

UPPER SCHOOL

WE GO FURTHER

Advanced and college-level courses

Cutting-edge Center for Innovation & Design

Award-winning drama program

Outstanding FSL team successes

Abundant leadership opportunities

Extraordinary college placement

Science, Humanities, and Justice Core Teams

Meaningful service learning

Internationally acclaimed math modeling team

Award-winning robotics team



Upper School

FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL
1845

Friends' Central's Upper School provides an exceptional college-preparatory program that is challenging, ambitious, and intellectual. Students are held to the highest academic and personal standards in a supportive, collaborative atmosphere that intentionally cultivates the skills and values of lifelong learners whose classroom experiences extend out into the world they will shape.

Friends' Central classrooms promote independent thought, the courage to voice opinions, the expectation that students and teachers will listen to and value one another's perspectives, and the understanding that diverse viewpoints will elevate discourse.

We dig deeper

A Culture That Supports Excellence

In class and out, FCS students are expected to ask questions rather than simply memorize, to apply creative and critical thinking to problem solving, to listen to the group for greater wisdom, and to express their thoughts clearly and with confidence.

The framework of listening and respect creates a classroom culture that nurtures confidence and encourages students to participate fully and to think deeply. The richest intellectual discourse and highest-level problem solving are achieved when all members of a classroom community are fully present, engaged, and invested in knowledge seeking.

Compelling and Engaging Curriculum

Friends' Central's Upper School offers a rich, varied curriculum with advanced classes available. With offerings from *Designing Experiments in Molecular Biology* to *Linear Algebra Advanced* to *Modern Chinese History* to *Design Thinking: Innovation & Creation*, our curriculum challenges students to learn at a high level while understanding their learning in a larger, global context.

The Friends' Central classroom emphasizes advanced levels of critical and conceptual thinking, both independent and collaborative projects often require significant original research. Experiential and contextual learning add depth and relevance to academic discourse. Students have academic-based travel opportunities to places such as France, Spain, and Costa Rica.





Program Highlights

Science, Humanities, and Justice Core Teams

Core Teams are unique to Friends' Central and seek to inspire the next generation of writers, educators, scientists, researchers, policy makers, and thinkers by bringing renowned scholars to campus for courses and a public lecture. A core group of Upper School students prepares for the lectures in advance and participates in special classes and workshops, both on campus and at the lecturer's home institution, as part of the Distinguished Visiting Humanities, Scientist, and Justice Core Team programs.

Extraordinary Curricular Choice

Each discipline offers a large selection of popular elective courses, many of which are advanced. A small sample includes *History of African-American Music*, *Mixed Media: Appropriation & Reinvention*, *Photography*, and *Woodworking*; English classes in African-American literature, speculative fiction, film, sports literature, and poetry; history seminars including *Capitalism and Consumption*, *Introduction to Philosophy*, *Modern Chinese History*, *Constitutional Identity*, and *Modern Africa*; and courses in genetics, botany, astronomy, anatomy, and atmospheric science and climate change.

Computer Science, Technology, and Data Analysis

We offer introductory and advanced *Computer Science* (Python), *Object-Oriented Programming*, and *Computer Hardware*. Across the curriculum, students develop skills in computing and data analysis: in digital art, math and statistics, science, and the humanities, where students learn to analyze authors' strategic use of data. Students also learn to present data in clear and compelling ways. The Advanced Biology II class, *Designing Experiments in Molecular Biology*, presents its data to the selective Annenberg High School Science Symposium each spring.

Travel Opportunities

The World Languages department offers a range of travel abroad opportunities, including a trip to Italy for Latin students; exchange programs for French and Spanish students in Lyon, France and Seville, Spain; and a trip to Québec City, Canada, for French students. The Science department trips within the country have included a two-day visit to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts and a 10-day summer ecology study program in coastal Maine.

Mission-Inspired Leadership

Classes like *Digital Design for Social Change*, *The Sociological Imagination (Race, Class and Gender in an Unequal World)*, and *Everything Change: Love in the Anthropocene*, which focuses on climate change, explicitly encourage students to connect what they learn in the classroom to the world around them and to understand their agency in changing that world. The Quaker Testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship shape an inquiry-driven, purposeful, collaborative, and respectful community, in and out of the classroom.

Student-led clubs and activities complement the curriculum with social justice offerings, service organizations, global awareness clubs, environmental groups, and a student honor council.



The background of the page features a warm, golden-toned photograph of a stone archway. A wooden column is visible on the left side, and the overall scene is softly lit, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees in the background.

Our Teachers Make the Difference

Alumni/ae tell us that it is the way our classes are taught that truly distinguishes Friends' Central and prepares students for college and beyond.

Passionate, expert teachers set a high academic bar, delivering innovative, engaging, and challenging content. They are, at the same time, warm and welcoming, caring deeply about their students' intellectual achievements as they attend to students' individual interests, character, and well-being.

Teachers encourage students to apply creative and critical thinking to original problem solving and to present ideas and proposals with confidence. They acknowledge and embrace the idea that everyone should be open to new ideas, paving the way for students to think for themselves and to be accountable for their own learning.

“A specific example of what our teachers are like is when, during biology, I was really interested in the electron transport chain and wanted to understand it better. I had a lunch meeting with my teacher, and we sat in her office discussing it and researching it together. It was really fun to learn more about it and have that one-on-one attention.”

UPPER SCHOOL STUDENT



A SAMPLE OF COURSE OFFERINGS

- Advanced Writers' Workshop
- Design Thinking: Innovation and Creation
- Multivariable Calculus
- Advanced Topics in Organic Chemistry
- Designing Experiments in Molecular Biology
- Speculative Fiction
- Spanish Literature: Borges, Cortázar, and Matute
- Atmospheric Science and Climate Change
- Philadelphia Black History from Reconstruction to the Present
- The Sociological Imagination
- Art & Activism
- Devised Theatre



Curriculum Overview

ENGLISH

Recognizing the power of strong written and verbal communication, sophisticated reading, careful listening, and critical thinking, Friends' Central requires that all students take English every year. Skills are developed through a curriculum of challenging and diverse texts, both classical and contemporary. In discussion-based seminars, students learn to read carefully, listen with open minds, and speak authentically. Students hone their oral and written expression skills through repeated practice, support, and feedback.

In the second semester of grades 11 and 12, students select from a wide variety of seminar courses, giving them the opportunity to explore an aspect of literature in depth. *Writers' Workshop (Advanced)*, a semester-long class, is also available.

Interested students may participate in a number of related clubs or projects such as *Ink*, our literature and arts magazine, the Humanities Core Team, the Poetry Club, and *Focus*, our Upper School newspaper.

HISTORY

An appreciation of historical context is central to understanding the world around us. Friends' Central's study of history explores human experience: how diverse people(s) have differed in their ideas, institutions, and cultural practices; how experiences vary by period and nationality and social circumstances, and how people(s) have struggled with each other. We ask our students to make connections between the past and the world they now inhabit.

All Upper School students take *Religions and Revolutions* in grade 9 and U.S. History in grade 11 and have the opportunity to write an extensive paper based on original research. Most students also take *Contemporary Global History* in grade 10, and all choose from a broad range of history electives in grade 12.

Clubs such as FCS World Press, Model United Nations, Debate, and Mock Trial offer students opportunities to further their knowledge and expand their public-speaking skills.

MATHEMATICS

Friends' Central's math department combines a belief that Friends' Central students rise to intellectual challenges with a program that offers a high degree of flexibility with respect to course selection and opportunities to advance. Most students complete at least a year of calculus before graduation, and many go well beyond. Advanced students have the opportunity to progress through *Linear Algebra (Advanced)* and *Multivariable Calculus (Advanced)* by the time they graduate.

Students may participate in many math-related clubs and activities, including a girls' math club, a club for girls who code, and an award-winning math modeling club. FCS students also excel in national and international math competitions.

SCIENCE

The Friends' Central science curriculum strives to foster a deep appreciation for the relevance of science, while cultivating the development of independent learners skilled in critical thinking and original analysis. The sequence of study begins with *Physics I* in grade 9. Subsequently, students enroll in regular or advanced chemistry, biology, and physics classes. Students who are passionate about science may choose to take more than one science course in an academic year; we offer a second year of advanced study in chemistry and biology and a third level of physics. In grades 11 and 12, semester-long electives offer more specialized study in topics including genetics, botany, astronomy, anatomy, organic chemistry, and atmospheric science and climate change.





Science opportunities for students include the Science Core team, the Natural Lands program, clubs like Team Radio Phoenix (which searches for new pulsars), and the opportunity to assist our teachers with their independent research.

WORLD LANGUAGES

The benefit of knowing another language contributes to Friends' Central's commitment to developing globally minded, culturally aware graduates.

Students are required to take two consecutive years of a language, and most take a language for four years. Students may study French, Spanish, Latin, or Mandarin, and advanced students may also choose to study Greek.

Language learners' classroom experience is supplemented by opportunities for travel abroad. French and Spanish students may participate in exchange opportunities with schools in Lyon, France and Seville, Spain. A summer service program in Costa Rica is also available for students to further their study of Spanish.

Interested students may also participate in national language competitions and join clubs such as Le Club Francophone, Latin Club, or the Latino Culture Club.

ARTS

The Friends' Central Arts Department offers 23 diverse electives and extracurricular activities encompassing visual and performing arts. We encourage students to discover their individual creative voices and to collaborate within ensembles. Students emerge confident, capable, curious, and expressive from their interactive arts experiences at FCS.

The drama program offers two "main stage" productions each year as well as a 9th & 10th grade play, directed by an FCS senior as a Senior Project. Students in theatre arts classes perform in drama showcases. In our music program, performance opportunities abound (both on and off campus) for students in orchestra, chamber ensembles, jazz band, house band, chorus, and small vocal groups.



ATHLETICS & WELLNESS

Friends' Central's athletic program is considered among the best in the Philadelphia area. We are a leading program in the Friends Schools League (FSL) and Pennsylvania Independent Schools Athletic Association (PAISAA), providing opportunities for leadership, elite competition, and all levels of participation.

Students are required to participate on an athletic team or in the performing arts during six seasons while in the Upper School. The remaining seasons, students participate in a wide variety of wellness activities.

Hallmarks of an FCS Graduate

An FCS graduate displays high-level thinking. They:

- ▶ Are a creative, independent, and critical thinker
- ▶ Have a breadth of knowledge across disciplines
- ▶ Know how to gather and synthesize information
- ▶ Are curious and remain open to learning

An FCS graduate displays an ethical and spiritual foundation. They:

- ▶ Have conviction, want to do good, and take action
- ▶ Are empathetic, compassionate, and reflective
- ▶ Appreciate the collective and individual search for truth
- ▶ Care about others, FCS, the wider community, and the world

An FCS graduate is respectful and open minded. They:

- ▶ Listen deeply
- ▶ Are interested in the experiences of others and engage in the community in an authentic way
- ▶ Are willing and able to grow and change through reflection and new understanding

An FCS graduate is resilient and flexible. They:

- ▶ Are prepared for a rapidly changing future
- ▶ Have the confidence to see challenges as opportunities and to grow from mistakes
- ▶ Are creative in their approach to challenges
- ▶ Are both humble and confident

An FCS graduate displays a sense of agency and self-determination. They:

- ▶ Are an engaged and self-aware learner
- ▶ Have a strong work ethic and effective work habits
- ▶ Are a confident self-advocate who is willing to ask for help

An FCS graduate displays leadership skills and the ability to collaborate. They:

- ▶ Have had numerous leadership opportunities and experiences collaborating with others
- ▶ Are interested in working with people different from themselves
- ▶ Have self-confidence and faith in their own ideas and understand the benefits of others' wisdom
- ▶ Are willing to accept responsibility

An FCS graduate has strong communication skills. They:

- ▶ Are able to articulate a point of view clearly in writing, in person, and through other creative forms
- ▶ Are ready to participate fully in class and in meetings
- ▶ Read and listen with energy and purpose



FCS graduates care deeply about their teachers, friends, and alma mater.





We grow stronger

Our school culture and purposeful teaching style create leadership opportunities that offer space for agency and growth.

Leadership skills, global awareness, and self-discipline are developed throughout the curriculum, as well as in a wide array of co-curricular opportunities including Model United Nations, Student Council, Debate, Mock Trial, affinity groups, athletics, drama, music, maker education, student publications, and numerous other clubs and activities.

The Upper School program includes a required community service component, with Upper School students and faculty spending five full days each year working at agencies and organizations throughout the greater Philadelphia region.

We believe that the discoveries our students make, the companies they lead, and all that they create will rely on them as individuals and as team members. They have to be ready to trust themselves to lead, and we begin that process here at Friends' Central.



EarthQuakers, Friends' Central's new Robotics Team, placed second and won the Rookie-All-Star award at their first competition.



FCS students thrive in a culture of high expectations. They are assigned challenging, long-term assignments, and they learn over time to be responsible for managing these projects successfully. This experience creates an immediate advantage for FCS students in college; they already know how to do the hard work, to manage their own time, and to work with classmates and professors to achieve the best results.

It is no surprise that colleges and universities love Friends' Central students. More than 90% are accepted to top-choice schools, and over 30% choose to attend *US News and World Report* top schools.

Many are drawn to schools where they can follow their passions and interests – schools such as Tisch School of the Arts, MIT, Colorado School of Mines, and Rhode Island School of Design, to name a few.

We are so proud of our graduates; they have the skills, the intellect, and the ethical compass to succeed in a rapidly changing world. They also have the courage to lead.

“I believe deeply in the significance and impact that Quaker education can have on students, faculty and staff, families, and alumni/ae. The faith and practice of Friends imbue all community members with an appreciation of and a desire for justice, equity, and peace – values which are especially important in today’s society.”

LEE PAYTON
UPPER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Founded in 1845, Friends' Central School is a Quaker, co-educational, college preparatory school for students in Nursery to grade 12. Our easily accessible Middle and Upper School campus is set on 28 beautiful acres on City Avenue in Wynnewood. Students in Nursery through grade 5 are on our idyllic 18-acre Lower School campus on Old Gulph Road in Wynnewood.

“The FCS experience taught me to think for myself, analyze different viewpoints, and come up with my own independent conclusions. In addition to the intellectual side, the spiritual side was so ingrained in every activity that it was also ingrained in who we became.”

FCS ALUM

“FCS has fantastic teachers, small classes, and a faculty committed to a particular vision of education: ethical, creative, and empowering.”

FCS ALUM

“The Friends' Central community is, bar none, the most incredible component of the 'FCS experience.' When I went to Wash U, I realized just how blessed I had been to be involved with such an intellectually engaged group of students and teachers at FCS. Every conversation in class was filled with intriguing dialogue, thought-provoking questions, and intense back-and-forth discussion.”

FCS ALUM



Want to learn more? Contact us!
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FRIENDSCENTRAL.ORG



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