



DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL

A school for
the innovative,
the curious and
the challenge-seeking.

A school for the innovative, the curious and the challenge-seeking. For those who will greet their future with eyes wide open and full of wonder. We are Baker.



Always remember that we can not stand still. It's a world of change, and we're going to have to do our best to give young people what they need to meet this change.

EDNA DEAN BAKER, CO-FOUNDER



Our Mission

At Baker, we champion an exemplary progressive education, which cultivates an intrinsic motivation to learn, values differences, nurtures the whole person, and encourages courageous choices.

Our Story

For over a century, Baker Demonstration School has been a nationally-recognized leader in exemplary progressive education. The school is named for Clara Belle Baker, school director for our first 34 years, who lay the foundation for our dynamic, experience-based curriculum that responds to the unique needs and strengths of each and every child.

Founded in 1918, Baker was established to provide a high-quality, innovative education for children in preschool through 8th grade. For our first 87 years, Baker was the lab school for the teaching college at National Louis University, until we became independent in 2005. Baker continues to carry out Clara Belle Baker's vision—ensuring academic excellence through meaningful and authentic learning experiences.

As a progressive school we are deeply committed to building a community that is truly global in perspective, diverse in composition, and reflective of the world.

Our Approach

Our approach is rooted in a simple, but powerful idea: an education should do more than help children excel academically; it should prepare them to thrive throughout life, no matter how different the future may be.

While academic excellence is at our core, our hands-on, experiential curriculum is designed to inspire curiosity, creation, and collaboration. We integrate content studies across disciplines in overarching themes, enabling children to learn critical concepts and acquire deeper understandings through real-world experiences. Our faculty facilitates dynamic classroom environments that nurture the intellectual, social, and emotional lives of young children and early adolescents.

We believe that children should be treated as individuals who are capable of shaping their own learning. Our school culture is focused on creating an intrinsically-motivated community of lifelong learners.

A progressive education pedagogy lies at the heart of everything we do, ensuring Baker students are active citizens and curious and critical thinkers.



In Kindergarten, an exploration about the life cycle of a butterfly lends itself to learning about patterns, counting, symmetry, and other concepts in math.

“ Every project, question, and interest students develop during their formative years at Baker emerges from a child’s proclivity for play - the ability to imagine creative solutions to problems, the joy of exploring new viewpoints in a meaningful discussion. A playful mind is central to the love of learning. ”

CARLY ANDREWS, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Early Childhood Preschool-Kindergarten



As part of our Buddy Program, preschoolers regularly spend time with their Middle School ‘buddies’ developing cooperative learning skills and friendships that flourish.

We believe in the power of play. Self-initiated play allows children to learn about themselves and their world. It develops intellectual, social, and emotional skills as well as lays the groundwork to promote leadership, collaboration, and problem solving.

Our mixed-age preschool program offers a caring and stimulating environment that fosters curiosity and wonder. Young learners are immersed in a wide range of creative and outdoor learning experiences designed to generate questions, learn by doing, and build a community. Our child-centered curriculum offers ample opportunities for young learners to tap into their natural interests.

Our Kindergarteners delve into numerous project and inquiry-based experiences. Art, Music, Movement, Library, Gardening, and Spanish are essential parts of the curriculum along with our Buddy Program with older students. Weekly outdoor nature explorations provide contexts to build confidence and develop a sense of wonder about our world.

Literacy and math concepts are explored every day through meaningful and authentic activities, such as graphing the weather, labeling stages in the metamorphosis of a butterfly, and observing and noting details about their butterflies in a journal.

Whether children are digging for insects, singing and dancing, building forts with friends, or sharing stories, their teachers are focused on each child’s social and emotional development, intellectual curiosity, and understanding of the community.



Because of Baker, our daughter loves to learn. She constantly asks questions and probes into the 'why' and 'how' of things. Baker instills a love of learning, an acceptance of and appreciation for all aspects of diversity, and confidence for kids to chart their own course.

MARK, PARENT OF 8TH GRADER



Primary

Grades 1-3

Our Primary School program is designed to engage students in wide range of inquiry-based experiences. Classroom activities such as building a Rube Goldberg machine or studying the physics of light and sound through the "Baker School of Dragonology" are engaging, fun, and collaborative ways to foster deeper and more expansive thinking.

During the primary experience, our instructional approach is child-centered and tailored to meet individual needs. Our thematic approach provides a range of contexts to introduce, explore, and reinforce content goals. Children's curricular experiences invite them to make connections within their learning and to apply acquired skills in real life situations.

Baker teachers develop units around the strengths of their students, integrating key concepts from Math, Science, Reading, Writing, Art, and Music. They use small groups, interactive games, engaging literature, and one-on-one connections to respond to the needs of each child.

Nurturing the social and emotional lives of children continues in the primary grades with an emphasis on community. Students engage in meaningful relationships with their peers and learn to solve problems together to deepen their understanding of themselves and each other.



Baker teachers find creative ways to tap into students' interests. An imaginary dragon school, for example, becomes a vehicle to investigate the physics of light and sound.



Weekly art classes expose children to a myriad of art styles and materials allowing them to make connections to personal experiences and the world around them.



“

The positive energy and creativity that the faculty and staff bring to their work is incredible. I love that at Baker I am a facilitator of ‘aha moments’ for the students.

”

SARAH, 5TH GRADE FACULTY MEMBER

Intermediate

Grades 4-5



During the Intermediate years, students have more opportunities for academic choice and self-directed learning as they build the skills of cooperation and negotiation.

In the fall, students hone their entrepreneurial skills by designing, marketing, manufacturing, and selling original products in the Baker Business School. Funds raised by their efforts are donated to a local nonprofit organization.

During the Intermediate years, students are empowered to use their voices and ingenuity to become agents of change. Through their studies, they learn about diverse current and historical exemplars of community leadership. By the end of fifth grade, students have the self-advocacy skills they’ll need to thrive in Middle School. Fourth and fifth grade students continue to engage in thematic studies, allowing for deeper explorations of History, Language Arts, Science, and Math.

In Social Studies, students examine diverse perspectives, systems of oppression, and cause and effect over time. These content explorations are connected to authentic field experiences, such as visits to local organizations and engagement with community leaders. Baker students leave the Intermediate grades with the understanding that their learning matters in the wider community.

Students are challenged to apply their knowledge of Math and Science in authentic ways focusing on the importance of presenting their data as claims backed by evidence. Designing their own fish tanks to create and test ecospheres that are safe for both fish and plants is just one example of how students learn to apply knowledge to real world situations.

The Baker Business School is one of the highlights of the Intermediate experience. During this immersive experience, students learn to pitch innovative ideas and move through a design-thinking process to ideate, prototype, and manufacture products. They use their understanding of math skills to manage the finances of their manufacturing company as they work toward the culminating experience which is a community market that raises money for local nonprofits.

“ To help our children become change makers and active participants in our democracy, we believe every student should have access to a learning environment that is structured to provide appropriate time and space for creative expression, meaningful risk, individualism, community, exploration, innovation, stimulating thought, and play. ”

TYLER, MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION COORDINATOR

Our Middle School is an intellectually stimulating and supportive environment where students continue to apply their critical thinking skills and take greater responsibility for their own intellectual growth.

Rich, thematic study continues throughout Middle School in the core disciplines of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics. These disciplines integrate with Baker’s World Languages program, which engages Middle School students in the study Spanish and Latin. One hallmark of our Middle School program is the choice-based Arts Core program. Students choose two electives per semester, enabling them to explore a broad array of arts-based classes. Showcases of student work, such as the Science and Math expos, demonstrate the unique connections between unlikely disciplines.

Another hallmark is our Advisory Program that supports each student’s social and emotional growth by matching them with the same advisor and advisory group for all three years of Middle School. This allows that faculty member to be especially attuned to the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student.

An integral part of the Middle School experience includes multi-day outdoor education expeditions where students apply knowledge gained in the classroom and strengthen bonds between classmates and teachers.



Middle School

Grades 6-8

Eighth graders bring their physics know-how to life for Baker’s Annual Boat Regatta as they race against their classmates in life-sized cardboard.



Inspired by the annual Student Leadership Day at the Illinois Holocaust Museum, several seventh and eighth grade Baker students designed and led a workshop about the importance of the power of words and micro-affirmations for the entire school.

Signature Programs

Art, Drama, Music, Library, Technology, Physical Education, Outdoor Education, and Service Learning are a vibrant part of student life.

Arts

Students are immersed in visual and performing arts from first through eighth grade, including weekly classes in Movement Arts, Drama, Music and Dance as an important part of a dynamic education. Our Kindergarten students take weekly Music and Dance classes.

Physical Education

P.E. classes are held every day for children in first through eighth grade including Swimming and Dance classes. The program encourages a lifelong love of healthy exercise and builds upon the connection between movement and cognitive development. The entire Baker community celebrates health and wellness during our annual end-of-year 5K at nearby Gillson Park. Preschool and Kindergarteners participate in their own 1K with cheers from their older peers.

Sports

Baker sponsors sports teams for students in fourth through eighth grade including interscholastic basketball, flag football, soccer, and track and field. Teams practice after school and compete against peers from other local schools.

Service Learning

Service Learning is a fundamental part of a Baker education and provides opportunities for students of all ages to make a difference. Baker's faculty regularly incorporate service projects into their thematic studies so that students can understand issues from multiple angles and serve as positive change agents. In addition, Baker's Student Council leads school-wide fundraising efforts and service projects.

World Languages

Starting in Preschool, Baker students learn Spanish through rich language interactions, songs, and engaging language activities. From fifth grade to Middle School, students also take Latin to deepen their understanding of World Languages.

High School Transition Program

We provide one-on-one support with our dedicated High School Transition Coordinator. Though this process, we aim to set our students up for an outstanding experience as they enter into high school.



Graduation & Beyond

The hallmarks of Baker graduates.

Passionate Learners. Deep and Expansive Thinkers.
Self-Aware and Self-Assured Leaders. Ambitious
Change-Makers. Thoughtful Contributors to the World.

“ Baker taught me thinking and processing skills that prepared me so well that I am the first person in three years at Latin that tested out of Honors Geometry. ”

SEBASTIAN, BAKER '17, LATIN SCHOOL OF CHICAGO '21



Baker graduates go on to a variety of institutions including the following:

High Schools

- Beacon Academy
- Chicago Academy for the Arts
- Evanston Township High School
- Jones College Prep
- Francis W. Parker School
- Latin School of Chicago
- Loyola Academy
- New Trier Township High School
- North Shore Country Day School
- Northside College Prep
- Walter Payton College Prep
- Wolcott School

Colleges & Universities

- Case Western Reserve University
- Colgate University
- Columbia University (NYC)
- DePaul University
- Howard University
- The Julliard School
- Northwestern University
- Purdue University
- St. Olaf College
- Santa Clara University
- Skidmore College
- Swarthmore College
- University of the Arts in Philadelphia
- University of Illinois
- University of Iowa
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- University of Southern California
- University of Wisconsin

Community

Baker Demonstration School is not just a school. We are a diverse and inclusive community dedicated to nurturing the next generation to thrive in our rapidly changing world. A unique part of the Baker experience is that all members of the community - students, teachers, staff, alumni, parents, grandparents - are all invited to participate in the life of the school.

Parent Engagement Opportunities

The parent community at Baker is very engaged in supporting the mission of the School. There are opportunities to get involved with the **Equity Action Team (EqAT)**, the **Green Team** (sustainability efforts, Baker's garden), the **Service Team** (current partnership focused on Connections for the Homeless), and our **Parent Ambassador Program** (allowing prospective parents and current parents to easily connect). Baker parents are also instrumental in helping to plan beloved community events like our Fall Bonfire.

Families

Baker draws students from 25 different zip codes across Chicago and the North Shore.



We are also committed to providing tuition assistance to qualifying families.



It was really important to our family that we chose a school with a community that was inclusive so that our children felt comfortable being themselves. We love that our children's friends come from different neighborhoods, with different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

SHANA, PARENT OF 5TH & 7TH GRADER



“ We want for students who graduate from Baker to have the two most vital qualities for their future success intact: their love of learning and their self-confidence in being able to think in creative and critical ways. ”

CARLY ANDREWS, HEAD OF SCHOOL

BAKER
DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL

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