



the  
museum  
school



OF AVONDALE ESTATES



## How it began

- The Avondale Education Association, founded in 2003, was composed of volunteers primarily from Avondale Estates and the surrounding community.
- Interested parents, retired teachers and administrators, and good neighbors of all ages were involved in the effort to create a charter school.



- Charter school activities began in June of 2008.
- The current Board of Directors is a group of 15 diverse members from all backgrounds and professions who believe in the mission of The Museum School of Avondale Estates.



## Mission Statement

The mission of The Museum School of Avondale Estates is to inspire students, teachers and the community to collaborate to develop strong critical thinking, interpersonal and academic skills in our students, which will prepare them for real-world success.

## Our School Values:

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Sustainability
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Kindness



## Core Values

The school's core values are interwoven in the curriculum and are an integral part of the school day and routine.

Students are recognized for their demonstration of these values through celebration assemblies and Explorer tickets.





## What is a Museum School?

- Innovative, proven school model
- Project-based learning through partnerships with museums and community organizations
- Collaborative learning
  - Real-world projects
  - Mentorships with experts

- Our curriculum employs a **constructivist model**. We have worked with educational experts, including some from the Normal Park Museum Magnet School, to create interdisciplinary themes and units to guide learning expeditions into museum environments.
- The Museum School has developed creative, readiness-appropriate unit and lesson plans with partners that incorporate specific objectives, assessments, and learning activities.



## Museum School Model Details

- Organized into quarterly units or themes
- Biweekly Learning expeditions:
  - Students visit partners and other sites, on average, every other week.
  - Trips are focused, structured, pre-planned and organized.
- Students reflect on learning in individual travel journals:
  - Drawings, poetry, fiction/nonfiction writing

- Each grade explores 4 themes each year, each in a 9-week block.
- Themes include elements from the GPS for Science and Social Studies, presented in an integrated fashion.



## What is Exhibit Night?

- The school **becomes** a museum.
- The community is invited in to view student-created exhibits.
- Exhibits include museum pieces as well as written labels to describe them.
- Students serve as docents, teaching parents and other community members what they have learned.

- Students develop strong oral and written communication skills.
- Teaching parents and community members allows students to deepen their understanding of the subject matter.



## Key Features of the Curriculum

- Hands – on
  - Interdisciplinary
  - Interactive
  - Project-based
  - Collaborative
  - Inquiry-based
  - Based on constructivist philosophy
  - Reinforced and enhanced by local museums and centers
- The curriculum programs and maps are aligned directly with the Georgia Performance Standards.
  - The Understanding by Design process assists teachers in centering their curriculum and assessments on big ideas, essential questions, and authentic performances.





## A constructivist approach

### The teacher

- assesses students' readiness levels and prior experience in order to tailor instruction appropriately.
- adjusts levels of support and participation in relation to the students' skills and the difficulty of the task.

### The student

- is an active inquirer and joint constructor of knowledge.
- actively experiments with materials and tools in an authentic environment.



## How do we meet individual needs?

...by differentiating through instructional processes and strategies at all levels, for all students:

- Learning Centers and Interest Centers
- Learning Contracts
- Interactive Journals
- Differentiating products
- Curriculum Compacting
- Independent Study

- Differentiated learning comes in many forms.
- Individual needs can be met by offering lessons, strategies, and activities that are based on learning levels, styles, and readiness.



## Academic Programs:

- Reader's Workshop
- Writer's Workshop
- Word Study Program
- Math Workshop





## Reader's Workshop

- Students participate in whole group mini-lessons and small guided reading groups.
- Leveled texts, self-selection of texts, and literature circles are major components of this program.
- Students are provided with texts, materials, and activities that are based on their readiness level and background knowledge.
- Students participate in Literature Circles and learning stations within the reading block.



## Writer's Workshop

- Students create meaningful writing projects by exploring and participating in every stage of the writing process.
- All students begin at the brainstorming phase, develop a rough draft, solicit peer reviews, and create a final draft to be illustrated and published.
- The final product is a significant piece of writing, through which each student was challenged and inspired.



## Word Study

- Through word study, students are exploring and understanding words and patterns through phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary instruction.
- Word study notebooks and word walls are referenced often as students are encouraged to record new patterns or words for better understanding and future reference.



## Math Workshop

- Based on the Reader's Workshop and Guided Reading approach, the Math Workshop setting is designed to better meet individual needs
- The Workshop begins with a 10-20 minute mini-lesson and transitions into small group activities with teacher, peers, and independently.
- The Math curriculum is based on the GA DOE Frameworks for GSE.



## Middle Grades at The Museum School

- Class changes and lockers
- Revised uniform options
- Advisory groups, sports leagues, after-school clubs and activities and social events.
- Extends the museum model of education and following Georgia Standards of Excellence
- Pre-AP classes, Advanced Courses for HS credit
- Departmentalized classes
- Flexibility in selecting exploratory/connection classes
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade kickoff with parents and students





## Assessment

- We are a data-driven school that analyzes data in order to target specific areas of instruction. Lessons and activities are tailored based on students' levels, prior experiences, and readiness.
- Students participate in local, state, and federal testing as required, including Milestones, GKIDS, and all applicable ELL and Special Education assessments.
- All students participate in Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to determine areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
- Diagnostic assessments are administered often, offering teachers immediate data on students' levels and strengths and weaknesses.

**All data strongly impacts curriculum choices, professional development, and overall school goals and improvement plans.**



## School Achievements

On the Milestones Assessment, Museum School students **significantly outscore the state** average in every grade level and every subject category.

**Exceeding the norm.** Results from the national Measures of Academic Progress show Museum School students learning at a faster rate than their peers across the country.

The statewide ranking system, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), places The Museum School among the **top 8% of Georgia's schools**.

**Collaborated** with several universities and colleges to serve as a model for pre-service teachers and student teachers.

Those institutions include:

The University of Georgia   Georgia State University   Agnes Scott College  
Clayton State University   Oglethorpe University

- The Museum School was recently awarded the Governor's Award for the Arts and Humanities and the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals' Distinguished Breakout Middle School Award.



## Parental Involvement

- Parents are expected to volunteer a minimum number of hours per school year, 15 hours per child, with a maximum of 30 hours.
- Some flexibility will be offered in fulfillment of hours.
- Parents are encouraged to become active members of our school family.

- Parents complete the Parent Agreement prior to enrollment.
- Parents may volunteer by offering classroom assistance, chaperoning learning expeditions, working on specific school-wide projects, or getting involved in any number of ways.



## Partners

We have three types of partners: curricular, resource, and community

**Curricular:** works with the teachers and Principal to develop curriculum; students likely will visit these partners often and during several thematic units

**Resource:** works with Principal to develop teacher-education, donate supplies or materials, provide guest speakers, and host field trips

**Community:** will be available for students to visit occasionally

### Criteria for Curricular Partners:

- Long-term financial viability
- Effective organizational structure
- Leadership and established educational department

## 2016-2017 Curricular Partners

- Alliance Arts for Learning
- ArtsNOW
- Atlanta Botanical Garden
- Atlanta History Center
- Fernbank Museum of Natural History
- Fox Theatre
- Georgia Aquarium
- High Museum
- Michael C. Carlos Museum
- Zoo Atlanta





## Facility Plans

- The school has a 10-year lease, with two five-year renewal options, with the DeKalb County School System for five buildings and 11 acres of land on Forrest Boulevard.
- For safety, code compliance and operational reasons, the facility required extensive renovations, for which The Museum School is solely responsible. The renovation costs have exceeded \$4 million.
- The Board of Directors collaborated with an architecture firm to create a 5 year phase-in plan beginning with the initial August 2012 move-in. Five buildings, constructed between 1954 and 1998, have been renovated.
- The next require construction project for the school is the building of a new media center.



## Staff Recruitment:

- Attracting and retaining a high-quality staff is crucial to the school's success.
- Full-time instructional candidates participate in a 3 round interview process, including a performance-based demonstration.
- Portfolios and student work samples documenting differentiated instruction and increased student achievement are reviewed.



## Who Can Attend?

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the attendance zone for The Museum School of Avondale Estates is divided into two areas. First priority is given to children of families living in focus area 1, which follows the attendance lines established by the DeKalb County School System for Avondale Elementary School and Peachcrest Elementary School. If space allows, priority is given to children of families living in focus area 2, which is defined as the remainder of DeKalb County.



### Goals:

Provide quality education to as many children as possible

Promote community education and socioeconomic diversity

Maintain concept of a community school





## Student Enrollment

- Enrollment Period: January 30 – February 10
- If the number of applicants exceeds the capacity of a program, class, or grade level, all students who applied during the open enrollment period will have an equal chance at admission through a random selection process.
- All applications must be received by February 10 to participate in the lottery. The public lottery will be held at the school on February 15 at 5:00 pm.
- The school expects to offer 60 Kindergarten spots, 6 4<sup>th</sup> grade spots, and 6 6<sup>th</sup> grade spots.



## Other Topics:

- Before Care Program
- After Care Program
- Lunch Program
- Uniform Policy
- Recess
- Exploratory Classes
- School Hours and Calendar





### Fast Facts

Is public, chartered by DeKalb County Schools, & open to all students in the attendance zone, based on available space.

Opened Aug. 9, 2010.

Includes grades K-8, serving three classes of students each in Kindergarten – 6<sup>th</sup> gr and two classes each in 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Limits classroom size to 20 students through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 22 students in 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade, and 24 students in the middle grades.

Offers gifted, special education programs, and early intervention programs.

Includes exploratory classes, including art, music, language, technology, STEM and physical education.

Begins classes at 8 am and ends classes at 3 pm (3:15 pm for middle school). Students may begin arriving at 7:30 a.m.

Offers an after-school program from 3 pm until 6:30 pm.

Has a mandatory uniform policy.

The Museum School does not discriminate in its enrollment procedures or educational programs based on intellectual or athletic ability, aptitude, disability, race, class, gender, family structure, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry, or any other basis prohibited by law.



Learn more at:  
[www.themuseumschool.org](http://www.themuseumschool.org)

## Additional Questions?

**Thanks for your support of  
The Museum School!**

Contact Information:  
Katherine Kelbaugh  
[katherine.kelbaugh@themuseumschool.org](mailto:katherine.kelbaugh@themuseumschool.org)