



HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2011

KENT SCHOOL
Chestertown, Maryland

Kent School is located on the banks of the Chester River in Chestertown, MD. This coed day school enrolls 176 students in grades PK - 8 drawn from the rural communities of the Eastern Shore and parts of Delaware. It is a uniquely beautiful setting in a quiet area, yet still convenient to the large cities of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Wilmington.

HISTORY AND CAMPUS

Starting on a large waterfront farm in 1967 with 69 students, Kent School sought to be a family school in which students could find both enjoyment *and* a "classic" education with a hands-on curriculum stressing the basics: reading, writing, math, and science. The school of today seeks to lay an exceptionally strong academic foundation in the basics while allowing the curriculum to grow and evolve so that it prepares students for life in a complex 21st Century. Students are encouraged to be "resourceful, independent, and disciplined learners who have the confidence to take risks and who readily accept new challenges."

Additions to the gracious farm have included "The Little School" that serves the pre-school, the spacious Lower School, science and library facilities for the Middle School, and a large and very functional gymnasium. These buildings sit on eight acres of land graced by fields and mature trees. Access to the school is down a long country lane with corn and soybean fields on both sides. Deer are common, ospreys soar everywhere, and the last mile into the school suggests to visitors and regulars alike an entry into a special time and place.

SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

Professional Staff:	26
Current Enrollment:	176
Maximum Enrollment:	204
Operating Budget:	\$2.2 million
Financial Aid:	\$202,000
Tuition Remission:	\$103,000 (Grandfathered. TR now all need based.)
Endowment:	\$1.1 million
Annual Giving:	\$76,000
Annual Auction:	\$81,000
Accreditation:	AIMS, Md. Dept. of Education
Member:	AIMS, NAIS

COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

Setting

Maryland's Eastern Shore was defined by one constituent as "the land time forgot." Chestertown itself is an exquisitely beautiful historic town that celebrated its 300th birthday four years ago. Lovingly restored antique homes and shops grace a downtown that is a step back in time. Yet this bucolic town is also host to Washington College, a regional hospital, and a diverse assortment of other civic and artistic organizations that contribute to the very sophisticated intellectual life of the community. It is a town at once old fashioned and dynamic. Plain hard work is just one of the old-fashioned values that define a slower and more deliberate pace of life. Residents seek and appreciate this quality. People know and care about each other and say it's a wonderful community in which to raise children.

"Have the honesty to say, 'I don't know and I'll get back to you.'"



Parents & Students

Over and over, constituents describe the school using language of family and community. They attest to a unified, happy and comfortable school with humor, caring, a tender touch, mutual concern, and a constant focus on meeting the needs of families and students. Emotional safety is a core value, and the school supports risk taking and failure just as it does success. The school community is without

pretense, or "authentic" as one enthusiastic parent described it. Parents appreciate what appears to be a good balance of enjoyment and rigor that keeps undue student stress at bay. Student leaders praised the school for personal attention, being "understanding and forgiving," and "having no favorites."



Kent School serves families from a large and diverse community of the Eastern

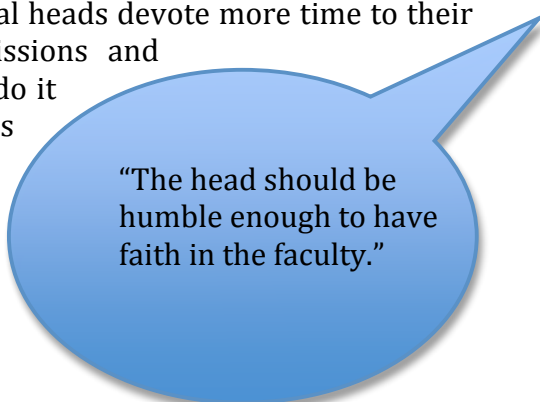
Shore, stretching from the Chesapeake Bay to the west, to Delaware to the east. While the region is known for its vacation and retirement attributes, it also supports more small businesses than large ones. Many families have chosen this location for its less hectic pace, and they consistently and deeply appreciate a school that mirrors "hard but caring work." Students are clearly challenged academically while treating each other much like siblings. Parents laud their children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and poise in public. Thirty-seven students are children of alums. Statistically, 7% of the student body consists of minorities, a count down slightly from previous years. Twenty-seven percent of students receive financial aid. Attrition has gone up in the last three years, due largely to economic pressures, but it is in line with NAIS "like-sized" schools.

Faculty

The faculty and staff are very stable, experienced, committed. Two of the three division heads have long history and experience with the school. Faculty cite professional freedom and feel trusted by the administration to teach to high standards and to be independent in implementing methodologies that will address students' needs. They are also quick to cite their appreciation of a supportive parent body. Several constituents cited strong faculty morale despite changes in the head's office and salaries that have been frozen last year and this year.

Administration

While small size is in many ways an advantage, it also defines the school as one that will require a lean administrative staff to wear many hats. The divisional heads devote more time to their teaching than they can to administrative duties. Admissions and development are "one-person shops" where the directors do it all. The business manager attends to budget and finances but is the first go-to person to tend to a leaky roof. Administrators clearly enjoy their work, and all constituents give high praise to the interim head, whose broad experience and unbridled enthusiasm model for the entire community a very evident "can do" attitude about everything the school does.



"The head should be humble enough to have faith in the faculty."



Board

The 20 member Board of Trustees consists largely of current and former parents, but also includes community members committed to the importance of independent education. It meets six times a year and has the typical array of working committees. Like many boards, it will rely on the experienced guidance and enthusiasm of the new head to focus its attention on issues of annual and capital fund raising and strategic long range planning.



"Without opportunities for a lot of building, the opportunities are more qualitative than quantitative. The balance comes in the rewards of life on the Eastern Shore."

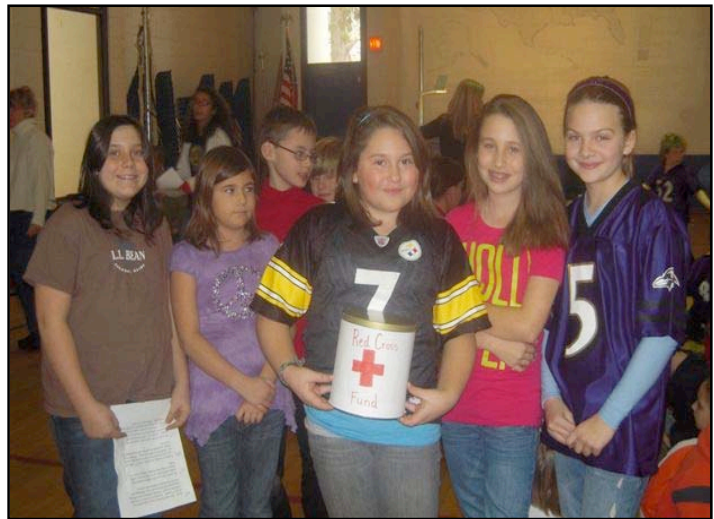
PROGRAM AND CULTURE

The school's overall program is described on the website www.kentschool.org.

Kent School is divided into three divisions: The Little School, Lower School (kindergarten through fourth grade) and the Middle School (grades 5 through 8). Little School is a pre-kindergarten mixed-age class of 22 three, four, and five-year-olds. Here the three teachers have developed a theme-based curriculum where learning by doing is the blueprint of the program. In the Lower School, kindergarten through second grade classes are usually team taught by co-teachers, though enrollment this year required cutting back to one in the second grade. The school enjoys waterfront access and takes advantage of its unique location near the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries for its environmental science program, which is especially strong in the Lower School. In the Middle School there are four homerooms, but students also meet regularly in small advisory groups where they set and attain both academic and personal goals. The middle school teachers strive to balance traditional curriculum with hands-on investigation. The focus is on the process, whether it is learning to do research or guiding a student to be more organized. Beginning in Little School, Spanish is the foreign language offering. French enrichment is offered starting in kindergarten.

"This school runs on kindness."

In the last three years Kent School teachers and administrators have committed the school to a program of "personalized learning for every student." The school has developed and continues to employ and refine strategies to help students reach their full promise by being knowledgeable of different learning styles, incorporating a student's strengths and learning styles within daily lessons, and making reasonable accommodations and adjustments when needed.



In the school's extracurricular realm, the primary athletic offerings are soccer for boys, field hockey for girls, and basketball and lacrosse for both. In addition, and among other offerings, there is a choir and popular Chess Club.

Throughout all divisions, teachers work to integrate subject areas and the arts into their curricula. Teachers and parents consider the program overall to be rigorous, yet responsive to students' needs where they are. Graduates leave prepared to face the academic and personal challenges of a variety of secondary schools with the skills and confidence to meet success. They attend area public schools, and many gain admission to competitive day and boarding schools such as St. Andrews School, The Hill School, and Woodberry Forest.

"We're a roll up the sleeves kind of community. We want that kind of head."

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Enrollment, Marketing, and Outreach

Student demographics are reasonably stable in the market immediately surrounding the school. The most rapid demographic growth is occurring in more distant towns, so while the school would like to pursue those markets more aggressively, it's difficult to provide cost-effective bus service. While Kent School is the only "traditionally structured" independent elementary school in the town, its competition comes from the usual array of public schools, public charter schools, and independent schools at a greater distance. Kent County has recently closed satellite schools and consolidated into a larger and controversial middle school, which could lead to more interest in Kent's program.

"Be wise, and apply what works; not what impresses."

One parent described Kent as "the small school at the end of the lane that we love." For the school to thrive, more people need to learn about it, enroll their children, and love it. There are only 5 three year olds enrolled in The Little School (vs. 17 four year olds), and this year, only half the typical number of four year olds moved on to kindergarten, producing a class of only 10 students. The school's pattern is that those who stay for kindergarten generally stay through 8th grade. The next head will need to build enrollment in all three divisions, starting with efforts to ensure full enrollment in The Little School and then in kindergarten. This will require not only ongoing programmatic refinements, but also highly visible and personal marketing and outreach in the extended community.



Plant

The campus has grown around its original farmhouse and with the additions made over the years, its facilities effectively support the school's program. The buildings are aging, however, and their maintenance is a growing budgetary challenge. The gymnasium's handsome wooden floor has just been refinished and is a source of pride. Plans have been drawn up for a major addition to the middle school and for renovations for the library. Total cost is projected at \$1.5 million. Funding for the library portion of the project is well in hand and the work is being planned for the summer of 2011.

Finances

The Kent School business model will always be a challenge for the school lacks economies of scale and serves a relatively rural community. It is difficult to make institutional finances work given the stable but small enrollment and the realities of tuition and affordability, heavy reliance on tuition revenues, compensation levels, financial aid, and pressing capital needs. Planning initiatives and capital campaigns have been complicated by administrative

"Take us to the next level. But take everyone with you."

changes, especially in the head's office, and the school looks forward to the prospect of the energy and focus of a new head who, ideally, will stay long enough to see the school through growth on several fronts. Buildings can accommodate another 25 students, and possible campaign objectives might include funding for facilities renovations and endowment for faculty salaries and financial aid.

Program

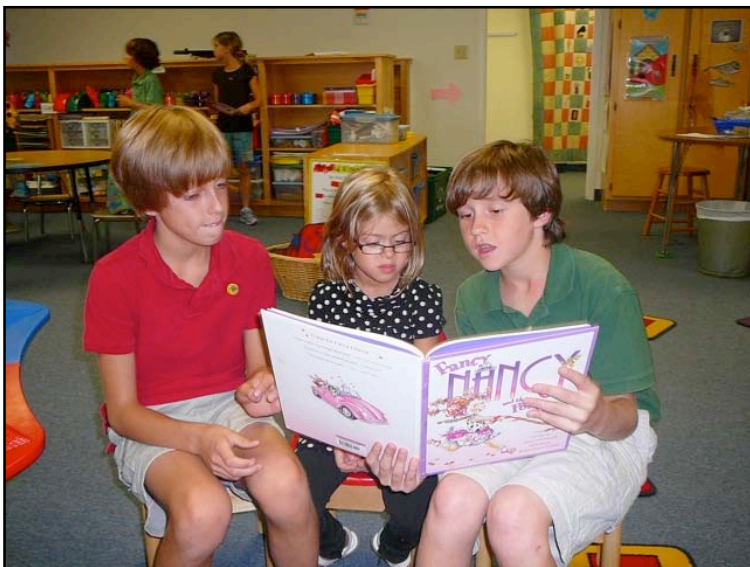
The new head will find a school whose program has been true to its mission. It's a very transparent place

where issues get raised and discussed openly. One ongoing question takes the form of "**Whom do we serve, and how?**" and relates to how well the school addresses the curricular and learning style needs of its extremes: those who achieve most easily, and those who struggle. It is this on-going discussion that led to the school's development of "personalized learning for every student," and the effort to articulate exactly what that means in practice for every student, every day.



"Have no agenda other than helping us enhance what is already good."

While again and again the faculty were identified as the great strength of the school, there is an expressed wish, in general, to raise the academic bar; to re-energize an already-good program; to take everything to the next level in a process that is fully inclusive and collaborative. The interim head has revitalized the faculty and administrative evaluation systems and there is a hope for enhanced professional development opportunities.



"Have a **vision** for our excellence as an independent school, and let that **vision** be more important than how the head looks."

THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will possess an excellent professional background and extraordinary skills, which will include:

- Advanced degree(s)
- Relevant experience in elementary education, preferably at an independent school
- Background in or knowledge of child development
- Evidence of excellent work with parents and families
- An inspiring ability to articulate a clear academic vision
- Demonstrated leadership of faculty
- Evidence of innovation in his/her current school
- Familiarity with school finance, business operations, and fund raising
- A desire for genuine professional growth
- Successful collaborative work with faculty, board, and administrative team

The next Head of Kent School should possess the following personal qualities:

- A desire to appreciate and become involved in the unique Eastern Shore community, not minding occasionally being "on display" outside of school hours, and recognizing that being at a parade, farmers' market, or a ballgame builds appreciation and credibility back in the office
- Excellent communication skills, to include listening, writing, and speaking
- High personal and professional standards, modeled by example
- A collaborative style, including sharing the spotlight and leading from the sidelines
- Personal warmth and humor and a presence that encourages respect
- A genuine love of children
- A strong backbone, with the ability to make and communicate mission-based decisions

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should send a cover letter, resume, a list of five references, and statement of educational philosophy to:

Thomas M. Evans
Resource Group 175
90 Great Western Road
Harwich, MA 02645
tmevanscca@comcast.net
774-237-0349

OR

Clay V. Stites
Resource Group 175
P.O. Box 104
Dartmouth, MA 02714
clay.stites@comcast.net
508-636-4984

For additional information about the school, visit its website: www.kentschool.org

Kent School does not discriminate in its policies based on race, religion, national origin, sexual preference, or age.