

Early Childhood Programs at Friends' Central



*Where joy-filled learning
is embedded in play,
exploration, and discovery*



About Us

Friends' Central is a co-educational Quaker day school. Our Mission – to cultivate the intellectual, spiritual, and ethical promise of our students – begins with the education of our youngest students.

The Early Childhood Program at Friends' Central offers a stimulating and nurturing environment where young children can grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. We challenge children to expand their knowledge and imagination, hone their relationship skills, develop problem-solving abilities, and acquire independence and self-confidence. The intentional arc of our Early Childhood Program begins with Nature Nursery, where our youngest students develop a love of learning in a largely outdoor-based program. In Pre-K, more concrete pre-literacy skills are taught in preparation for Kindergarten, where the learning crystallizes into increasingly more developed academic skills. Outdoor learning remains key throughout.

Along with its playgrounds and rolling fields, our idyllic 18-acre Lower School campus provides expansive, ever-changing “outdoor classrooms,” including an organic farm with chickens, a scenic pond to explore, and a “bird blind” from which to observe birds in their natural habitat.

The Ulmer Family Light Lab, a cutting-edge facility on the Lower School campus, is designed specifically for children in Nursery to grade five and is equipped with four themed Maker studios: Natural Sciences, Media/Computing, Fabrication, and Design.

The Lower School is committed to thematic education, a holistic approach that unifies diverse subject matter around a central theme, creating a depth of interest and understanding often absent in traditional approaches to curriculum. A new Lower School fall theme is chosen every year and is followed by grade-level themes in the spring semester. Hands-on projects like letter writing, newsletters, art projects, model building, and role-playing opportunities set the Friends' Central fall project apart from others.

Quaker values are the foundation for our academic strength and the ethical compass that guides Friends' Central students well beyond their Lower School years. Lower School students learn to be good friends and to listen to and respect differing viewpoints. Intentional processes teach students to move through and resolve conflict, providing essential tools for navigating the world. Children of all ages participate in weekly Meeting for Worship, 25 minutes of quiet reflection and truth seeking that are an essential part of life at the Lower School.

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Cover and inside left flap photos by Polina Bulman

Nature Nursery

Learning in Nature

Our Nature Nursery is a magical place where important lessons about sharing, friendship, math, art, science, and reading happen in the context of the woods, gardens, pond, stream, fields, and classrooms of our beautiful 18-acre campus. Highly qualified teachers guide our youngest students, beginning at age 2 years and 7 months, through their first steps in the Friends' Central School community. Nursery students play on their own playground and take "field trips" to explore and learn from different facets of our campus. Learning thematically with an integrated approach to language arts, math, and social studies takes place both in the classroom and outdoors, where an exploration of the natural world – including seed germination, planting, harvesting, and eating vegetables – helps children improve their fine-motor skills and make connections across the curriculum.

Nature Nursery has its own dedicated "lunch grove" beneath the trees in a beautiful clearing with nursery-sized benches and umbrellas for snack and lunch. Two "mud kitchens" provide ideal spaces to play and learn.

At Nature Nursery, 70 percent of the learning happens outside. Spread across the week are the "specials," which include science, art, music, library, and Spanish, as well as "gym & jam," where students explore the gym and its equipment to a background of music. At Meeting for Worship every Thursday, Nursery students sit outside in silence for several minutes and then listen to a story relevant to their current inquiries.



"One year at Friends' Central's Nature Nursery changed my child in a way that I didn't imagine would be possible in such a young child. It's unlike any program I've come across. It was a transformative, beautiful experience."

NATURE NURSERY PARENT



Observing the aeroponic towers in
The Ulmer Family Light Lab's solarium

Pre-Kindergarten

You Can't Say You Can't Play

Our Pre-K curriculum is designed to develop creativity and problem-solving skills through interaction with the curriculum and each other. There is an increased emphasis on skill building, and the academic curriculum starts to become a little more structured, ensuring that students develop important pre-reading and math skills. The Pre-K program provides a bridge to Friends' Central's Kindergarten, beautifully preparing students for the next step in their educational journey.

Outdoor learning and learning through play remain key for Pre-K students, with an emphasis on social and emotional growth.

Imaginative play and learning are linked, and students build early literacy through independent reading of just-right books, as well as working one-on-one with teachers. Journal writing and acting out stories help students to stretch their literacy foundation. Dress-ups, nature walks, singing, and participating in conversations with classmates and teachers encourage students to observe, listen, and synthesize new information. Each Pre-K classroom is staffed with two highly trained educators.

Special classes in art, music, physical education, science, and Spanish enrich the day. Weekly visits to the Lower School library help foster an early love of books.

Kindergarten

Laying the Foundation

In Kindergarten, there is lots of play balanced with a focus on preparing students for grade 1 and beyond.

Students' early literacy flourishes as they master sound/symbol associations, write in their journals, read stories, and recite poetry. Math fluency develops as students learn to recognize numerals, explore spatial awareness through the use of manipulatives, create addition and subtraction sentences, and investigate the world of measurement. Teachers individualize instruction to meet the needs of each child. For example, children who come to Kindergarten reading are encouraged to grow their skills with a program designed for challenge.

Each Kindergarten classroom is staffed with two full-time, highly qualified teachers. Students meet regularly with specialists in art, computers, math, music, science, physical education, and library.

Raising praying mantises in Kindergarten



Friends' Central School
228 Old Gulph Road
Wynnewood, PA 19096



A Typical day

An integrated full-day curriculum has a flexible structure, allowing children to experience the joy of learning in the moment while developing the capacity to think for themselves.

NURSERY

8:30 am	Classroom Free Play*
9:00 am	Circle Time
9:30 am	Snack Outside
10:00 am	Outside Time**
11:00 am	Outside Time**
11:30 am	Outside Time**
12:00 noon	Lunch
12:30 pm	Rest
1:30 pm	Rest/Recess
2:00 pm	Tidy Up
2:50 pm	Dismissal

PRE-K

Circle Time
Free Play
Art
Science
Language Arts
Recess
Lunch
Story
Rest
Recess
Dismissal

K

Circle Time
Assembly
Free Play
Language Arts
Social Studies
Math
Lunch
Recess
Spanish
Story
Dismissal

**Free Play choices include painting, building, playing with dough, toys, sensory sand, or reading*

***Nature walks, pond time, taking care of chickens, specials (science/art/music/library/Spanish)*

**Please contact us for more information about our programs,
including transportation and extended day options.**

FRIENDS' CENTRAL LOWER SCHOOL • NURSERY THROUGH GRADE 5
610.642.1018 • friendscentral.org