

**MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR POSITION
SABOT AT STONY POINT
RICHMOND, VA**

THE OPPORTUNITY

Sabot at Stony Point, a Reggio-inspired preschool-8th grade school in Richmond, VA, seeks a middle school director and teacher. This director would join a cohesive, committed, and talented team whose members are garnering national attention for their ground-breaking work.

Sabot, founded as a preschool in 1972, launched lower school and middle school programs in 2006. One of the first schools in the U.S. to adopt the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA), Sabot employs a social constructivist approach throughout the school.

We have small classes (12-16 children) in the middle school and one teacher in each classroom. Our Reggio-inspired, social-constructivist curriculum is inquiry-based and driven in part by the children's interests. We emphasize collaboration and recognize the gifts that each child brings to the group. Our math curriculum is based on the University of Michigan's standards-based Connected Math Project. Our literacy curriculum is based on Lucy Calkins' widely-recognized Reading and Writing Workshops. Study in science and history emphasizes the development of process skills by providing opportunities to practice the work of a scientist or historian through investigation and research. Students learn to think like scientists and historians through individual and collaborative projects. The arts are incorporated into all areas of the curriculum and children learn to represent their thinking in many media and through many modes of expression. Our approach is one that recognizes the whole child and focuses first and foremost on social and emotional learning and relationships as the necessary foundation for learning.

Our biennial Symposium and semi-annual Open Doors: Visiting Educators Days have attracted over 500 educators from around the U.S. and Canada to observe in our classrooms and collaborate with our faculty and staff. This outreach is one among several means through which we seek to realize our goal to be A Small School for Big Change.

THE SABOT APPROACH

Our approach to teaching and learning is grounded in the Reggio Emilia Approach, key elements of which are described below.

IMAGE OF THE CHILD

We believe that children are born thinkers and theorists who, from their earliest months, observe and experiment in order to understand their world. Children are naturally curious and creative, motivated to acquire knowledge, and to seek understanding by developing, testing, and refining theories. We believe that these dispositions, when nurtured and sustained, contribute powerfully to learning and understanding.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

We believe that in order to truly learn and understand, children need to construct knowledge for themselves based on their own reading and sharing of information and data, not simply absorb or memorize knowledge that was once gained by others. Across the curriculum, our students build understanding by examining their existing ideas in light of new experiences and new information, discussing questions, and testing and refining theories in collaboration with other children and adults. It is essential, therefore, that middle school teachers build a learning

community by teaching children to collaborate on project work.

INQUIRY

Sabot classrooms are inquiry-based. This means that our students do not wait for the teacher to provide answers; instead, they ask questions, design investigations, and actively seek answers themselves. Students learn that there is no one resource for answers, but that many tools are useful for exploring problems and finding solutions – and that frequently there is more than way to solve a problem. As they make observations; collect, analyze, and synthesize information; and draw conclusions, Sabot students develop life-long problem-solving skills that can be applied elsewhere. Our students quickly realize that learning has cycles, not endpoints. Moreover, inquiry-based learning begins where students are; it allows students to value their previous experience and knowledge and make use of their multiple ways of learning and understanding.

METACOGNITION

At Sabot at Stony Point, children learn to think about their thinking. That is, we help them become aware of how their minds work, how they learn best, which means of representation and expression come easily to them and which are more demanding, and which cognitive strategies help them do their best work. Our practice has taught us that children who know their own strengths and weaknesses, who are challenged to assess their own work, and who are comfortable asking for help when they need it will be more effective learners. They will also be better able to adapt to the new challenges of the future.

COLLABORATION

In a collaborative environment, children begin to understand their own competencies, both as individual learners and as part of a group. From kindergarten on, Sabot students begin to recognize each other's unique talents – what Howard Gardner calls the multiple intelligences. They will seek out those with mechanical skills when something is broken, those who can negotiate ably when conflicts arise, and those who love to dream when a big idea is needed. This recognition of themselves and others usually comes without judgment and is rarely competitive. Students view each other as resources, realizing that what they can accomplish by working in concert far exceeds what they might accomplish individually. A school-wide embrace of individual differences and a concomitant emphasis on the brain's plasticity and nearly infinite capacity for growth and development allows children to build upon their strengths and address their challenges without pressure and without limit.

THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES STUDIO

The studio is a crucial part of the process because it helps students to make their learning visible. In the studio (be it the shared studio in the main building, the classroom studio, or simply a studio-inspired mindset), children can use various media (clay, dance, video, or pen and paper) to represent, analyze, problem-solve and communicate in what Reggio teachers call “the hundred languages of children”. This process of representing knowledge and learning leads to reflection, and then to further questions, then to more investigation in an ongoing cycle of inquiry.

ACCESS TO THE NATURAL WORLD

Our campus environment provides children with a rare degree of exposure to the natural world, an experience that many children today lack. Time outdoors fosters the genuine curiosity that makes learning meaningful; in fact, observation of the natural world often prompts students to ask the science and social studies questions that drive investigative research (e.g., how does water sustain life? how do birds fly? how is sound heard? how is Sabot allowed to own land and how is

ownership different in other countries/cultures?) The campus and the adjoining Larus Park serve as a laboratory for making observations, asking questions, and planning experiments. The larger communal spaces available for outdoor play allow children to make cross-age connections and provide more opportunities for social interaction, especially important for students in smaller classes. When weather and circumstances permit, we give students the option to do classwork and eat lunch outdoors.

ASSESSMENT

The school's emphasis on self-awareness and reflection, and on continuing development and life-long learning, lead us to an approach to assessment that attempts to reduce the focus on letter grades and increase the focus on feedback and improvement. We do not regard "A" level work as a reason to stop working, improving, or thinking. We expect students to acquire knowledge, because knowledge is necessary for learning and problem-solving -- but it is not sufficient. Thus, we assess work to ensure that it meets appropriate benchmarks, but our most important goals for our students are to learn the process of solving complex problems and to develop the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their own work. As they move through all school grades, students are expected to observe, evaluate and refine their own work and learning. This process of supporting students in taking increasing responsibility for and ownership of their own learning begins in preschool and continues throughout the lower and middle schools.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR DESCRIPTION

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work with the Head of School and the Directors of Early Childhood and Lower School to insure a consistent and cohesive experience for students and parents throughout the school
- Lead the middle school faculty in implementing, evaluating, and revising the middle school program for consistency with the Sabot mission, and as indicated by the needs of students and the implications of current research and best practice
- Guide and support the ongoing professional growth of the middle school teachers
- Facilitate collaboration among members of the middle school faculty
- Provide leadership in executing the school's and middle school's approach to behavior guidance and discipline
- Communicate with middle school parents as needed to maintain equilibrium in the operation of the program and in the community of the middle school
- Conduct the annual planning and day-to-day administrative tasks of the middle school

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Middle School Director will maintain a part-time teaching load in their discipline. Our school's teaching priorities include:

- investigative research and inquiry
- representation in multiple media
- small and large group work
- authentic assessment
- documentation and communication to make learning visible for students and parents

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

Applicant must:

- hold a bachelor's degree or better from an accredited college or university or equivalent in pertinent experience (master's degree preferred)
- understand child development
- have a demonstrated preference for working with and ability to relate well to middle school students
- have a deep interest in students as learners
- be able to clearly communicate verbally and in writing
- be able to collaborate with others in an open way
- be able to work both indoors and outdoors
- upon employment, be able to pass criminal background checks

Other important traits and experiences include:

- interest in one's own ongoing growth and learning
- knowledge of human development among children ages 11-15
- interest in being a member of and helping to shape a diverse and inclusive school
- compatibility with Sabot's social constructivist paradigm for teaching and learning
- compatibility with Sabot's approach to guidance and discipline
- interest in working with parents to support students' development and growth
- experience teaching middle school

TO APPLY

Candidates should submit a letter of interest, vitae, references, and a statement of educational philosophy. Address your letter to Dr. Irene Carney, Head of School, and submit all materials electronically to cwebb@sabotatstonypoint.org with the subject of your email as "Middle School Director Application".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- This position will start on July 1, 2017.
- Compensation is competitive and commensurate with experience.
- Sabot is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic faculty committed to teaching and working in a multicultural environment. We strongly encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates.
- Website: [Sabot at Stony Point: A small school for big change](#)