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pg. 42



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Ranked the No. 1
All-Girls School in the
Philadelphia area, **The
Agnes Irwin School** is
known for cultivating
girls' confidence,
intellect, and sense
of purpose.

page 46

Agnes Irwin students
enjoy a spring day in the
Hamilton Family Courtyard.

Known for cultivating girls' confidence, intellect, and sense of purpose, **The Agnes Irwin School** proudly ranks as the No. 1 all-girls school in the Philadelphia area.



She's an Agnes Irwin Girl

by **Nancy Smartt**, AIS Associate Director of Communications | photos by **Bridgett Woody**, AIS Associate Director of Marketing

No one is surprised when a well-spoken, intelligent young woman is recognized as an Agnes Irwin student or graduate. At Agnes Irwin, confidence is cultivated as an essential quality, empowering girls and young women to step into opportunities with a success-oriented mindset. Whether in the classroom, on a stage or the athletic fields, or within the community, Agnes Irwin girls are known for demonstrating a well-rounded strength that defines them as both learners and leaders.

For 155 years, Agnes Irwin has stayed true to one essential goal, year after year—providing an individualized education that empowers each girl to learn, to lead, and to live a legacy. Today, Agnes Irwin is proud to be one of the oldest all-girls PreK–12 college-preparatory schools in the country. Its



tradition of excellence is grounded in understanding each student's unique strengths and fostering her intellectual curiosity. Graduates are not only academically and intellectually prepared for college and the challenges ahead but also poised to meet them confidently, with resolve.

The Agnes Irwin Difference *No. 1: A Faculty That Specializes in Girls' Learning Strategies*

With an average tenure of 16 years, Agnes Irwin's educators are deeply committed to understanding their students and helping each girl reach her potential. The faculty encourages girls to embrace their interests, push forward, and explore, creating an environment where learning is not just academic, but a pursuit—something students will carry with them throughout their lives.

Eighty-four percent of Agnes Irwin's teachers hold advanced degrees, serving as intellectual role models to the students. These educators show up on the sidelines, in the audience, and actively engage with student-driven initiatives. They are more than instructors—they are invested mentors who intentionally know the whole girl. They foster a culture where being smart

**An Agnes Irwin
Lower School
foundation
sets girls up for
future success!***

40%

of AIS graduates who started in our Lower School went on to Top 25 ranked colleges, compared to 1.75% nationally

57%

of AIS graduates who started in our Lower School went on to Top 50 ranked colleges, compared to 6.65% nationally

56%

of AIS students inducted into the national *Cum Laude* Society since 2014 started their Irwin's journey in our LS or fifth grade

is celebrated, making learning dynamic, inspiring, and enjoyable.

"To actively engage teachers in the latest research on what girls need to thrive, Agnes Irwin's Center for the Advancement of Girls offers professional development workshops," said Ali Monzo, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Girls (the Center). Founded in 2011, the Center's dedicated staff focuses on the latest research about how girls learn best and translates these insights into actionable strategies for both the classroom and broader programs. Focused and deliberate professional learning reinforces Agnes Irwin's faculty, establishing a seamless integration of best practices into their classrooms. "The ultimate goal is for all educators to follow a unified, girl-centered approach, ensuring that students benefit from greater consistency and support at every stage of their educational journey," Monzo said.

No. 2: The Latest Research in Girl-Centric Learning

Over the last year, the Center conducted an in-depth exploration of the latest findings on what works best for girls. Research reaffirms the belief that all-girls learning environments provide distinct advantages, including improved academic performance, higher self-esteem, and a reduction in gender stereotyping:

- A 2021 study published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly* found that girls in single-sex classrooms often perform better in subjects traditionally dominated by males, like math and science, due to reduced gender stereotypes and the ability to engage without the social pressure of mixed-gender environments.
- 2020 research published in *Learning Environments Research* suggested that single-sex environments can lead to increased self-confidence and leadership skills, as girls are empowered to take risks and engage in activities that might traditionally be dominated by boys in coed settings.
- A 2018 study published in *Gender and Education* found that girls in single-sex en-



vironments are more likely to take on leadership roles, free from gender-based judgment and expectations.

"Through research and by way of our deep understanding of the students in our care, the Center has developed six guiding principles of girl-responsive teaching and learning," said Monzo. "Our faculty is prepared to respond to the ways in which girls perform and present themselves in the classroom. Oftentimes, this translates to hands-on and experiential learning experiences where girls can be deeply engaged."

Regarding the six guiding principles, Agnes Irwin believes that girls learn best when they have: Voice, Choice, Clarity, Connection, Balance, Relevance.

No. 3: A Tailored Approach to College Preparation in a Changing World

Agnes Irwin is keenly aware that as the world changes, so too do the needs of girls and young women. "The ever-evolving landscape of education, the college admissions process, the shifting demands of the workplace, and the uncertainties girls will encounter in the future compel Agnes Irwin to keep learning and deepening its understanding of what students need to advance and thrive," said Dr. Elizabeth Rossini, Assistant Head of School.

At Agnes Irwin, college preparation is recognized as a highly individualized process, shaped by each student's interests and experiences. From an early age, girls are encouraged to take on leadership roles in clubs, organizations, and boards, which help them refine their passions. These ex-

periences not only promote self-awareness and agency but also provide valuable content for college application essays and extracurricular involvement—key components of the admissions process. "Getting involved, trying new things, and taking risks through extracurricular activities is not just encouraged; it's integral to our students' educational journey," said Dr. Rossini.

Key programs offered by the Agnes Irwin College Counseling Department include a College Counseling seminar, designed to equip students with the knowledge and confidence to proceed thoughtfully through the college search and application process. During spring of their junior year, students produce a variety of college application related material (essay drafts, extracurricular activities, lists, etc.) and explore a range of topics including understanding admissions, academics, and tuition assistance, to various aspects of campus life. Fall of senior year includes a weekly supervised work period dedicated to the college process in which students are given time to fill out applications, work on essays, and consult with their college counselor.

The School's goal is to develop students who don't just check off boxes, but engage deeply with their interests and challenges. "The focus is on cultivating students who actively take on tasks, drawing from their diverse skill sets and consistently refining their approaches until they reach new heights of understanding and success," said Rossini. "This process of exploration and personal growth is what equips them with the tools needed to navigate their futures with confidence." ■

The Agnes Irwin School

To learn more about how Agnes Irwin could be a transformative educational experience for your exceptional daughter, visit visitais.org.



The Agnes Irwin School took the top spot among all-girls' PreK–12 private schools in the Philadelphia area in Niche.com's "2025 Best Schools in the Philadelphia Area."

* Estimates based on publicly available rankings data