reach eighth grade, they are very different from who they were in sixth grade. During this period, they need opportunities to take risks, fail, and succeed while learning about themselves and the world around them.”

While today’s Middle School boys are going through the same monumental physiological changes that boys 60 years ago were experiencing, education itself has changed immensely. Preparing for college and life in the 21st century involves vastly different teaching methods than those utilized during the 50s. Teachers used to be the conveyors of information, providing students with facts and teaching them how to find answers. Technology puts facts at our fingertips now, so spending a great deal of time memorizing information is futile. In order to be thoroughly prepared for their future, students instead need to be problem solvers and collaborators, developing and utilizing critical thinking skills.

The Haverford School attributes much of its success in helping boys reach their full potential to educators who commit themselves to understanding how boys learn at every stage of development, and who teach to those differences.

“Middle School boys have a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm,” noted Marion Jacob, Sixth Grade Science Teacher. “They are extremely creative, very visual, and hands-on. Providing them with opportunities to explore, investigate, and problem solve is very important. It is also paramount that we allow them to make mistakes, especially from a science and engineering standpoint. Some of the greatest discoveries and inventions have occurred because of mistakes. This process allows them to take more ownership of their learning. It is truly amazing how education has changed. As a teacher, I am a facilitator of learning experiences. I can pose a question, but students perform the research, gather materials, and discover

back-up concepts in many different ways. There is a lot of collaboration and peer review. They learn from one another and through trial and error. They realize there is never simply one way to arrive at an answer to a question.”

### STATE-OF-THE-ART LEARNING IN THE NEW MODERN BUILDING

With sweeping changes and advances in education, The Haverford School recog-

nized the need for modernization of its Middle School building. The School made the decision to demolish the existing two-story Middle School and replace it with a state-of-the-art three-story building, nearly doubling its size and providing a 52 percent increase in square footage use per student. Moreover, the newly designed Middle School will completely support The Haverford School’s ability to employ 21st century teaching and learning.

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“We designed Haverford’s new Middle School using the neighborhood model. Because Middle School years are such a crucial point in the development of young men, the new building is organized by grade level to provide three distinct neighborhoods, establishing smaller, scaled communities within the Middle School community at large. On each floor are designated classrooms for each grade, as well as a science room and a collaboration space, to accommodate Haverford’s integrated approach to education.”

**MAARTEN PESCH, PRINCIPAL & ARCHITECT AT WALLACE, ROBERTS & TODD, LLC**











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Maarten Pesch, Principal and Architect at Wallace, Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT) and Lead Architect for the new building explained, “We designed Haverford’s new Middle School using the neighborhood model. Because Middle School years are such a crucial point in the development of young men, the new building is organized by grade level to provide three distinct neighborhoods, establishing smaller, scaled communities within the Middle School community at large. On each floor are designated classrooms for each grade, as well as a science room and a collaboration space, to accommodate Haverford’s integrated approach to education. This neighborhood configuration supports Haverford’s recognition that learning doesn’t just occur in the classroom itself. The new makerspace will be the center of digital learning and electronics, with 3D printers and robotics. Furthermore, the new building will house a Learning Commons, a flexible space for faculty and students to utilize for additional support, individual study, and tutoring.

“When I worked with the focus group at The Haverford School, I was struck by their incredible level of commitment to teach Middle School boys, even in that very old building,” Pesch continued. “You don’t always witness that sort of dedication. The old space was not conveying the high level of quality the School provides its students, so we are eager to see the impact the new building will have on teaching and learning at the School.”

“This new building will give the faculty the necessary resources to do incredible work and provide the boys with access to what they need to develop themselves as scholars, athletes, artists, and men of character,” stated Dr. John Nagl, The Haverford School’s Headmaster. “As we designed the new building, we made sure to include locations where the boys would feel connected. All Middle School students will mix with each other through sports, assemblies, and lunch, while also having a neighborhood on each floor. They will build a sense of belonging and community.

“Our goal in Middle School is to expose the boys to as many different experiences as possible,” continued Dr. Nagl. “We encourage them to experience and determine who they are in a supportive environment that is unique to single-sex schools. This process can become a strength for them later in life, or simply allow them to gain confidence. It

is all part of the structure and support we give to boys as they advance through this important period in their lives.”

“The classrooms will reflect our teaching philosophies,” added Kori Brown, Eighth Grade History Teacher. “In the humanities, we work diligently to make learning a dynamic experience. Students are no longer passive receivers of information, but instead they are actively learning, generating their own questions, and finding their

own answers. In the past, teachers would have posed a question and had the students write a paper on the answer. Most papers would have looked the same. Now, we have students develop their own questions and explore those topics in depth, researching material that interests them. By creating their own experiences, students are more connected to the information, and they understand the relevance of the subject matter they are learning about.”

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The Haverford School's unique  
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# Medieval





## THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL DIFFERENCE

Parents recognize The Haverford School's unique ability to positively shape the academic and emotional lives of their sons, equipping them for success in college, and life.

"The single-sex learning environment was a major reason why we as parents found The Haverford School appealing," said parent Liz Malone of West Chester,

whose son T.J. graduated from the School in 2018, and son Teddy is a current sophomore. "Haverford's faculty understands the ways in which boys think and learn. As a result, both of our boys feel that the work given to them is purposeful and interesting. They feel free to be themselves and discover new interests without any pressure from the opposite sex. Our boys have held leadership roles in student government, served as tour guides, and were

involved in the Christian organization FOCUS, all of which I'm fairly sure they wouldn't have done in a co-ed environment. The character piece is also a big positive. Our character is what defines us, and Haverford builds men of character. Our sons were afforded more than an education at Haverford, they received an experience. They understand it was a privilege and feel compelled to do something bigger because of it. Our sons were drawn to the excellence Haverford offers and expects from them, and despite the 45-minute commute, they would not have traded the experience for anything."

Parent Ivy Schlesinger of West Chester, whose son William entered the sixth grade this year explained, "Haverford appreciates that boys learn differently and designs its curriculum accordingly. We researched several schools, both public and private, but were drawn to Haverford for its music program and the all-boys learning environment. While our son William is especially interested in music, there are many different opportunities to explore at Haverford, and the School actively encourages the boys to pursue new interests. We can't imagine a better place for William at this important time in his life. He is surrounded by a great group of kids, and the boys are connected to each other by a sense of brotherhood and mutual respect. The new Middle School will be similar in style to the Upper School. Having visited the Upper School and seen the plans for the Middle School, it is apparent that the new building was designed with a great deal of insight into how boys learn in the classroom, in small groups, and socially – and to help ensure a smooth transition as boys progress in their education." **CCL**

### The Haverford School

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