THE PENNINGTON SCHOOL

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PENNINGTON, NJ, October 28, 2026—The Pennington School Announces Exciting New Immersive Learning Experience and Speaker Series

Earlier this month, Pennington's Associate Head of School Chad Bridges unveiled an exciting new experience for students at a School-wide community meeting. "Today, we're introducing something that we believe will change the way Pennington students learn, forever," announced Bridges. The program, which will be known as Gateway Term, reimagines what learning means, offering hands-on educational experiences as well as inspiring stories and perspectives courtesy of dynamic guest speakers scattered throughout the academic year.

Jacob Bongiovi '20 was the year's first Gateway speaker at an all-School Chapel this past Monday. The Gateway Speaker Series is a new program designed to bring the Pennington community together to hear from individuals who have taken unique paths, navigated challenges, and found success in an ever-changing world. Bongiovi attended Syracuse University before pursuing opportunities in filmmaking and acting. He enjoyed returning to Pennington with his wife, actor Millie Bobbi Brown, and his parents, Jon and Dorothea Bon Jovi.

During a Q&A with School Chaplain Rev. David Hallgren, Bongiovi reflected on the lessons that he learned while at Pennington. "Pennington was so key in my self-advocacy," said Bongiovi, adding, "That's something everyone pushes for here: stating what you need and pursuing that—be that in the classroom or on the playing field. That's a real skill that I've taken with me into my life." Drawing direct parallels to those advocacy lessons and his current work in film production, Bongiovi recounted crucial moments involving project risks in which he was able to say, "'You know what? I do belong in this room. I am capable. I think that this is an interesting idea'… and all that started here, at Pennington."

The Gateway Term itself begins in May 2027 with a two-week immersive learning experience designed to give students the opportunity to explore a chosen interest in focused, meaningful, and hands-on ways. Through experiential learning ranging from on-campus projects and programming to local fieldwork and, in some cases, domestic and international travel, students will engage deeply with real-world experiences beyond the traditional classroom.

The Gateway Term encourages students to be curious learners, creative problem-solvers, and thoughtful collaborators. Programs emphasize inquiry, reflection, adaptability, and engagement with diverse perspectives, helping students develop skills and dispositions essential for success in college and life.

Gateway Term serves as both an entry point and a bridge connecting academic learning with real-world experience, and empowers students to pursue passions, test ideas, and discover new pathways in an intensive, supportive environment.

In the Middle School, the Gateway experience will involve campus projects, local field trips, and community partnerships. It will culminate with a showcase event in celebration of student learning and creative accomplishments within Grades 6 through 8.

Seniors will spend the last two weeks of the year in the Senior Gateway Experience, formerly known as the Horizon program, which has long served as a capstone project for Pennington's graduating class and helped inspire the structure of the new Gateway Term. Grade 9 students will be engaged in a two-week Gateway program designed to strengthen the bonds of community, called "This is Pennington."

Students in Grades 10 and 11 will spend the two weeks in programming that will include both new mini-courses on campus, field trips, and some opportunities for domestic and international trips to destinations such as Morocco, Olympic National Park, Nashville, Chile, Croatia, and Malawi. The Gateway Term will culminate in a final celebratory week of classes with presentations, table talks, and more.

The Pennington School is an independent coeducational school for students in Grades 6 through 12, in both day and boarding programs. The curriculum is college preparatory, with an emphasis on individual excellence, fostering the development of the whole student through academics, athletics, community service, and the creative and performing arts.

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