



Allendale
Columbia
School

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FOR EVERY FIRST

Epic Stories Start Here



CHAPTER 1

AC'S FACULTY BRINGS AN INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

People make a school great, just like characters make a story worth reading. The AC faculty has an incredible depth of teaching knowledge and life experiences that benefit our students every day. Six of AC's seven new teachers in the Lower School have taught internationally! They are able to take their students from a classroom at AC on Allens Creek Road to places like Germany, Australia, Tanzania, and Thailand through their understanding about the world, the cultures they've experienced first hand, and the people who live in it.

Lower School Division Head and Director of Little School Michelle Feiss began her career teaching first grade in Baltimore, Maryland, but her professional path includes faculty and leadership positions in London, Hong Kong, and Germany. Michelle's international experience has shaped her own teaching philosophy immensely by enabling her to view her students through culturally sensitive eyes.

"When you teach abroad or in an international school, there is an emphasis on understanding the values and beliefs that a culture holds dear," explains Michelle. "Rather than teaching about people or places with a flags, festivals, food approach, teachers are encouraged to find the deeper human connections within a community and share that with their students. This approach lays the foundation for a mainstay of most international curriculums—and one we use here at AC—having students take action in their own communities."

All AC students benefit from our inquiry-based learning method in which teachers ask their students questions rather than relying solely on lecturing. The students' answers and interests help guide the lesson. Inquiry-based learning is also a hallmark of international education, which Michelle studied under a recognized expert in the field, Australian Kath Murdoch, who has authored 15 books for teachers including the international bestseller *'The Power of Inquiry'*.

"As educators we realize that students' questions can drive curriculum," shared Michelle. "This is how children best learn, and it's a very effective way of keeping them engaged. It requires every AC teacher to do more listening than talking, and to be both flexible and collaborative since inquiries often take us to places outside of our own classroom."

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At AC, our faculty take a fresh approach to pedagogy and are encouraged to implement new educational strategies in their classrooms for all their students, regardless of their grade level. Beginning in AC's Little and Lower Schools where children are free to explore and to develop their own voices while learning; through Middle School where they are encouraged to take educational risks and gain more confidence; to Upper School where individualized learning occurs alongside our rigorous college preparatory curriculum, AC develops globally-minded young people.

"Children are children, no matter where you go," reflects Michelle. "They are always eager to learn and thirsty for knowledge. It's up to us, as teachers, to help them develop into the best versions of themselves."

AC can do that, with your help. Unrestricted annual fund dollars are directed in great part to faculty salaries which are the School's largest expense. Help us attract and retain the best and most diverse teachers possible for today's students, and all those who come after by making your donation today.

Look for the next chapter in AC's story series in the coming weeks.