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1. A kindergartener working on the computer after school.
2. Principal Gregory assisting 4th graders with their class work.

Photos by Meaghan Gay, Courtesy of DCPS

Turner at Green Elementary School

Poised for Success

BY HEATHER SCHOELL

Driving through the neighborhood surrounding the Turner at Green Elementary School campus, there is a pervasive feeling of hope and change. The progression of green fields, lots amid construction, and brand new structures lined with saplings all convey new beginnings. With the opportunities for students to shine at their new school, Turner at Green is renewing hope for a successful neighborhood school.

Leading by Example

Principal Robert Gregory is the leader at the helm of Turner at Green, the campus of the merged schools that opened in August. Gregory inherited a task of not only turning the school's performance around, but blending the children and families of rival schools and streets. Gregory was at Turner last year, and when the schools merged, he brought Turner teachers to Green. "It's a new day," said Gregory. "This is a child-centered school, a school that is committed to children's potential."

Cultivating that potential, using resources to bolster that hope in their students, is what this school is counting on in making Turner at Green a success story. "We're turning potential into reality," Gregory said. He, along with his teaching staff, as well as Abby Parker, the After School Coordinator, are filling school days with opportunities to learn and grow, but what sets Turner at Green apart is the breadth of their extras, like their partnerships with organizations such as Sports4Kids and City Year, and their professional development.

Even with access to resources, it takes a leader to cultivate and develop a staff and to juggle egos and negotiate boundaries. At the first of the year, overlapping programs had some program directors claiming turf over another. Gregory identified the problem and turned it around. "At first there was a fight over quotas," he explained. "Now we're a team. We have monthly partnership meetings. We work together, coordinate, identify who needs what." This is what an effective principal does – bringing staff together for the advancement of the students, and showing how smartly a gentleman (or gentlewoman) conducts himself, leading by example.

A Day at Turner at Green

Children in before-care, run by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation, can be dropped off as early as 7 a.m. Students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 5th grade arrive in uniform – white or baby blue tops with khaki bottoms. Homeroom classes teach the DCPS curriculum, and students go to "specials" for library, computers, and music.

Mr. Gregory chooses a book of the month for the school to focus on, a book that will carry a common theme through each class. April's book was "Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)" by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard. Different grade levels glean information from the many aspects of the book. Older grades might look at the historical landscape of the times referenced by Aunt Flossie, while the younger children may make paper hats and talk about families.



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1. Principal Gregory looking on as the students read.
2. City Year volunteers conducting an after care reading lesson.

The pre-k, in a large and bright classroom, using Rhyme-to-Read, has 4-year-old children using rhymes to read an entire sentence. Hat, bat, cat, sat. Pictures help jump start the recognition of words.

The school day ends at 3:15 p.m., at which time students are picked up or go on to aftercare activities, ending at 6:30 p.m. There are 324 students at Turner at Green, and about 200 are enrolled in after-care.

Programs for Kids

Turner at Green has a multitude of programs for each facet of a students' life – physical health, mental wellbeing, cultural cultivation, and academic support.

Sports4Kids is a nonprofit organization that sets up playtime activities, guiding students through active and meaningful play during recess and after school, teaching teamwork and cooperation while engaging students in physical activity. Turner at Green has an onsite Sports4Kids coordinator who works along with the P.E. teacher and after-care. Students learn sports such as volleyball, baseball, and soccer.

Mental wellness is for everyone, and keeping an eye out for budding issues in a child's life can address the symptoms before there becomes a problem. Turner at Green offers a DCPS social worker, a DC Dept. of Mental Health social worker, and a school counselor, working together.

Dance is an activity that is both physically and mentally stimulating, as well as being one door to cultural awareness. Turner at Green works with The Washington Ballet during school and City Dance after school. The Washington Ballet teaches creative movement three times per week, and has even given the 2nd graders the opportunity to perform in the Nutcracker at The Warner Theater! City Dance combines dance with creative writing, blending physical and mental expression, and students got to perform during a Saturday Wizards game.

Academics are bolstered by programs such as DC Scores, an after-school program that brings together soccer with creative writing. Additionally, Turner at Green is fortunate to have City Year's full time assistance, an all-day organization that provides one-on-one in-class help, plus a structured after-school program.

Opportunities for Adults

Turner at Green boasts a full-time parent coordinator, Donald Monroe. Monroe works from the parent resource center, along with the newly-elected PTA, to engage parents and to bring everyone into the fold. "We hold parent workshops at least once a week," said Gregory. There may have been some initial growing pains, blending Turner families with Green families, ending the rivalry between the schools that dates back to the students' grandparents' time. "But we've gotten past that," Gregory said. "Along with the students' performance, parents see the resources in this school." They also see their children getting along, which has inspired parents to reassess their own thoughts.

Teachers receive professional development through literary and math coaches, but also have onsite the Center for Inspired Teaching, a program that puts teaching coaches in the classrooms to observe teachers as they work. This in-house approach hones classroom skills, helping teachers to grow to their full potential.

Poised for Success

"Turner at Green has made great strides this year; the school has done everything from leveraging partnerships with organizations like the Washington Ballet and City Year to focusing on rigorous instruction and ultimately boosting student achievement," said Chancellor Michelle Rhee. "Principal Gregory has demonstrated strong leadership by spearheading the consolidation of two school communities and with the help of teachers and parents, the school has been truly invested in setting high expectations and collaborating to serve the best interest of students."

Turner at Green has all the pieces in place for a successful school – a strong leader, plenty of resources, and onsite professional development in a safe and well-maintained environment. They're working diligently on bringing parents to the table, and their community partnerships are extensive. All that's left to do is to keep up the good work.

For more information on Turner at Green, please visit them at 1500 Mississippi Ave., SE or call 202-645-3470.