

# GORDON SCHOOL







Gordon is dedicated to preparing students academically, socially and emotionally to positively impact the world around them.

The results? Gordon graduates are courageous learners who are unafraid to take risks as they pursue knowledge and understanding.

And Gordon produces compassionate leaders. These are students who command influence among their peers, and advocate for change in their communities—their schools, their careers, their families—for the rest of their lives.

Are you ready to explore what's possible at Gordon?





# A progressive school

Progressive education is about putting children, and their voices, at the center of their learning.

Gordon recognizes that children come into school with important knowledge, understandings, relationships, values, and backgrounds. A progressive curriculum and pedagogy honors students' questions and their experiences. At Gordon, children are not empty vessels to be filled with information. Instead, teachers use what they hear and observe to shape the curriculum.

Gordon builds an authentic sense of curiosity, awe, and wonder in children. They are not simply pursuing learning for an external reward or motivation. They're doing it because they want to understand the world. At age three, Gordon students pose and answer questions they've never seen before. The greatest accomplishment of Gordon's progressive education is that their learning remains relevant, and the fourteen-year-olds are still asking new questions, and finding answers for themselves.

**"Gordon has loomed large in my imagination since my early days as an educator for being a school on the cutting edge of progressive pedagogy."**

**-Dr. Noni Thomas López, Head of School**



Students create  
autobiographies  
and  
self-portraits  
beginning in Kindergarten



## Stand up, stand out

Gordon is a school that encourages young people to stand up for themselves and for one another, and to make space for voices that are being left out. It's something they do with words, but also through their choices and their actions.

Through this practice, Gordon students stand out in the crowd... proudly.

"Stand up, stand out" is a phrase that applies to students, but also to the school itself. Since its founding, Gordon has adopted forward-thinking strategies and taken stands that have set the school apart from its peers, in ways that, over time, have proven to be visionary.

**"Children don't need to be taught to advocate. They do this naturally. What they need is an environment that encourages them to never stop advocating."**

**-Marianne Pieri,  
Early Childhood and Lower School Director**







# Honoring the pace of childhood

## The Nursery to eighth grade advantage

By not having a high school, Gordon keeps the focus exclusively on younger students. Gordon's one hundred years of experience with this model has reinforced that it best serves the educational, social and emotional needs of children.

At Gordon, children are allowed to be children, in the best possible sense, until they graduate from eighth grade. During these critical eleven years, Gordon students take more risks, try more activities, and grow into confident, empathic, and engaged leaders.

Learn more at [gordonschool.org/nurseryto8th](https://gordonschool.org/nurseryto8th)



## Finding the right high school

Eighth grade, not Kindergarten, is the ideal time to select a high school that fits best.

Gordon considers the transition to high school thoughtfully. With guidance from seasoned placement counselors, eighth graders reflect on their talents and skills in order to develop an individualized list of potential schools. Students practice interview skills and receive support throughout the process, from applications to the final decision.

Learn more at [gordonschool.org/highschools](https://gordonschool.org/highschools)

# Embracing young minds

We delight in the person a three-year-old is today: curious, joyful, expressive.

Gordon's youngest students are important members of the community from the very start. This is a place where your child is valued not just for the high school or college student they might become one day. They are celebrated for what they bring to the community every day, beginning today.

Gordon specializes in the crucial, early years of childhood. Students are welcomed to a campus full of age-appropriate, flexible spaces tailored to their needs, a place where they know they truly belong.



**Over 24,000**  
volumes in the campus  
**library**

**"I will be forever grateful for the encouragement, love, and support of Gordon's faculty."**

**-a Gordon graduate,  
Class of 2000**





**"Gordon provides a strong academic foundation. They are committed to creating critical thinkers and fostering a love of learning and inquiry."**

**-Parent of a Middle School student**



Eighth graders visit The National Memorial for Peace and Justice during the annual Civil Rights Trip

# Academic innovation driven by our mission



Gordon faculty present regularly at conferences nationwide and are sought out as consultants and trainers

Gordon's faculty is a dedicated group of professionals who are thoughtful and ambitious about their work. They are drawn to Gordon by the opportunity to teach young students using a progressive, multicultural curriculum that tackles challenging topics in age-appropriate ways.

At every grade level, Gordon teachers create inclusive, anti-bias classrooms where children's identities are embraced and their voices are valued. Students learn to consider the experiences of others and gain the capacity to advocate confidently for justice in an increasingly complex and diverse world.

**"It is our responsibility to educate young people to manage, navigate, and change their world."**

**-Lynn Bowman,  
Assistant Head of School**



**A diverse community**

**44% students of color**

**26% faculty of color**

**50% people of color on leadership team**



## Civil Rights Trip

Since 2002, the eighth grade has traveled to Georgia and Alabama as part of their study of the Civil Rights Movement. They visit historical sites, meet veteran activists, and engage with citizens currently working for change. On their return to Rhode Island, students start making positive change in their own communities, partnering with local agencies in a full time, four-week service learning project.





# Social and emotional learning

Children learn best when they know how to manage their feelings and personal relationships. Gordon addresses this reality head-on with a social curriculum that begins on day one of a Nursery student's Gordon journey, a physical education program that prioritizes smart responses to emotional situations, and health classes that begin in third grade.

Social and emotional strategies, like any skill, take practice. Gordon students do this work in the classroom, through direct instruction and a multicultural approach to learning that asks students to know themselves well and to consider the perspectives and experiences of others. The result is students who are empowered to self advocate, have open and honest discussions, and make choices that are right for them.

## Student affinity groups

Common Ground  
(race-based affinity,  
Lower and Middle School)

Heritage Speakers and  
Latinos Unidos  
(Spanish heritage, all school)

Children of divorced parents  
(Middle School)

Gender and Sexuality Alliance  
(Middle School)

# The original open air school

12 acre campus

70% open space

3 playgrounds

1 stream & 1 pond

4 outdoor classrooms

2 recesses daily

Nature trail  
around the edge of campus

Outdoor play in  
rain, shine, or snow

Gordon was founded in 1910 by pediatrician Dr. Helen West Cooke as the *Open Air School*. Windows were kept open year round to encourage good health and clear thinking. Today, ample time to play in that fresh air is still a daily priority.

Both indoors and out, there remains a schoolwide commitment to supporting healthy social, emotional, and physical development. Experiential education, movement breaks and mindfulness practices enhance classroom learning. Robust health and wellness, physical education and after school athletics programs complement unstructured outdoor recess. Student fitness and growth are treated holistically, in the spirit of Gordon's founding belief that "mind and heart should be educated with equal care."

**"Gordon's proactive approach to health has made it so much easier for me to have healthy, authentic conversations with my children, especially when tricky topics come up."**

-Parent of two recent Gordon graduates





# Connecting with families

## A strong partnership between home and school

### Full day programming

Gordon's day extends from 7:15am to 5:30pm for all ages, every day. Free, fun care is available before the first bell rings. After school programs offer adventures in music, theater, sports, language, math, science, art, and beyond.

Learn more at [gordonschool.org/afterschool](https://gordonschool.org/afterschool)

### Family Individualized Tuition

Family Individualized Tuition (FIT) is Gordon's forward-thinking and mission-driven tuition model. FIT reinforces that every family is a critical contributor to an equitable and inclusive school community. With FIT, families make a customized financial commitment to Gordon based on their individual circumstances.

Learn more at [gordonschool.org/FIT](https://gordonschool.org/FIT)

### Parent engagement

Gordon's calendar is packed with events that connect families with one another, and keep the conversation between the school and parents lively and relevant.

Learn more at [gordonschool.org/parents](https://gordonschool.org/parents)

### Active parent groups

Gordon Community Association

Parents of Students of Color

Rainbow Family Alliance

Parents of Students with  
Learning Differences

Antiracism Working Group  
for White Parents



**"Gordon was more than just a school. It was a community for our family that shaped how we view the world."**

-Parent of two Gordon graduates



**9 out of 10**  
students participate in our  
**after school**  
**programs**

# The Gordon journey

## Early Childhood

*(Nursery to Kindergarten)*

*A play-based program that harnesses joyful curiosity to build foundational skills and instill a love of learning*

The inspiring, age-appropriate curriculum facilitates social and emotional growth and challenges students intellectually. Children venture beyond their classroom to learn from specialists in the fields of music, art, library, physical education, and Spanish.

## Lower School

*(first to fourth grade)*

*An engaging learning experience that sets the stage for academic and social success*

In Lower School, students widen their worlds, sharpening their skills on increasingly complex topics in math, science and humanities. In small groups, as a class, and as a grade, they begin to discover their own strengths as collaborators, and to practice advocating for themselves and others.

## Middle School

*(fifth to eighth grade)*

*A dynamic and intensive program that challenges students to take responsibility for their own success in the classroom*

By Middle School, students are continually applying their classroom learning to real-world events and experiences. The curriculum gives each student a chance to shine, honing their individual voice and helping them find their own path to leadership.

Learn more about each division at  
[gordonschool.org/academics](https://gordonschool.org/academics)





# Athletics

Beginning in fifth grade, students can put on Gordon's green and white jersey and represent their school in the Rhode Island community. Outstanding mission-centered coaching and a no-cut policy ensure that every child can find a place on a team and grow as a valued contributor. Student athletes are encouraged to take risks, to internalize the value of fair play, and to approach both victory and defeat with empathy and integrity. For many, Gordon athletics is a four-year journey, producing graduates who go on to be major contributors to high school and college teams.



Learn more at  
[gordonschool.org/athletics](https://gordonschool.org/athletics)



**85%**  
of Middle School students  
play interscholastic  
competitive sports

# Arts

Visual and performing arts are integrated into the curriculum beginning at age three,

in generous spaces dedicated to studio art, music instruction, and theater. Drawing supports writing. Music teaches listening. Performance encourages the development of individual voices. By eighth grade, every student has had a chance to find their voice, through art shows, full-scale theater productions, and musical ensembles ranging from all-percussion to a cappella.



Learn more at  
[gordonschool.org/arts](https://gordonschool.org/arts)



## A more just and sustainable world

In 2019, parents, faculty, administrators and alumni collaborated to create a strategic vision for the school's next three to five years. The result was *A More Just and Sustainable World*, a plan that ties together work in every corner of the school. With a mandate to nurture the school's resources wisely, to tell the Gordon story boldly, and to serve families responsively, it's an outline of how Gordon will continue to educate modern learners for a modern world for years to come.



**Hundreds**  
of parents, students,  
faculty, grandparents  
and alumni  
helped shape the  
strategic plan

## Beyond the Gordon campus

Through service projects and experiential learning opportunities, Gordon has recently partnered with:

Agnes B. Hennessey School • Amos House • Berkshire Outdoor Center • Brown University playwriting program • Casey Farm • Crossroads RI • The Environmental Education Center at W. Alton Jones • The Farm School • FIRST LEGO Robotics League • Genesis Center • Girls on the Run RI • Higher Ground International • Highlander Charter School • Jacob Hill Farm • John Hope Settlement House • MathCounts • McAuley House • The National Geographic Society • Osamequin Farm • Pleasantview Elementary School • Progreso Latino • Providence Children's Film Festival • Providence Children's Museum • Refugee Dream Center • RI Coalition Against Gun Violence • The RISD Museum • Sargent Center • Save the Bay • Trinity Repertory Company







**“At Gordon, young people discover their unique gifts and learn how to use these gifts to make a difference in the lives of others. These children will change the world.”**

**-Dr. Noni Thomas López, Head of School**

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Learn more at **[gordonschool.org](https://gordonschool.org)**



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