



Olney Friends School

61830 Sandy Ridge Road | Barnesville, Ohio | 43713

Phone: 740.425.3655 | Fax: 740.425.3202

www.olneyfriends.org | mainoffice@olneyfriends.org

2020–2021 School Profile

SCHOOL and COMMUNITY

Olney Friends is an independent, co-educational, college preparatory boarding school, offering a cooperative learning environment for grades 9–12. Established in 1837 by the Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, Olney cultivates the traditional Quaker values of egalitarian respect, shared responsibility, and consensus, while honoring ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, gender, and socio-economic diversity. Students participate integrally in all aspects of the program, including decision-making in the dorms and deliberating on the academic structure.

Olney occupies a 350 acre USDA-certified organic farm in a part of the Appalachians which, after years of local coal development, has recently become ground zero for the fracking industry. Both the campus and the surrounding area offer excellent place-based environmental education opportunities. Other academic advantages include the school's small size, low student to teacher ratio, cultural diversity, and long tradition of shared inquiry.

STUDENTS and FACULTY

More than a third of Olney's thirty-five students are international, representing Bolivia, China, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Korea, and Uganda. Domestic students come from fifteen U.S. states. A quarter of the students have previous Quaker connections; the rest reflect a wide variety of religious and secular traditions. A fifth self-identify as members of the LGBT+ community; it is school policy to accommodate transgender students and staff. The faculty to student ratio is 1:3; the median class size is 8. Teachers also represent a diversity of background, style, and life experience; they average 15 years in the classroom and 70% hold advanced degrees.

ACADEMICS

The heart of Olney's curriculum is Humanities, a double-block, grade-specific class that integrates English and History. And at the center of Humanities is *Harkness*, a student-driven investigative seminar which improves listening skills and the ability to develop ideas critically, collaboratively, and effectively. The spirit of Harkness

permeates the entire program, whether the subject is *Pride and Prejudice* or the First Law of Thermodynamics.

In the 2019–2020 school year teachers started meeting weekly in grade-level teams to optimize horizontal course integration. Students now take an additional class (Metanoia) intended as the focus of this conscious effort to improve transdisciplinarity.

The school year is split into four terms, which represent a quarter course credit each. Graduation requirements include the following minimum credit distribution:

- 8.00 **Humanities** (Integrated English and History: 2.0 credits per year): *Ancient Cultures, European, U.S. American, and Modern concentrations*
- 4.00 **Mathematics**: *Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2 (required), Precalculus, BC and Multivariable Calculus, and Statistics*
- 4.00 **Lab Sciences**: *Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Agricultural Science, and Robotics.*
- 3.00 **Language**: *Spanish, Japanese, ESL*
- 3.00 **Metanoia**: *Cornerstone, SAT and TOEFL Prep, Rhetoric and Writing, Life After Olney—College Class, Keystone*
- 1.50 **Arts**: *Studio Art, Film, Theater, Music, and Woodworking*
- 1.00 **Questions of Conscience** (Quakerism required): *Religion, Philosophy, Peace and Social Justice Concerns*
- 0.50 **Health and Sexuality**
- 0.50 **Financial Literacy**
- 1.50 **Additional courses**: *Practical skills, outdoor education, reading or writing intensives, art and other courses.*

Further graduation requirements include a 15-page Junior Research Paper, a 20-page Senior Graduation Essay, and admission to an accredited four-year college.

GRADING

Most core classes and electives are graded A+ through Failing. A few classes and electives are graded pass / no credit. The principal form of descriptive email evaluation is through quarterly and midterm narrative comments.

Olney does not track students. All courses are college preparatory; none are designated Honors or AP. Students may sit for AP exams, but classes focus on content rather than test preparation. Due to Friends traditions and our emphasis on collaborative learning, Olney does not compute comparative statistics such as class rank.

Olney Friends School celebrates intellectual vigor, provokes questions of conscience, and nurtures skills for active engagement locally and globally.

CO-CURRICULUM

Regular coursework is complemented by co-curricular traditions that support academic rigor and the lifelong learning ethic the school hopes to inspire.

Athletics program: Students are required to participate in Physical Education for a minimum of an hour and a half, twice per week. Most do considerably more. Sports include soccer, running, fitness training, basketball, gymnastics, dance, yoga, ultimate frisbee, and “Farm Team”. Students who meet the minimum are awarded a fixed quarter credit per year.

Community Service and **Outdoor Education** are built into many class electives, on and off campus. In addition, students complete a minimum of fifteen hours of Community Service or Outdoor Education activities per year, that may either be sponsored by a faculty member or organized by themselves.

Outings: Class days are cancelled three times per year for all-school trips to visit museums, historical and natural sites, etc. Similarly, regular morning classes are cancelled four times per year for “reading mornings”.

Poetry and Story Slams: Every spring, 9th graders, seniors, and other volunteers contribute to an annual public poetry reading. Sophomores and juniors take similar responsibility for a *Story Slam* in the fall.

Advisories: All teachers and staff are responsible for advising two or three students each. They are particularly responsible for the social and academic well-being of their advisees, and act as the primary communications channel with parents or guardians.

COMMUNITY LIFE

The Olney community is characterized by diversity and by shared responsibility for organizing recreation and more serious decision-making.

Meeting for Worship: Students and staff come together twice a week for about 45 minutes of silent reflection or meditation, occasionally enriched by a reading, quiet activity, or theme offered as a focus.

Community meeting: All students and staff participate in weekly consensus-based community meetings to develop policies and programming, to respond to important issues as they arise, and to debrief learning experiences.

Self Gov: Paralleling faculty meeting, students have their own forum for discussion which occasionally has real impact on school policy. Self Gov chooses its own leadership. Other designated student leadership opportunities include: Dorm Governors and Staff, Work Program Crew Leaders, Spiritual Life Leaders, Admissions Ambassadors, Athletic Team Captains, and Class leaders.

Work program: All students and most staff members spend three or more hours per week in a variety of maintenance jobs such as janitorial and kitchen work. Besides being a Friends School tradition, community labor reinforces respect for the dignity of all work, and for the campus as our home.

ACCREDITATION

Olney Friends is accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS). It is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and the Friends Council on Education (FCE).

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

Some of the colleges and universities that have admitted Olney graduates in the last four years include:

Allegheny College
Antioch College
Appalachian State University
Arizona State University
Bennington College (2)
Berea College
Bishop's University
Bluffton University (4)
Boston College
Bradley University (2)
Clark University
College of the Atlantic (3)
College of Wooster
Dickinson College
Earlham College (8)
Emory University
Evergreen State College (3)
Goshen College (2)
Guilford College (2)

Hampshire College
Hiram College
Iowa State University
Juniata College
Lewis & Clark College (3)
Loyola University Chicago
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University (3)
Notre Dame College (Indiana)
Ohio University (6)
Pacific Lutheran University
Penn State University (3)
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rockhurst University (2)
Sarah Lawrence College
School of the Art Institute - Chicago
Seattle Pacific University
Smith College
Soka University of America (2)

St. Lawrence University
The George Washington University
The New School
The Ohio State University
University at Buffalo SUNY
University of California Davis
University of California Irvine
University of California Santa Cruz
University of Connecticut
University of Evansville
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Mississippi
University of Pittsburgh (3)
Warren Wilson College (2)
West Liberty University
West Virginia University
Wheeling Jesuit University (4)
Willamette University
Wilmington College (2)

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