



Danielle Dayton, Director of Athletics

- B.S., M.A., Ohio State University
- Camden County Sports Hall of Fame 2016 inductee



After teaching and coaching stints at Columbus School in Ohio and Hockaday School For Girls in Dallas, Texas, Dayton arrived at MFS in 2004 as the Lower School Physical Education Teacher. The following year she served as

Interim Athletic Director before assuming the position permanently prior to the 2006-07 school year.

When queried about the rise of the MFS athletics program, she shies away from leaning on championships and awards as measures of success or failure. Dayton points to the very high participation rates of students (typically over 70%) in athletics as a sign of success and chooses to focus on how all community members represent the school.

"Our student-athletes, coaches, and community represent MFS athletics in ways that make the larger school community proud — their grit, their determination, their hard work," she said.

Dayton is committed to ensuring that MFS student-athletes are well supported. "I want our student-athletes to have the best possible experience while they are here," she said. "That doesn't mean that things are always going to go their way or turn out the way they want them to. But I want to make sure that they have great coaches to work with, and that all the details that go into athletics – trainers, equipment, schedules, facilities, and more – are taken care of so they can go out and put their best effort forward and strive to be successful."

She was quick to credit her team of Assistant Athletic Director (and Math Teacher) Ron Obermeier, Certified Athletic Trainer Kevin Cauley, and Administrative Assistant Deb Collins Williams '74 with helping to ensure this positive experience. "I have such a dedicated, caring team to work with," said Dayton. "There is so much work behind the scenes that people don't see that Ron, Kevin, and Deb accomplish on an everyday basis."

Head of School Julia de la Torre greatly appreciates Dayton's approach: "Danielle's commitment to the well-being of children guides everything she does. She understands that in order for students to be successful in athletics they must be committed to their own growth as well as the development of the team. I am always struck not only by the athletic talent of our students, but more importantly by the depth of character they show in competition."

Colleagues in the Friends Schools League are quite complimentary of their lone New Jersey representative. Dayton was nominated to serve as the league Clerk (commissioner) from 2016-18 and is often leaned on for counsel and advice from her fellow athletic directors.

Guiding the Foxes

Danielle Dayton has worked tirelessly to ensure a high-quality athletics experience for a generation of Moorestown Friends students

Since the turn of the century, the profile of the Moorestown Friends School athletics program has steadily risen. In the past five years alone, the school has enjoyed multiple state championships, a haul of sectional championships, and hard-earned Friends Schools League (FSL) championships.

Behind the scenes of this ascent is a tireless, dedicated Director of Athletics, Danielle Dayton, who has been in her role for 14 years and has seen an entire generation of MFS student-athletes compete.

Dayton was a decorated three-sport athlete at Collingswood High School and is a member of the school's Athletic Hall of Fame. In 2016, she was inducted into the Camden County Sports Hall of Fame. The proud Ohio State alumna (where she was a three-time field hockey Regional All-American and earned bachelor's and master's degrees) points to her roots, at home and at school, as critical to her career path.

"Anytime I was in a classroom or on an athletic field, I always felt at home," said Dayton. "Watching teachers and coaches, their professionalism, their passion... I wanted to have that opportunity to be in a school setting and make a difference for kids."

Sports were especially popular in her neighborhood as a child. "Where we grew up it was common to go outside after school and play sports," she said. "It was always boys and girls getting together to play on our street. In our household, as long as you were being a good citizen and getting good grades you got to choose your extracurricular activities and I always chose sports." She is known as a die-hard Phillies fan and also still enjoys watching her Ohio State Buckeyes in person and on TV.



Danielle Dayton has led the Field Hockey program to 130 wins during her 14 years at the helm.

"It's Danielle's sense of integrity towards the work that she undertakes in the Friends Schools League that really stands out to me," said Abington Friends Director of Athletics Jeff Bond. "It can be tricky at times for athletics administrators to balance the interests of the league and their individual school, but Danielle always enters into our league discussions with an overriding sense of fairness and integrity. When she speaks in our meetings, you know that she has given careful thought as to how best to move the discussion forward in a productive manner."

Advocating for your own school while balancing the needs of the league can always be difficult, but Dayton's peers point to her strengths in this area.

"Whenever consensus is needed within our ADs group, Danielle is a leader in trying to find common ground between schools, while also juggling the delicate role of advocating for MFS," shared Katie Bergstrom Mark, Germantown Friends School Director of Athletics. "I cherish my relationship with her as a trusted colleague and expert in our field. When I need to bounce ideas off of someone or need advice, she is the first person I call."

Bergstrom Mark also lauded Dayton's ability to hire and develop coaches.

"Every sport, every year, I always reflect on the solid coaching staff that MFS has. That comes from Danielle's dedication to professional development for coaches, and also in her wide network she has created to hire good coaches," she said.

Her coaches appreciate the support.

"I couldn't ask for a greater supporter of MFS athletics," said Mike Brunswick, Chair of the Physical Education Department and Girls' Basketball Coach. "Danielle is the kind of community leader and friend that everyone should be able to come across in a lifetime."

Dayton has had a significant impact on the field hockey program at MFS as the varsity head coach since 2005. Her teams are known to be technically sound and tenacious. She has the most coaching wins in program history (130); during her tenure, the Foxes won the FSL championship in 2007 and have advanced to the championship game four other times in 2010, 2011, 2016, and 2017. They have reached the NJSIAA sectional semifinals multiple times.

Some of Dayton's current players point beyond wins and losses as keys to her coaching success.

"What makes Ms. Dayton such a great coach is her passion and love for the sport," said Kendall Connolly '19. "You can feel that she not only wants the team to succeed and reach its peak potential, but she also wants each individual on the team to shine and improve."

Added Shelby Deibler '20: "As a lifelong field hockey player and coach, Coach Dayton understands, and is not afraid of, the amount of work it takes to make a great team. She is always optimistic



Athletic Director Danielle Dayton is a fixture at MFS sporting events near and far. She is pictured here with colleagues Steve Shaffer and Kelly Banik at the 2014 Girls' Soccer NJSIAA state championship match at Kean University.

about any game or practice because she has taught us that 'almost everything in life is controllable,' meaning that it is up to us as a team to determine the outcome. Most importantly, she has taught us integrity and how to handle the pain of a tough loss."

Not hiding her competitiveness, Dayton is very proud of the program's successes, whether it be a tennis state championship or an exciting weekday Middle School basketball game. But she gathers the most joy by simply observing. "My favorite part of my job is to go outside or into a gym after school and see hundreds of kids, not just our kids but any kids, and coaches and fans, coming together to celebrate athletics," she said. "There are so many moving parts that make an athletic program run well. When everybody does their part, it's cool to see all of that be put in motion and work."

On a recent walk through the Red Gym, where championship banners hang, Dayton reflected: "I'm proud of how much success we've had. I've witnessed 21 Friends League or NJSIAA sectional championships and four state championships in 15 years. That speaks to the commitment and dedication from everyone: student-athletes, coaches, the parents and families."

She concluded: "But I would never lose sight that it always needs to be a meaningful and positive educational experience for everyone involved. You can't always measure that in wins and losses."