

## Malcolm Price Laboratory School

Grades PreK–12 • Private/Suburban • Cedar Falls, Iowa

### Knowing What Is Going On in Kids' Lives

“Price Lab seems to have a way of knowing what is going on in kids' lives,” says Jimmy, a 2006 graduate of Malcolm Price Laboratory School, the demonstration school of the College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). Although Price Lab has a national reputation as an instructional model, student anecdotes consistently reveal the school's nurturing side. With his mother confined to a hospital, Jimmy found himself floundering in his junior year, trying to get himself to school and handling the pressures of being on his own. Teachers were incredibly supportive, particularly one who told him that she would be “honored if he would come live with her family.” Jimmy moved in with the teacher and her husband (a Price Lab administrator) and was able to graduate with his class. Now attending a four-year university, a feat he never thought possible, Jimmy concludes, “The whole school was there for me.” This feeling of genuine concern is one that epitomizes the atmosphere that has been created for all students who attend Price Lab.

Serving approximately 370 students in grades PreK–12, Price Lab is unique in providing rich educational opportunities to students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as to pre-service teachers who participate in observations, demonstration lessons, individual tutoring, and student teaching. The school's motto, *Care and Excellence*, promoted by the UNI College of Education, emphasizes the importance the school places on fostering caring attachments while providing an excellent education for all.

The Elementary Citizenship Program promotes the Guidelines for



Success with five core values: respect, learning, responsibility, attitude, and honesty. In classrooms, in the hallways, and in newsletters, the slogan *Give Me Five at PLS* is a familiar feature that reinforces the core values, which also find their way into classroom lessons, counseling sessions, and buddy circles. At the middle school level, the Guidelines are the basis for an advisory program that meets daily. Teams of teachers have also developed core lessons for students in grades six and seven, and there are plans to expand this practice to grade eight next year. In high school classes, students examine the core values through lessons integrated into the existing curriculum, and teachers regularly link discussions to the Guidelines, with essential questions as a framework.

Since so many grades are housed under one roof, opportunities for cross-age tutoring and sharing experiences abound. Clare Struck, counselor to the elementary school students and a positive force for character education at Price Lab, says that she is “awed by the cross-age experience of older students working with younger students.” Willa, a first grader, reports that the most important thing she has learned is to practice the Golden Rule, “a combination of all the Guidelines.” Interview after interview shows that Price Lab clearly demonstrates the Golden Rule in action. Rae,

a senior, comments that “Price Lab could teach others how to be more accepting” because students here feel free to “always find their own niche.”

Price Lab's development of the whole child also emphasizes student-centered instruction that underlines the core values. Guidance counselor Rachel Cole notes, “Students are more engaged, and we do more project learning.” Parents agree that teachers are “innovative and creative,” and this methodology makes their children thrive. Parent Jill Langford praises Price Lab's “rich learning environment,” a comment echoed by parent Julie Creedon, who mentions the “incredible opportunities for students to learn.” Amelia, a senior, sums up her life at Price Lab: “I can come to school anytime and ask for help anytime. This school makes you grow and bloom.”



#### THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER:

Dave Smith

#### ADVICE TO THOSE NEW TO CHARACTER EDUCATION:

*Begin by looking at your own data and at the significant current research that indicates that establishing a caring community and meaningful relationships has a direct correlation to student achievement. We would recommend reading current works of James Comer, Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Matthew Davidson, as well as The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action—A Report of the Commission on the Whole Child (ASCD publication).*

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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