



**THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL**  
Atlanta, GA

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**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
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[paideiaschool.org](http://paideiaschool.org)



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES

# THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

“Above all else, a good school should be a good place for people to be. It should exemplify qualities of human interaction that we would wish for people everywhere. One should feel valued. A great many interesting things should be going on. One should be learning a lot – and especially learning how to better learn. School should be a place one looks forward to going in the morning and is somewhat reluctant to leave at the end of the day.”

– Dr. Newt Hodgson, Paideia Self-Study, 1980

## OVERVIEW

The Paideia School, an independent Pre-K-12 school located in the Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia, prioritizes relationships, inquiry, and community. There is a palpable sense of joy on campus where students delight in the exhilaration of discovery and faculty relish the opportunity to intellectually engage with students and with each other. While Paideia promotes rigorous exploration and inquiry, it is not a place that takes itself too seriously. A sense of humor permeates daily life on campus; one of the most endearing qualities of Paideia is how often and easily everyone seems to laugh.

Underlying all that takes place at Paideia between students, faculty, and parents is an abiding sense of trust, which serves as the School’s fundamental guidepost and catalyzing force. This is as true in 2022 as it was when the school was founded in 1971.

## SCHOOL HISTORY

Paideia was started in 1971 by a small group of parents who wanted to create a school that respected the individuality of children. The ancient Greek word Paideia conveys the concept of a child’s total education: intellectual, artistic, and social. After many years and considerable growth in size and programs, Paideia remains true to the ideas that inspired it and brought it into existence. Today, Paideia is a leading progressive school and one of relatively few progressive schools in the Southeast.

## At a Glance

Founded: 1971

Total students: 1036

Students of color: 40%

Total faculty: 158

Faculty of color: 27%

Faculty with advanced degrees: 66%

Student/teacher ratio: 15:1

Financial aid budget: \$3.5 million

Students receiving aid: 14.4%

Endowment: \$28 million

[Framework of Values](#)



## THE SCHOOL

Paideia prioritizes the innate curiosity of children and their desire to understand and master their environment. The school takes considerable care to tailor its program to the talents and needs of each student.

Two mainstays of Paideia's culture and success are described in more detail below:

### **1. The educational authority residing with faculty and orchestrated by administrators**

When teachers are asked why they like to teach at Paideia and choose to remain, most teachers speak immediately of the respect they feel from the school and the trust they explicitly and implicitly enjoy from the entire community. Teachers are treated as professionals and experts of their craft. Some will speak of autonomy in the classroom, the freedom to teach, and trust. The school offers teachers independence, much like the trust and freedom enjoyed by faculty at colleges and universities. Paideia teachers have great freedom to develop their art and continue to learn and grow. Teachers are expected to be a part of a team of expert educators. The school understands that success in teaching is not simply measured by grades and college matriculation, but rather found in the growth of students and their enthusiasm for learning and life. The way to foster respect, independence, and appropriate decision making for children is to put them with adults who are afforded the same.



## 2. The personal approach and understanding of students

The culture of teaching and learning at Paideia is both personal and individualized. It is also optimistic. This perspective permeates the school. It begins with the school's admissions process and culminates with the graduation ceremony. The word "Paideia" offers a comprehensive approach to learning: philosophical and interpersonal, encompassing the total education and development of children. At Paideia, the emotional or affective dimension of children is an essential component of learning. The school celebrates strengths as much as it attempts to remediate weaknesses. Teachers direct their energy to understanding not only how well a child reads, but also what he likes to read; not only her reading level of achievement but also what makes her laugh, what risks they will or will not take, and how they are navigating developmental milestones. Teachers care about what is happening on the playground as well as what is happening in the math group and believe they are responsible for creating an environment that enhances both.

Since its founding, students have called teachers by their first names and enjoyed an informal environment that supports each individual's full expression of themselves. There is no student or faculty and staff dress code. There are no formal grades in the elementary school and junior high; rather, narrative student evaluations detail strengths and areas of growth. Expectations are high, and students are challenged academically and personally.

Paideia School is accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and the Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools (AAAIS).



## ACADEMICS

Paideia's educational philosophy is based on the belief that schools can be informal and individualized, while educating well and with academic rigor. Effective teaching requires continual evaluation to determine student progress. This is especially important in a curriculum in which students are placed according to their academic needs. Paideia balances a focus on intellectual achievement with personal consideration of the needs of each child, within a supportive, nurturing school environment.

### Half Day (Pre-K)

Students ages 3-5 in the half-day program enroll in either a morning or an afternoon session, each of which consists of approximately 24 children with four teachers. A priority for the half-day program is building in time for the teachers to listen to children, probe their thinking, and help them extend their thoughts.

Children in the half-day program become socially confident, learn to engage others of all ages, know when to ask for help, learn to resolve conflicts, and practice flexible thinking. Upon leaving the program, students can connect ideas, take risks, benefit from mistakes, grow in empathy, and progress along the path to becoming life-long learners.

### Elementary (K-6)

Paideia has a strong elementary academic program within a caring, attentive, and stimulating environment where children learn to explore, understand themselves, and develop intellectually. Students learn in multi-age classrooms with two teachers. Teachers work to get to know their students individually and provide a stimulating and supportive classroom. The sense of independence cultivated in students is reflected in the respect for the independence and capability of Paideia's teachers. This openness and flexibility creates classes that are rich, diverse, and challenging.



A “central subject” is the organizing principle behind the Elementary program. Each year, each teaching team selects a topic or theme (e.g., the Middle Ages, seeds, voice, bridges) around which they organize the year’s study of social studies, reading, and writing. Intentional work in racial literacy is woven into the central subject. This integrated, flexible, and inclusive approach inspires and engages the school’s youngest students.

### **Junior High (7-8)**

Paideia has developed a program that is especially suited to meeting the needs and opportunities of early adolescence. It combines close and sustained contact and support from teachers with independence, individual responsibility, and a range of choices. It demands a lot from students, but it does so in relaxed surroundings in which they can feel supported and empowered. Classrooms are openly arranged with sofas, tables, and chairs. Academic and interpersonal skills are nourished within a creative curriculum designed to develop self-awareness, expression, and empathy.

The teachers, more than any other variable, set the tone and atmosphere of the school day. One of Paideia’s guiding principles has been to find experienced, talented, and innovative teachers and then give them room to teach. Their classes are a reflection of their styles and passions. Junior High teachers all share three qualities: they enjoy being around children this age, they believe they can make a positive impact on the lives of students, and they have a sense of humor that allows them to roll with the moment.

Junior High students take classes alongside their peers in multi-age homebases, which form a bridge between the elementary classroom and the individualized schedules of the high school.

### **High School (9-12)**

While high school is a fascinating time of academic growth, it is also a time to test one’s strengths, tackle new skill sets, and pursue passions outside of the classroom. Paideia provides an academically rigorous and collaborative environment for high school students to take risks in learning.



Paideia's high school academic year is split into four separate terms. Long Term 1 runs from August to December while Long Term 2 runs from February to May. In ninth and tenth grades, students take foundational courses in English, social studies, and science with course placements in math and modern language. In eleventh and twelfth grades, students are placed in a variety of leveled courses ranging from themes to AP/Seminar classes. In the months of January and May, students select elective short-term classes. During short term, students generally take fewer courses that meet for longer periods during the day, giving them an opportunity to study a topic in greater depth and intensity than is possible in a long-term class; short term also affords the opportunity for students to study topics outside of a traditional academic offering or department. Some past short-term course offerings include Women's Makerspace, Hidden Figures, Rockets, and Introduction to Playwriting.

Paideia's students embrace the high school's culture of intellectual curiosity, trust, and diversity, and it shows in their academic success. As faculty guide students through the curriculum, they also facilitate personal understanding and management of each student's own strengths and challenges as a learner, vital knowledge for success throughout high school and the stages that follow.

## College Matriculation

22% of students in the class of 2021 were honored by National Merit. Students in the classes of 2020 and 2021 were admitted to the following institutions, among others:

Agnes Scott College  
American University  
Arizona State University  
Bowdoin College  
Brown University  
California Polytechnic State University  
Columbia University  
Cornell University  
Duke University  
Emerson College  
Emory University  
Fordham University  
George Washington University  
Georgetown University  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Georgia State University  
Harvard University  
Indiana University, Bloomington  
Lewis & Clark College  
Loyola University, New Orleans  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Morehouse College  
Mount Holyoke College  
Northeastern University  
Northwestern University  
Purdue University  
Reed College  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Rice University  
Savannah College of Art and Design  
Spelman College  
Stanford University  
Syracuse University  
Trinity College, Dublin  
Tulane University  
United States Merchant Marine Academy  
University of California, Berkeley  
University of California, Los Angeles  
Vanderbilt University  
Washington University in St Louis  
Yale University



College counseling at Paideia is designed to be personal and individualized. The approach is flexible but driven to obtain successful results for every student. At its best, the process goes beyond helping Paideia students find a college that is a “good match.” It helps them grow and learn more about themselves. From beginning to end, the students are at the center of this process. They are expected to take responsibility for registering for appropriate tests, completing applications, and meeting deadlines. The college counseling staff is available to assist, encourage, challenge, and support students as they set goals and make decisions. Students are admitted into competitive academic programs post high school and attend a broad range of schools. In a typical graduating class of over 110 students, students attend up to 60 or 70 different colleges and universities. This is an indicator of the personal college counseling process and the importance of finding the right school for individual students.

## THE ARTS

Paideia promotes development in the arts as part of a well-rounded education. The arts at Paideia cover a wide range of creative forms, including visual arts such as drawing, painting, ceramics, woodworking, photography, and performing arts, including music, chorus, and drama. Elementary teachers often work with art teachers to coordinate lessons with central subject themes. Visual and performing arts are a required part of the Junior High day. High school students take art and music on an elective basis. Students have been successful in photography, art, and music competitions at the local, state, and national levels, and some choose to submit supplementary portfolios for college admission and attend art school post-graduation.



## ATHLETICS

Paideia wants all students to engage fully in athletics and take a risk, try a new sport, discover their strengths, and experience the highs and lows of competition. In addition to physical education classes offered during the school day, seventy percent of students in grades 7-12 participate in at least one sport. Sports offered in junior high school are soccer, volleyball, ultimate frisbee, cross-country, basketball, softball, baseball, tennis, track, and swimming. Sports offered in high school are baseball, golf, soccer, tennis, track & field, ultimate frisbee, basketball, swimming, cross country, and volleyball. Paideia is nationally competitive in Ultimate Frisbee and has won state championships in boys' and girls' soccer. Paideia has facilities both on-campus and off-campus at Python Park in Avondale Estates, and transportation to and from the off-campus site is provided.

## SCHOOL LIFE

The culture of teaching and learning at Paideia is both personal and individualized. Paideia strives to greet and teach each child personally, understand children individually, and encourage them to develop mindful of their own relative strengths, passions, interests, and dispositions, both in and out of the classroom.

Paideia's high school has more than 40 student clubs. Club offerings are student-driven and new clubs appear every year. Clubs include Academic Bowl, Debate, Mock Trial, Robotics, Theater Tech, Model UN, Steering Committee (student government), and Student Diversity Leadership Initiative. There are multiple affinity groups at the high school level including TribeOnyx (African American students), PRIDEI(A) (LGBTQ alliance), AAA (Asian American students), LASSO (Latino /Hispanic Students), Jew Crew (Jewish students), and FEMS (Feminist Allies).



Paideia is also home to an outstanding urban agriculture program. Through urban agriculture, students, teachers, and parents learn about the synergistic relationships between growing crops, eating, raising animals, reusing waste, and the related nutritional and environmental benefits. Paideia’s farm is located five miles southeast of the main campus, in East Atlanta. A “Commitment to an Environmental View” is a core value of the School, and the farm program embodies and facilitates this civic responsibility.

More broadly, the School encourages its students to lead “socially useful and purposeful lives.” This is, indeed, one of Paideia’s core values, and an aspect of the School that both students and alumni describe as central to their Paideia experience. Not only through the urban farming initiatives, but also through service learning at every level and throughout the greater Atlanta area, students are encouraged to be change-agents and compassionate, active members of the communities in which they live.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

The Paideia School celebrates and values diversity, equity, and inclusion on its path to becoming an anti-racist institution. Paideia has always believed that the path to a complete and well-rounded learning environment must be inclusive, diverse, and equitable. Recently, the school has taken a hard, critical look at what it means to create an authentic community of belonging. This work has been at the foundation of who Paideia is and who it will be in the next 50 years.

Learning for Justice, Pollyanna, and other racial literacy resources are utilized as the lenses by which teachers create the elementary curriculum. In the Junior High, much of the curriculum is centered on a focused learning program called Race, Class, and Gender.

In the High School, diversity and inclusion are built into the curricula in every discipline. Parents and employees are invited to join affinity groups that include Asian Parents Association, Black Parents Organization, Latino Parents Group, Rainbow Pi (LGBTQ Parents and Families), Paideia Asia Society, and White Anti-Racist Teacher Groups.



In 2021, the DEI Board Committee developed a Strategic Plan, which was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees. It includes the following key pillars: 1) Build Infrastructure; 2) Augment DEI in Certain Key Areas; 3) Optimize Frameworks, Policies, and Tenets; and 4) Communicate and Measure Progress.

As the school prepares for its next 50 years, it is committed to listening to the community, learning from the changing world, and taking effective, actionable steps to keep DEI a priority so that every child feels safe, seen, and welcomed on campus.

## **CAMPUS**

Paideia's 16-acre wooded campus is located in the in-town Druid Hills neighborhood near Emory University, Agnes Scott College, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The 14 buildings include the original 1509 Building at the east corner of Ponce de Leon and Fairview Avenues, and the 1341 Building, an historic Neel Reid structure that houses the half day program and development office. Python Park, Paideia's 12-acre playing fields located in Avondale Estates, includes two soccer fields and a softball/baseball diamond.

The \$25M Paideia@50 campaign is expected to conclude successfully in June 2022. Among other initiatives, this campaign provides funding for a new Junior High building that will open in June 2023.



## ATLANTA, GA

The capital of Georgia and its most populous city with just over 500,000 residents (5.8 million in the metro area), Atlanta is a beloved gem of the Southeast and one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. In recent decades, the city has attracted business from both domestic and international corporations and greatly expanded its civic and cultural venues and activities; the city is home to the world's busiest airport. As a major business center, Atlanta has the country's third-largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies. Delta Air Lines is the city's largest employer and operates one of the world's largest airline hubs. Media powerhouses based in Atlanta include Turner Broadcasting Company, which began in the city, and CNN. Atlanta is also home to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), as well as Coca-Cola, UPS, and Home Depot.

With more than 30 colleges and universities located in the city, Atlanta is a center for higher education. Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory University, and Georgia State University are some of the city's most prominent institutions. Atlanta also has the largest consortium of historically black colleges, comprised of Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and the Interdenominational Theological Center.

Atlanta's cultural offerings are rich. Highlights include the High Museum of Art, Atlanta History Center, The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, and The Center for Civil and Human Rights. The Carter Center was founded by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter to advance human rights worldwide and alleviate human suffering. Atlanta's performing arts scene includes the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Alliance Theater, Atlanta Opera, and Atlanta Ballet. Parks — like Piedmont Park in Midtown, Downtown's Centennial Olympic Park, and the Beltline that surrounds the city — are prevalent throughout Atlanta, and it is common to see people taking advantage of these urban oases with a game of Frisbee or a family picnic.

The Paideia School is located in the Druid Hills neighborhood, which was designed at the turn of the 20th century by Frederick Law Olmsted. Druid Hills is on the National Register of Historic Places and over time has preserved the environment of parks, streetscapes, and landscapes in the spirit of the original concept.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Paideia's next Head of School will join the community at a critical and exciting inflection point. The School is characterized by a diverse community where the life of the mind flourishes and where faculty, staff, and students alike are able to bring their full and authentic selves to school each day.

The priorities, opportunities, and challenges ahead include:

- Honoring Paideia's half century of history and tradition, building on the momentum of the school's success during its founder-led era, and capitalizing on the community's readiness as the school prepares for its next chapter.
- Thoughtfully considering how to augment the school's structures with systems that allow for greater equity, efficiency, and predictability, ensuring that the school's human and financial resources are put to their best use in support of the school.
- Recruiting, hiring, retaining, and supporting faculty and staff who fully embrace Paideia's [Framework of Values](#) and who reflect the diversity of the student body.
- Furthering the school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, consistent with the current [DEI Strategic Plan](#).
- Maintaining Paideia's fundamental commitment to teacher autonomy and agency while maintaining a balance of collaborative work at each level.
- Evaluating current financial aid policies and funding with an eye towards providing even more equitable access for a wide range of exceptional applicants.
- Communicating with inspiration and clarity, serving as the "chief storyteller" for the school.



- Strengthening existing community partnerships, establishing new relationships, and building the public presence of the school in order to serve the ongoing growth of faculty and students.
- Serving as the school's cultural leader, honoring the school's unique history and vibrant culture and nurturing deep connections between and among students, faculty, parents, departments, and divisions, finding joy and humor with the community and holding to the school's central belief that the present is equally important as the student's next stage in life.

## **DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The ideal candidate(s) will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

### **Professional Qualifications**

- Deep appreciation and affection for a community that prioritizes the needs of students, the passions and professionalism of teachers, and an abiding belief in the power of an intentional community where adults and children live and learn side by side.
- Personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and the requisite skills to support a diverse student body and faculty and to facilitate critical conversations in the design of ever more inclusive culture, curriculum, and programs.
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy and the tactical skills to manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy, skillfully moderating change.
- Depth of experience in school operations, strategic planning, and board management.

## **Leadership Style**

- A collaborative leadership style built on approachability, responsiveness, and transparent communication.
- A history of responsive and sensitive change management, moderated by deep respect for an organization's history and traditions.
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback.

## **Personal Qualities**

- Experience as a classroom teacher and a profound appreciation and respect for the art of teaching.
- A fundamental belief in the joy of teaching and learning; a contagious sense of humor; and a spirit of playfulness.
- Alignment with Paideia's Framework of Values and commitment to a life of integrity.
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with inspiration and clarity.
- Eagerness to engage actively with students, faculty, and staff and willingness to prioritize visibility amidst the demands of a busy schedule.

## **TO APPLY**

Interested candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing interest in this particular position (Consultants will offer specific guidance regarding the cover letter.)
- A current résumé

Candidates are invited to submit one additional writing sample in support of their candidacy.

### **Devereaux McClatchey**

President

dev@carneysandoe.com

### **Marsha Little**

Search Consultant

marsha.little@carneysandoe.com

### **Heather Flewelling**

Search Consultant

heather.flewelling@carneysandoe.com

### **Jessica Wright**

Search Consultant

jessica.wright@carneysandoe.com