

ONCE UPON A TIME

A CELEBRATION OF THE
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF
WOODLANDS SCHOOL, INC., MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



This booklet was issued in anticipation of the Woodlands School 2013-2014 academic year and the opening of Woodlands School East. Our school theme for this academic year is "Once Upon A Time."

Acknowledgement for material herein is gratefully given to Woodlands School Archives, Alverno College Archives, and fairy tale authors of times past.

HMH/June 2013

Once upon a time, in 1887 to be exact, a small band of religious sisters following the rule of St. Francis established a school in Milwaukee to educate their sisters in the teaching standards, or *norms*, needed to teach in parish grade schools. This institution was called St. Joseph Normal School, and it was located on Layton Boulevard on the grounds of the sisters' newly established motherhouse. In these days, many young maidens entered the congregation without having even completed a grade school education, so for a number of years the School Sisters of St. Francis also ran an elementary and high school for the sisters at the motherhouse to ready them for the normal school.

During the 1930's and early 1940's, St. Joseph Normal School grew and grew, finally becoming Alverno College. In 1948, Alverno College began to admit lay women.

Five years later, in 1953, the college moved to its present campus site on South 39th Street in Milwaukee. By this time, the college was engaged in a long range plan to develop an integrated curriculum from kindergarten all the way through college using the best teaching methods.

To further this plan, an elementary laboratory school was opened on the campus in 1954. Alverno College Elementary School, the precursor to Woodlands School, was finally born. All in the kingdom rejoiced!

This plan was the outcome of 15 years of research, study, and experimentation carried on by committees of classroom teachers under the direction of the college's Education Department. With the inclusion of these previous 15 years of study before the laboratory school opened, Woodlands can trace its beginnings to the late 1930's.

The first school year, 1954-1955, welcomed 99 precious younglings in K/4, K5, and 1st and 2nd grades. The initial 99 used college classroom facilities for several months until a newly constructed building was ready for use in January 1955. The new building, on the northeast corner of the campus, contained observation rooms with one-way vision glass and speakers allowing college student observers to both see and hear what was going on in the classrooms without being seen. Students from the education and nursing departments of the college studied the growth and development of the students.

Additional grades were added in subsequent years, and mixed units worked together in much the same way as they do today. In these days, however, Kindergarten was Group A; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades were Group C; 4th, 5th, and 6th were Group E; and 7th and 8th were Group S – the group names forming the acronym A-C-E-S, for Alverno College Elementary School.

In the beginning, foreign languages, music, and art were taught by college professors several times weekly. Eventually, music and fine art specialists not connected with the college joined the campus school staff.

Upon the opening of the campus school, parents were sent a questionnaire concerning their choice of foreign language. French was chosen by parents over German and Spanish. When the school reached full enrollment, a full-time French-born teacher was employed. Madame Yvette believed that developing a pure accent in the children was paramount, and she offered several trips to France during her tenure.

Introducing elementary school students to the humanities was integral to the overall curriculum at the campus school. It was seen as the "seed" which then flowers at higher academic levels. This seed is still being planted today with the current language, music, and art programs at Woodlands School.

Attention in each day's work was centered on religious inheritance and integration. Around 1967, when the campus school began enrolling children from a variety of faiths and racial backgrounds, the need for an interfaith, experience-based approach to teaching religion became a priority. Eventually, the campus school faculty, with input from other professionals, authored a series of 21 books called A Time for Living Religious Experience Program. The series was published by a New York publishing company and sold nationwide. The status of religion at the campus school was such that specific religious doctrine became the responsibility of home and parish, whereas at school, the focus was on the inter-relationships of culture, race, and religious denomination. Of particular focus was the development of a community of persons who support and are concerned with each other and with the real values of life.

Sound familiar? The Woodlands Time For Living (TFL) character education program of today has quite a long history!

By and by—specifically in 1987—it was discovered that all was not well in the kingdom. At a time when the campus school was flourishing, the college decided to close the school because it no longer met the needs of the college. Student teachers were increasingly choosing field experiences at more traditional schools. Parents and staff were suddenly and unexpectedly left with the choice of closing for good or transitioning to an independent school.

So after the completion of 34 successful school years as a laboratory school for Alverno College, parents set off down the yellow brick road to Emerald City to find a new home for some 200 children, with no wizard at the end of the road to help them solve their financial problems. Fortunately, there were no wicked witches to deter them along the way, and the burdens were shared by many devoted parents and supporters, making the load light.

The first year of independence, 1988-1989, kicked off with the holding of a "Name our New School" election. The entire school family was invited to nominate new names. One note that went home to encourage nominations by parents said, "Remember, if you don't submit a school name, you could be sending your child to Darth Vader Elementary School next year!"

A panel of community educators and leaders met to select two candidates from a list of over 100 names submitted. The two names were Woodlands School, a name that lent itself well to a logo using a tree as a symbol of a strong foundation, and the more practical name of Milwaukee Community Academy. Given that 1988 was a national election year, voting took place on November 8, Election Day. The name Woodlands School won by just one vote!

After a final year on the college campus, the new Woodlands School moved in the summer of 1989 to what was intended to be temporary quarters at 5th and Mitchell Streets in the school building of St. Stanislaus parish. The event was artistically named "Woodlands' First Movement."

Students packed up classrooms at the end of the school year. To save money, it was decided that volunteers would move the library and classrooms. Even the flag pole and playground equipment were moved. It took three weekends. People brought vans and trailers and empty boxes. Ten volunteers were able to load one truck, drive to the new site, and unload the truck all in one hour! During the remainder of the summer, long hours were put in by all to clean and prepare the building for the opening of the new school year. Even Cinderella could not have worked more diligently.

In the end, plans to erect a new building did not materialize, and we spent 14 happy school years on 5th and Mitchell Streets.

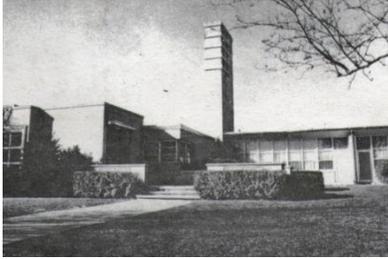
After our stay at 5th and Mitchell Streets, Woodlands finally found its current home at 55th and Bluemound Road in the former Holy Cross Grade School building. Our move west took place in the summer of 2003.

During our years as Woodlands School, we earned accreditation by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States, and we became a charter school of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. We remain committed to the same focus on innovative and integrated education begun under Alverno College. We developed and fine-tuned our multi-age learning model. Our curriculum remains rooted in the Time For Living character education program. Woodlands parents, staff, students, and volunteers continue to enjoy a great majority of the same school activities, events, and traditions begun by the school community at the Alverno College Elementary School.

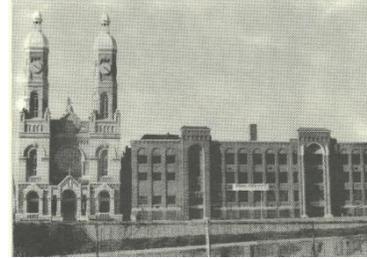
The 2012-2013 school year marked the completion of 25 years as Woodlands School. We have fundamentally remained the same school that began in the minds of the classroom teachers working under the Alverno College Education Department during the 15 years before the college laboratory school opened in 1954. We still love with the passion of the shoemaker for his wooden puppet, we still trust that the ugly duckling will turn into a beautiful swan, and we still live what we call the "Woodlands Way."

In the best of fairy tales, dreams come true and people live happily ever after. The dream of giving birth to a new school is before us. We celebrate our past tradition of excellence in urban education, and we commit ourselves firmly to the opening of Woodlands School East. For the Woodlands family, it's not "The End," but a continued "Once Upon a Time."





Alverno Campus Elementary School
3231 South 39th Street
(former site)



Woodlands School
1669 South 5th Street
(former site)



Woodlands School
5510 West Bluemound Road



Woodlands School East
3121 West State Street

Our Mission Statement

Creating the character of the community through diverse education.

Our Six Guiding Principles

1. Diversity – We respect what makes one unique: religion, culture, family structure, socio-economic status, and ethnicity.
2. Communication – We communicate respectfully and effectively in a variety of meaningful ways.
3. Life-long Learning – We embrace an ongoing and active approach to developing an adaptive, well-rounded person who values continued education.
4. Integrated Learning – We encourage teachers to collaborate with experiences that link learners to the arts and the outside world through an interdisciplinary approach.
5. Excellence for Every Child – We foster growth toward each child's potential through small class size, multi-age groupings, and a variety of learning styles. We help students develop personal academic goals, and we employ meaningful assessment methods.
6. Discovery-based Learning – We promote critical thinking and problem solving by encouraging students to present their ideas and compare them with the perspective of others using a real-world, hands-on approach.



For more information on Woodlands School and Woodlands School East,
visit our website at www.woodlands-school.org or contact:

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