

# mu se um

*We are* A MUSEUM SCHOOL

OFFERING A HANDS-ON, PROJECT-BASED, STUDENT-CENTERED,  
INTERACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE—INSPIRING  
AND PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE REAL WORLD.

the  
museum  
school



OF AVONDALE ESTATES



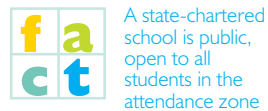
## *An Exhibition of Excellence*

FOR EVERY STUDENT, EVERY TEACHER, EVERY PARENT

When it comes to your child's education, you have the right to expect great things, like parental choice and accountability from school leadership. You have the right to ask for a neighborhood school where motivated children learn responsibility and respect for self and community. You have the right to ask for a school that tailors education to the individual instead of to the masses, a school that takes an innovative approach to learning. You have the right to expect a school to encourage exploration, inspire creativity and teach students critical thinking skills so they can compete on a national and global level.

At The Museum School of Avondale Estates, our teaching methods are based on research about how students learn best: through first-hand, hands-on experience. We believe each student is an individual, developing at his or her own pace. We believe freedom to explore is the key to developing a love of learning. We believe parents are a central part of a child's education. We believe that diversity of backgrounds and cultures makes a community stronger. We believe schools should be held accountable, and we believe in choice and excellence in public schools.

Founded on these beliefs, The Museum School delivers a quality interdisciplinary education. It is a public school, chartered by the state of Georgia, and built on the idea that families deserve a choice in public education. Designed as a neighborhood school, it brings together children from diverse backgrounds within the same community. Finally, The Museum School is dedicated to inspiring excellence, in both faculty and students.





## *A Deeper Understanding* THE MUSEUM SCHOOL CONCEPT

The Museum School partners with museums and other learning institutions to provide real-life experiences with classroom topics. Learning expeditions offer students a chance to ask questions, make observations, reflect on experiences and draw their own conclusions. Learning is student-centered and project-based. Museum learning brings a depth of understanding on subjects rather than merely asking students to memorize facts. Intensive curriculum development ensures that classroom discussions are reinforced and enhanced through interactive learning expeditions.

In-class instruction at The Museum School is focused on each student's individual learning style, readiness and prior understandings and experiences. Teachers are trained to evaluate each child's skills and needs and then tailor curriculum accordingly. This teaching model allows all students to move beyond basic proficiency and toward academic excellence.

Operating as a charter school allows us to implement this unique but proven model that is aligned with Georgia Performance Standards yet is not available in any other Georgia public school. We believe museum learning will lead to a deeper understanding of material and higher student achievement.

### **PARTNERS IN EDUCATION**

Partnerships are a central part of the museum school design, offering valuable knowledge and a chance to explore. Partners host learning expeditions, provide guest speakers, donate supplies and assist school staff in developing curriculum.

History museums, science centers and institutions dedicated to the arts open young minds to imagination and real-world experience. They bring fantastic opportunities to learn about diverse histories, philosophies and cultures. Students are challenged to examine information from the perspective of another culture, period in history or set of circumstances.

For example, a visit to a museum that details the background of the nation's civil rights movement allows students to go beyond the facts and imagine themselves part of the moments when history was made. Or, partnership may mean a trip to a Georgia nature science center, where students study carnivorous plants, learn about alternative energy sources and tour an organic farm.



*Did You Know...*  
The museum school model of learning is based on the idea that children learn best through personal exploration and hands-on experience. Students develop their own inquiries and identify their own questions to answer. In visiting science institutions, such as museums, science centers and art centers, they get a real-world perspective on lessons taught in the classroom. Our particular museum school model calls for each class to visit a museum or other learning institution roughly every other week.



A state-chartered school has flexibility to develop and implement its own educational goals



## *A DAY IN THE LIFE* FAR FROM TYPICAL FOR EACH AND EVERY STUDENT

It's a chilly February morning, and as your second grader walks into The Museum School, he pauses in front of the ocean-life mural painted by his parents and neighbors before the school was built. It reminds him of the water-in-motion exhibit his class constructed earlier this year after studying tides and waves, and he remembers how much fun the project was. Then he moves on, looking forward to the day ahead.

In the classroom, instruction begins with a math lesson, but Spanish class is the highlight of his morning, as students draw maps of all the Spanish-speaking countries of the world and compile them in a book. After music class, lunch and recess, they turn their attention to a solar system hanging in the corner of the room. They crafted it themselves with styrofoam balls and papier mâché and will work today on painting it for the upcoming Exhibit Night, where they get to demonstrate the knowledge they've gained during a nine-week lesson on space. After reading class, they enter Writer's Workshop. Consulting travel journals they took with them on a recent expedition to a local planetarium, each student creates his own story about visiting another planet and prepares it, too, for Exhibit Night.

Walking back through the halls on his way home that afternoon, your child stops again at the mural and slowly traces his fingers over the outline of an indigo fish. He thinks about the lessons he has learned this year, about the moon and the oceans and the connection between them, and as he goes on his way, he wonders what the next adventure will be.



## *EXHIBIT NIGHT* AN INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Learning doesn't end at sunset. And neither does the excitement of exploration and discovery. It's Exhibit Night, one of four special evenings each year when students get a chance to showcase the knowledge they've gained and the projects they've completed in the classroom and on learning expeditions—bringing it all to life as they create their own interactive museum. On this night, they become the teachers, proudly relaying what they've learned and answering questions for parents, school partners and community members.



Hallways and classrooms are overflowing with exhibits, from portraits of U.S. presidents to history lessons on Native American tribes in Georgia, from Civil War battleground maps to Japanese costumes and fans. Other exhibits detail the habitats and characteristics of endangered animal species and trace the journeys of European explorers in the New World. And while a few young students give parents a brief history of space exploration, middle-school students roam the halls acting out scenes from "Romeo and Juliet."

This is the pinnacle of each nine-week lesson, a chance to show what they've learned and how their worlds have grown. It's a chance to step into the spotlight and step into the shoes of the people they've studied... and a chance to shine. Now they bring all the pieces together—the museum visits, the classroom exercises, the independent exploration—and realize they've been learning all along.





## OUR CURRICULUM IN DEPTH AND INSPIRING

The Museum School's guiding principle for curriculum is constructivism, a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on experiences, individuals construct their own understanding of the world. While the curriculum is firmly rooted in Georgia Performance Standards, constructivism avoids a one-size-fits-all method of instruction by allowing teachers to customize lessons to each student's needs.

Our curriculum is also built on the museum model, a model that fosters exploration and discovery, giving students a strong sense of autonomy, interdependence, motivation and a joy for learning. While museum visits are a key part of the school's focus, most of a student's time will be spent in the classroom, where the exploration and discovery continue. By encouraging creativity, investigation and active imaginations, our curriculum engages students and makes learning meaningful.

The Museum School's faculty works with other educational experts to develop interdisciplinary themes. The curriculum is organized into nine-week thematic units, creating an integrated approach to learning as lessons and ideas from one classroom subject are reinforced in other subjects and on learning expeditions. For example, sixth graders studying European colonization and exploration may be asked to compose an essay for writing class, explaining the impact of colonization on a particular African nation. Or, a fourth-grade social studies lesson on Colonial America may lead to a reading assignment asking students to report on the diary of a revolutionary war soldier.



A state-chartered school is funded by the same per student dollars that go to all public schools



### CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING

In the constructivist classroom, learning is:

- *Constructed.* Students create new knowledge based on their prior knowledge.
- *Active.* Students determine some of their own goals and then analyze, interpret and predict information.
- *Reflective.* Students think about their experiences and interests and set goals accordingly.
- *Collaborative.* Students work together to make discoveries and add their prior knowledge to that of the group.
- *Inquiry-based.* The main focus is on solving problems. Students ask questions and investigate to find answers and draw conclusions.
- *Evolving.* Students reevaluate prior conclusions as new knowledge emerges and understanding deepens.
- *Personalized.* Standards-based curricula are customized to each student's prior knowledge. All students learn, because teachers meet them at their current level of understanding.



## INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION A SINGULAR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

We realize that not all children learn in the same manner and at the same pace. The Museum School's core programs require teachers to identify students' skills, interests and needs and tailor lessons to meet each child at his or her level. Students work in differentiated reading and math groups, and teachers help each child set achievement goals. These core programs strengthen children's skills and build self-confidence. In gaining knowledge and seeing what they already can do, children learn to believe there's nothing they cannot do.

### Reader's Workshop

Reader's Workshop teaches literacy through both independent and small-group guided reading. Students use tactics such as whisper reading, peer reading, echo reading and shared reading. They are asked to complete comprehension activities such as creating story webs, story pyramids or character studies. Teachers facilitate interactive discussions centered around books and stories. In addition, students select their own books to read individually, and classmates are encouraged to form book clubs to discuss books and create projects based on them.

Language learning centers are a key part of Reader's Workshop. Student-centered stations are set up around the classroom, and children receive instructions for a hands-on activity that results in a reading-related product. For example, a vocabulary center might ask students to choose five words from their book of choice, define those words, illustrate them and use them in a meaningful writing assignment.

### Word Study

In Word Study, students tackle word knowledge, spelling, phonics, phonemic awareness and vocabulary. A word wall may list commonly used words, words with tricky spellings and vocabulary words. A word-study notebook becomes each child's own reference book, highlighting particular word patterns, such as how the letter pattern "ould" makes the similar-sounding words "should," "could" and "would." This approach is meaningful because words chosen for study often appear in students' readings.

### Writer's Workshop

At The Museum School, writing is a daily activity, beginning in kindergarten. Fluency is built through continuous, repeated exposure to the writing process. Students work at their own pace as they learn and practice the basics of story creation — from planning and writing to revision, teacher editing and grammatical instruction. As students write, teachers circulate throughout the room, answering questions, providing mini-lessons and working with individuals to meet each one's needs. Children write about their own experiences and learn to think creatively.

Students also keep journals, recording their thoughts and experiences and exploring essential questions of each nine-week thematic lesson. These journals become an insight into their minds, storing their observations, reflections, questions, drawings and imaginations.

Writer's Workshop is integrated with other classroom topics, such as social studies and science. For example, a first-grade lesson on American folk tales may lead to a writing assignment asking students to create their own folk tale.

### Everyday Mathematics

Everyday Mathematics engages students by showing them exactly how mathematics relates to their own worlds. A kindergarten teacher might read from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and afterward, students sequence events of the story using props. They retell the story focusing on ordinal numbers, showing which item the caterpillar ate first, which item he ate second, etc. Then students create lines of blocks and name the ordinal numbers associated with each block.

For higher grades, the material, of course, is more difficult, but the concept is the same. Fifth graders learn to gather, organize and display data and interpret graphs. A small group of students might complete a school-wide survey on the number of siblings each student has. They research different types of graphs, the purposes of those graphs and their applications. Then they organize their survey data, create graphs, analyze the data and present their findings to classmates.

Everyday Mathematics uses self-directed learning and whole-class collaboration. Students might create a financial plan for a school store—complete with a budget, initial costs, sale prices and profits—and then build and manage the store. They learn to work individually and with classmates.

The Museum School uses technology to advance students' understanding of core math concepts. Students learn to use software for organizing data and creating graphs for analysis. Additionally, the curriculum includes many activities in which learning is extended and enhanced through the use of calculators, software and the Internet.

Everyday Mathematics is designed as a spiral curriculum, offering multiple exposures to math concepts over the course of two or more years, giving children many opportunities to grasp an idea when they are developmentally ready.



## MEASURING ACHIEVEMENT GAUGING EXCELLENCE

The Museum School's educational program is research-based and data-driven and includes a concrete measure of progress. We engage in rigorous and continual assessment of students throughout the school year using national, state and local measures. The results from these varied assessments drive professional development plans, curriculum development and pacing and influence instructional modifications, such as the incorporation of paraprofessionals in high-need content areas or additional instruction in specific growth areas.

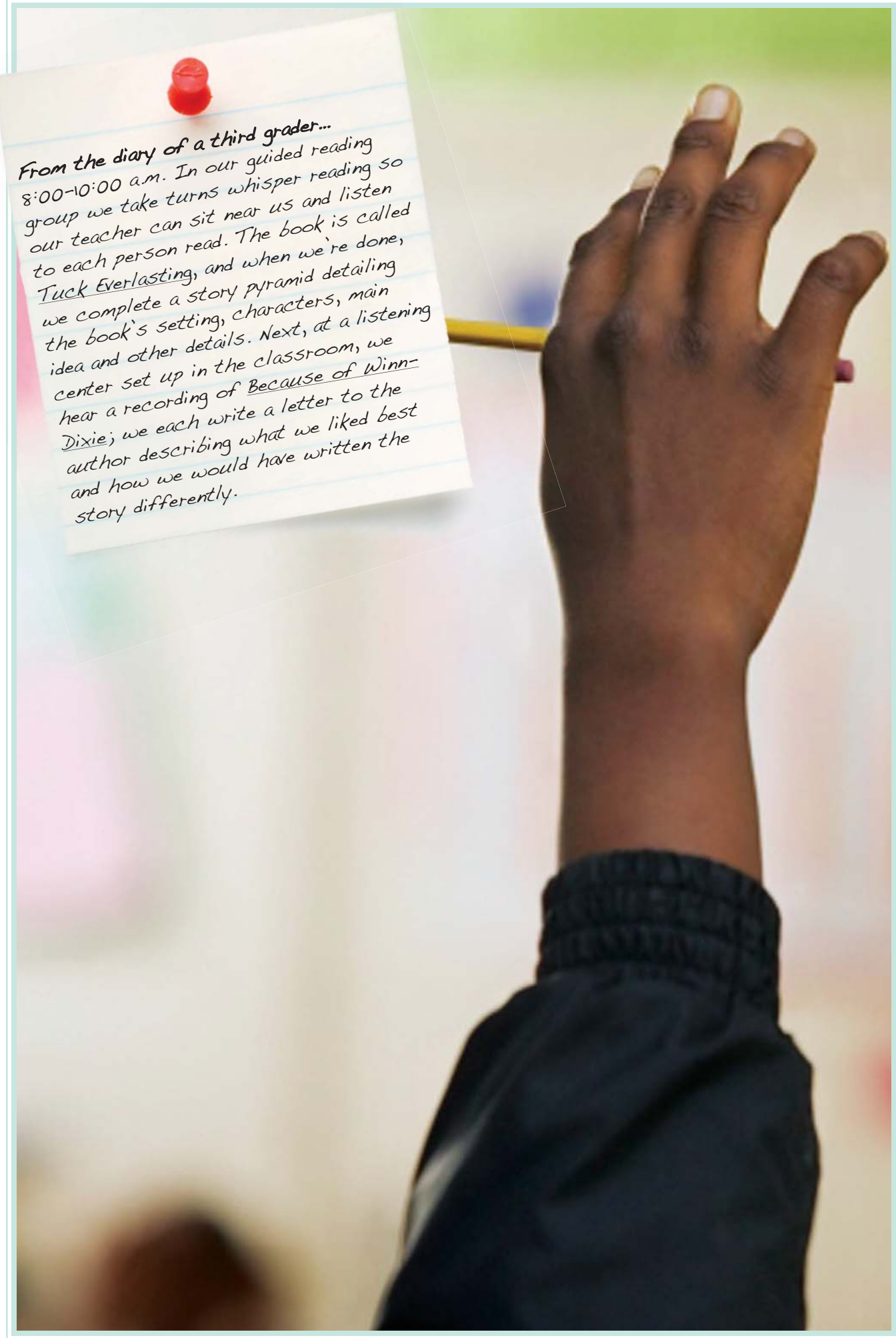
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is used in grades K-2 in reading and mathematics and in grades 3-8 in reading, language arts, mathematics and science. This computerized, adaptive test assesses students based on their current level and provides an accurate indication of each child's instructional level. The test gives teachers a guide to each student's existing skills and growth needs.

The Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) is administered in grades 1-8, and results are used to determine each student's core competencies and to develop educational growth goals. Each student's results are shared with and explained to parents so that home support can be implemented for target growth areas. Data from the CRCT also are used to assess school-wide and grade-level-wide strengths and areas for growth.

In addition, The Museum School administers standards-based periodic assessments at the end of each nine-week thematic unit to evaluate concept mastery. As with the MAP and CRCT, the periodic assessments determine instructional pacing and curriculum and shape instructional strategies for the school as a whole.



A state-chartered school operates under a contract with the Georgia Department of Education



*From the diary of a third grader...*  
8:00-10:00 a.m. In our guided reading group we take turns whisper reading so our teacher can sit near us and listen to each person read. The book is called Tuck Everlasting, and when we're done, we complete a story pyramid detailing the book's setting, characters, main idea and other details. Next, at a listening center set up in the classroom, we hear a recording of Because of Winn-Dixie; we each write a letter to the author describing what we liked best and how we would have written the story differently.



## OUR CORE VALUES

### THE MEANING BEHIND OUR EDUCATION

The Museum School's core values are not just words recited to prospective parents. They are character traits expected of faculty, staff, parents and students alike, and they are woven into our everyday practices and into the curriculum.

**Responsibility.** The museum curriculum is designed to help students take responsibility for their own learning. With teachers as guides, children make their own inquiries about a subject and then experiment, observe and investigate. **Respect.** We know that each child learns differently, and we respect that. Rather than present a fixed curriculum that may not be appropriate for some students, the museum school model integrates a myriad of learning styles and presents lessons that are appropriate for each student, all while not only meeting but exceeding Georgia Performance Standards. Students learn respect through direct experience in the classroom and on learning expeditions, collaborating and communicating to achieve common goals. **Cooperation.** Though students form individual learning goals and plans, they also undertake group projects that require cooperation. The creation of museum exhibits requires the coordinated effort of an entire class. Additionally, Everyday Mathematics employs cooperative learning and small-group instruction on a daily basis. **Sustainability.** The Museum School is dedicated to principles of sustainability—the idea that a balance exists between meeting the needs of the present and ensuring the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Our students study and participate in environmentally sound processes throughout the school such as recycling, energy conservation and waste reduction. Our curriculum also emphasizes sustainability. The curriculum at The Museum School is interdisciplinary by design to help children see that seemingly isolated facts and events are interconnected. **Creativity.** As a basic premise of the inquiry-based learning framework, students identify their own problems to solve and questions to answer. Teachers encourage risk-taking and innovation in guiding students' explorations and investigations. Students have an opportunity to use creativity at every step of the museum process. In addition, by providing teachers with professional development and a focus on creative lesson planning, we enable them to meet the needs of each individual student. Fostering a sense of creativity and encouraging an active imagination are the means to making learning meaningful and engaging. Transforming school from an obligatory activity to a fulfilling one is the key to giving children a lifelong love of learning.



#### A TRUE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Museum School is the recognition of what many families in the community have been looking for: a results-driven community school that is innovative in its nature, accountable for achieving its goals and dedicated to education instead of just schooling.

The Museum School is a school built *by* the community *for* the community. It is designed as the *center* of the community, a place where children of different backgrounds, races, nationalities and family histories can imagine and discover side by side. The school includes children born in foreign countries as well as those born just a few miles away. Its students are from many different racial, ethnic and family backgrounds; they come from single-parent, two-parent and same-gender households. It is a school for the entire community. This is a school where every child can thrive and succeed. This is a school for everyone. *This is your school.*



## *FAST FACTS* A SNAPSHOT OF THE SCHOOL

- Founded by parents in 2010
- Governed by a Board of Directors
- Chartered by the Georgia Charter Schools Commission in December 2009
- The founding principal is Katherine Kelbaugh.
- Parental involvement is key to the success of the school. All parents are required to volunteer for the school, per the Parent Agreement. The opportunities are many and a fun way to be engaged in your child's education.
- Typical class size is approximately 20 students.
- Faculty members include teaching assistant, who assist classroom teachers.
- The mandatory school uniform is collared, polo-style shirts and khaki pants. Girls may wear skirts and jumpers.
- The Museum School participates in the Federal Lunch Program; lunch is available to all students on the school premises. Reduced and free lunches are available to eligible students.
- Siblings of an enrolled student are given priority placement. If a child is offered a place in the school, admission will be offered to all of his or her siblings, based on available space. Once students enroll and attend, they retain placement in the school, unless they withdraw.
- The Museum School does not provide transportation to and from school premises, but we charter buses to and from learning expeditions.

We welcome all students, from every background. 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. We will administer placement tests, but no admissions tests. We embrace and celebrate the diverse community that makes our school unique.