

The Agnes Irwin School

Lower School Director



The Agnes Irwin School (AIS), a premier educational community for girls in Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve, seeks a dynamic, experienced educator to serve as Lower School Director. Reporting to and partnering with the Head of School, the Lower School Director will serve as the academic and administrative leader for a vibrant faculty and engaged student body in Pre-Kindergarten through grade four. This talented educator will join two other expert division directors and the Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence on the Head of School's program team as well as work closely with other senior administrators.

Since the school's founding in 1869, AIS has dedicated itself to providing an exceptional and empowering education for girls. Rooted in academic excellence, scholarship, community, and collaboration, AIS consistently tailors its programs to the distinctive and individual needs of girls, always holding fast to the principle that a girl's educational journey from childhood through graduation should be joyful, challenging, creative, and inspirational. Located on a beautiful campus in Philadelphia's Main Line suburbs, AIS students and faculty benefit from access to the comprehensive cultural, educational, environmental, and industry resources that the Philadelphia area provides.

**The Agnes
Irwin
School
empowers
girls to
learn, to
lead, and
to live a
legacy.**



TO LEARN

Agnes Irwin provides girls with a deep foundation in the humanities, mathematics, science, wellness, and athletics. In an inclusive setting that values diversity, students develop skills in critical and analytical thinking, self-expression, effective communication, and collaboration. A rich and varied approach to instruction, team and individual endeavors, inquiry, and assessment enables girls to solve problems, design solutions, create meaning, and prepare for a complex and challenging world.

TO LEAD

We believe that all girls and young women have the capacity to lead, and that leadership can take many forms. Therefore, through our instruction, our community interactions, and our daily choices, we affirm this belief and provide an environment that challenges girls to develop the core values of leadership: empathy, integrity, resilience, independent thinking, and commitment to action.

TO LIVE A LEGACY

Agnes Irwin students are a part of the global community of girls and women. They are also the trustees of our School's heritage and traditions. By adopting values that foster equity, justice, social responsibility, civic-mindedness, and integrity, and by nurturing positive relationships and intentional decision making, our students and alumnae engage in bold and meaningful ways to impact our interconnected world.

ABOUT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

AIS is an independent, college preparatory day school for nearly 600 girls in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. AIS offers a unique opportunity for its students: nurturing leaders with a tenacious spirit and sense of integrity while prioritizing civic engagement and independent thinking through a rigorous liberal arts curriculum within a collaborative environment. Young women gain maturity and self-confidence as they are challenged to become the global leaders of tomorrow.

Situated just 12 miles outside of Philadelphia in Rosemont, PA, AIS sits on a beautiful 24-acre campus equipped with extensive classroom facilities as well as spaces dedicated to the arts, science, technology, engineering, and athletics as well as campus maker spaces. Along with three divisions—Lower, Middle, and Upper—AIS uniquely includes the Center for the Advancement of Girls (the Center), a vital force that infuses girl-centered research into the AIS experience. The Center impacts curriculum and drives the school forward by creating programs and partnerships to enable girls to enrich their AIS experiences, hone their leadership skills, and develop their voice.



AIS's 159 faculty and staff members personify the school's commitment to academic excellence and model a community with a diversity of experience and perspective. The teachers—84 percent of whom hold an advanced degree—cherish and reward determination, creativity, and independent thinking in an academically rigorous and supportive environment. The student-to-faculty ratio is 6:1 which allows for an understanding of individual student interest, personal development, and skill enhancement.

THE LOWER SCHOOL

The AIS student experience is rooted in research about what is best for girls: how they learn, how their brains develop, and what their social and emotional needs are as they grow. AIS girls are known, understood, supported, and encouraged to be their very best selves. Throughout the journey, they are guided by exceptional teachers—the kind who have a gift for bringing out the best in each girl. The Lower School is home to 26 faculty members including specialists for Science, Technology, Spanish, PE, Art, Library, and Music, a four-member student Support Team, a Lower School Nurse, and five additional staff members, including the Lower School Admissions team, all of whom are committed to nurturing the academic, social, and emotional growth of the 126 Lower School students.

The well-appointed and self-contained Lower School building includes 13 classrooms on two floors, the iWonder lab (a makerspace designed for young learners), a gymnasium, an art studio, a music room, a science laboratory, suites of offices for the student support team and Lower School Admissions team, and a beautiful library complete with a fireplace and cozy window seats. The 1:1 Program equips each third and fourth grade girl with a laptop, integrating the latest technologies into the classroom while teaching 21st-century communication and online safety skills. Lower School faculty and staff also enjoy the benefits of being part of a Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve school on one campus. Lower School students and faculty may utilize Upper School performing arts facilities or the television production studio and enjoy relationships with AIS students across divisions. A new school-wide schedule in 2019 will further enhance opportunities for cross-divisional collaboration.



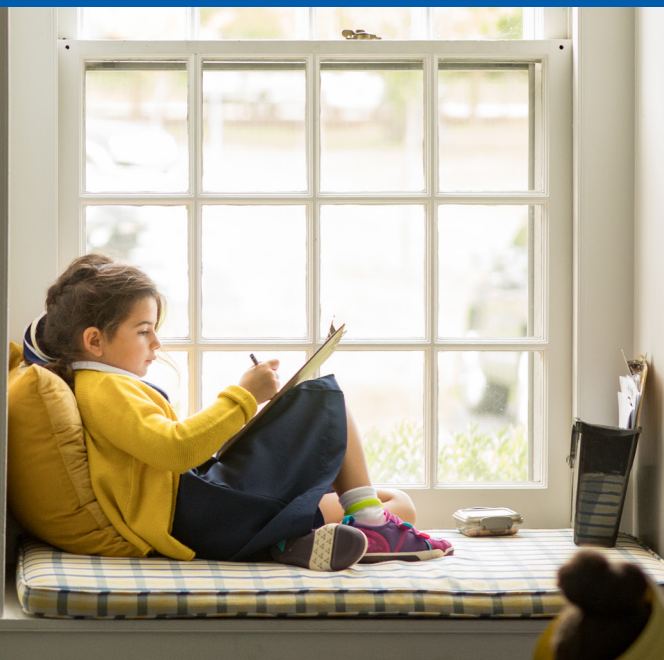
Academics

The focus in [Lower School](#) is educating young girls based on research about their development and growth. There are multiple ways to learn—and the AIS curriculum is designed to address the individual academic learning style of each student. The AIS faculty encourage girls to notice and explore what is around them and to discover the connections that exist in the world. Supported with a robust professional development program, each AIS faculty member has ownership over his or her personal-enrichment program.

The intentional structure of the early childhood education program utilizes a combination of academic instruction and guided play to challenge students to think critically, make connections, take risks, and solve problems. Across the division, a program of core subjects (language arts, math, science, social studies, and Spanish) are supported by learning opportunities in art, physical education, music, and library classes. In addition, students at each grade level are given numerous opportunities to deepen their learning through cross-curricular projects as teachers work together as a team to teach a lesson or concept. Students have opportunities to use laptops, K'NEX, iPads, cameras, and other tools to develop a sense of wonder and technological knowledge. Whether students are creating portraits, writing how-to books, building a massive clock tower, or coding during “Genius Hour” in the iWonder Lab, learning is happening.

The Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes balance academic, teacher-directed activities with structured and unstructured student-driven time using the teaching approach known as Developmentally Appropriate Practice, or DAP. During play time, girls are free to set their own pace and make their own choices under the observation of their teachers, who may ask questions or make comments with the goal of expanding ideas, deepening involvement, or encouraging peers to join an activity. Much is learned about each student’s interests, personal development and skill levels through questions and observations like these, and teachers adapt classroom instruction accordingly.

As girls advance through grade levels in the Lower School, the research-based curriculum is designed to balance challenging academics with social and emotional health and leadership development to help each student thrive both in and out of the classroom. Connections in the curriculum are logical and organic: AIS girls use the Upper School television studio to produce meteorology reports, visit an aquaponics greenhouse to learn about sustainable farming, and translate science projects into Spanish. AIS has relationships with other schools, including The Haverford School, a local all-boys institution, and offers its students opportunities to collaborate on projects throughout the year.



Leadership

At AIS, it's essential that girls learn to see themselves as the bold leaders of tomorrow. Throughout the Lower School years, students develop their leadership identities as they reflect on the traits of strong leadership and begin to recognize those traits in themselves and their peers. Produced by a team of AIS faculty, the Center for the Advancement of Girls, and Bryn Mawr College researchers, the Living Leadership in the Lower School© (L3) curriculum develops girls' leadership identities from an early age. Unique to AIS, this program uses the Leadership Toolkit, a physical collection of objects connected to nine leadership traits, which brings abstract ideas about leadership to life for even the youngest learners. By the time she leaves Lower School, every girl sees herself as a leader: empowered to ask questions and find answers, self-advocate, and collaborate.

Developing Social and Emotional Intelligence

The Lower School places emphasis on promoting emotional and social intelligence alongside rigorous academic preparation. The Division has an experienced support services team including a Literacy Specialist and Coordinator of Lower School Student Support Services, a Learning

Specialist, a Lower School Counselor, and a Psychologist, as well as a dedicated Lower School Nurse. This team serves each student and family in the division: working directly with students, teaching a wellness curriculum focused on relationships, communication, mindfulness, and meditation; providing professional development to faculty; and working with parents to educate them about appropriate developmental milestones and providing a prevention model of parent coaching.

Based on research about the social development of young girls, the AIS Let's Care program utilizes the Four "C's" of social intelligence—communication, caring, coping, and character—to equip students with core competencies of friendship-making, self-expression, and self-care. As students enter the older elementary years, the focus of the program shifts to teaching students how to recognize relational aggression, and how to use strategies for dealing with this phenomenon effectively. The Let's Care program also connects to the leadership curriculum and in recent years has expanded to include diversity, equity, and inclusion education using Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice Standards. At every grade level in the Lower School, attention to the whole child—academic, social, and emotional—is intentional and specific.



Innovation in Teaching

The three members of the Innovation Team—or iTeam for short—are the “Innovation Experts” at AIS. While one member of the team is dedicated to the Lower School, this group works across divisions to serve as catalysts and coaches for teachers and partners with them to bring innovative practices into the classroom to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Collaborating with teachers to create new projects, or to revamp existing projects, the iTeam strategizes with other community members and provides resources to transform ideas into reality. Throughout the year, the iTeam organizes and leads professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about new technology tools, project ideas, and teaching approaches. In addition to facilitating workshops for several in-service days, the team also regularly hosts informal “pop-up PD” sessions during teacher lunch hours and other free periods.

In 2017, with a grant from the Edward E. Ford Foundation, AIS launched the Legacy Through Leadership program: a three-year fellowship designed to empower faculty members to explore, create, and collaborate on powerful new learning opportunities for students. In workshops and individually, the “Innovation Fellows” delve into pedagogical theory, develop professional goals, and explore new technologies, while being mentored by the iTeam. After the first year, the Fellows serve as instructional coaches to a new cohort of teachers.

Lower School Life

Lower School teachers pride themselves on making school a joyful and engaging experience. Cherished traditions in the Lower School include Field day, Grandfriends’ day, and Mayfair—an AIS spring tradition that is more than 75 years old. As early as Pre-Kindergarten, Lower School girls can participate in the after-session and/or Extra Session program, providing after-school care for families and an opportunity for all students to explore new interests. Students choose to participate in mind enriching activities including Cooking Around the World, Wood Creations, Green Thumb Club, Girls on the Run, World Travelers, Acting, and Coding.



MIDDLE AND UPPER SCHOOL AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

After fourth grade, Lower School students continue their AIS education in the Middle School (grades 5-8) and Upper School (grades 9-12). As girls move through their education, an engaging and dynamic curriculum continues to inspire. Faculty work across disciplines to create a meaningful and immersive learning environment and, along with a rigorous academic program, girls continue to develop social and emotional intelligence. Leadership development, begun in Lower School, is further refined and strengthened in the Middle and Upper Schools.

Technology is used as an academic tool and is infused throughout the learning environment, including in the state-of-the-art [STEAM Studio](#), which is located in the Innovation Corridor in the Middle and Upper School's building. The studio is outfitted with iPads, 3D printers, and other tech tools, providing an immersive space for girls to explore science, mathematics, technology, engineering, and the arts.

In addition to the strong academic program and robust electives offered, the [Special Studies Program](#) gives Upper Schoolers access to immersive learning opportunities, both on and off-campus. For example, girls have the chance

to travel internationally to fully engage with language and culture, travel to the south to study the Civil Rights Movement, or pitch a new product idea, Shark Tank-style, to professors from the Villanova College of Business. The Special Studies Program allows girls to complete 20+ hours of community service towards a graduation requirement of at least 40 hours. Girls are challenged to develop the habit of serving the broader community along with gaining awareness of the unique lived experiences and challenges of others nationally and globally.

AIS's comprehensive and supportive [college counseling process](#) and the academic rigor of its programs have proven to yield impressive results:

- The 2018 graduating class received 342 offers of admissions from 146 distinct institutions of higher education, including Ivy League Universities, Highly Selective Liberal Arts Colleges, Top Public Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and International Institutions;
- 92% of the Class of 2018 are attending one of their top college choices;
- 70% of these students are attending the most/highly selective colleges;
- 30% of these girls intend to major in a STEM field; and,
- 22% were recruited athletes



INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

AIS fosters an inclusive, diverse, and equitable community by honoring the individuality of all students, families, teachers, and staff. Diversity of experience, thought, and ideas is not only a pillar of the school, but is an integral part of the learning process and the AIS experience. Aspects of individuality are explored through inspiring speakers, a rigorous curriculum, faculty development, and student organizations. Every day, AIS nurtures the necessary skills and provides experiences for students to thrive in a diverse and inclusive community.

Equity and inclusion are collaborative efforts at AIS. Four coordinators—one for each academic division and one for faculty and staff—work together with division directors and the Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence to implement programming, resolve conflicts, and model and support inclusive excellence.

STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2016, AIS's Board of Trustees—along with the administrative leadership team, faculty, staff, parent, alumnae and student input—strategically crafted a course to propel the school further forward. Building on the success of a \$40 million capital campaign completed in 2014, AIS has prepared to embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead by focusing on four key initiatives as part of a [strategic plan](#):

- Ignite curiosity and creativity
- Energize our educators
- Enrich our community
- Secure our future

These strategic priorities mark the course through 2021, including a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the school's founding in 2019-2020, as AIS continues to empower girls by delivering a transformative education.

LEADERSHIP AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

Head of School [Wendy L. Hill, Ph.D.](#)

Dr. Hill has been a strong, collaborative leader who has helped to advance AIS since becoming the 13th Head of School in July 2014. After leading the School through a successful PAIS re-accreditation in her first year, Dr. Hill guided a comprehensive process to develop the School's Strategic Plan which was informed by significant input from the AIS community and the latest research in girls' education. To implement these exciting and ambitious goals, Dr. Hill has assembled a strong group of administrators who are focused on enhancing the learning environment for the current and future generations of AIS girls.

Working with the Board and others, Dr. Hill has finalized a campus master plan for the School that articulates a comprehensive framework for future work on facilities and grounds, one which will continue to ensure that AIS provides a state-of-the-art campus in keeping with the premier education offered.

An engaged leader, you can typically find Dr. Hill at a sporting event, a play performance, a robotics competition, or doing morning carline in the Lower School. Moreover, because Dr. Hill is committed to knowing students in authentic ways, she also teaches science in each division, has had an advisory of 9th grade students, and offers a Special Studies Program course for Upper School students.

Prior to joining the AIS community, Dr. Hill had a highly successful career at Lafayette College, where she served as Provost and Dean of the Faculty for seven years. Before moving into administration, Dr. Hill held the William C. '67 and Pamela H. Rappolt chair in neuroscience and taught at all levels of the curriculum at Lafayette while mentoring more than 100 students conducting research in her laboratory. Dr. Hill was named the Pennsylvania Professor of the Year by the CASE Foundation and received numerous awards for her teaching and scholarly achievements. The Lafayette College Neuroscience Laboratory was named in her honor.

ROLE OF THE LOWER SCHOOL DIRECTOR

The Lower School Director will report to the Head of School and will accomplish the school's strategic goals with the help of direct reports, including:

- Lower School Faculty
- Lower School Literacy Specialist and Coordinator of Student Support Services
- Lower School Learning Specialist
- Lower School Director of Technology Integration and Innovation
- Lower School Psychologist and Counselor
- Lower School Administrative Assistant & Registrar
- Lower School Nurse

Opportunities and Challenges

The Lower School division director will work collaboratively with other school leaders to enhance opportunities for students and faculty across the divisions. With a respect for the strong traditions of The Agnes Irwin School, s/he will lead the AIS Lower School forward by bringing forth innovative and effective approaches to the following priorities:

Academic Excellence

- Ensuring the continued excellence of the division's teaching through research-based curricular development in partnership with the school's Innovation Team and the Center for the Advancement of Girls;
- Supporting the Lower School faculty as AIS moves to a new school-wide schedule necessitating new pedagogical approaches as part of the institution's strategic plan;
- Attracting, recruiting, and retaining excellent faculty and staff;

Enrollment Management

- In an increasingly competitive environment, overseeing enrollment efforts at the highest level, engaging with prospective families and communicating clearly the value of an AIS education for young learners;
- Partnering with internal and external constituents to champion the AIS Lower School experience to diverse audiences, including those not familiar with independent school education;

Strengthening Community

- Fostering leadership development in the School's youngest students by further strengthening the existing Let's Care and Living Leadership in Lower School programs; and,
- Advancing initiatives and programs that foster an equitable and inclusive community thereby supporting the social, emotional, and academic experiences of all students.



Qualifications and Personal Characteristics

Given the opportunities and resources available at AIS, the Lower School Director will be an experienced and culturally competent leader with a passion for educating girls. S/he will be knowledgeable about the academic, social, and emotional development of young girls and have experience in the classroom as well as a proven track record of inspiring faculty, students, and families as well as moving diverse constituent groups to action. In addition, strong candidates will possess:

- Outstanding leadership skills, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a creative approach to solving problems;
- Demonstrated ability to develop meaningful relationships with students, faculty and staff, and to work productively with a broad range of constituents, including parents, trustees, and alumnae;
- Experience identifying, developing, and implementing strategic initiatives;
- Expertise in working to engage prospective families by powerfully and persuasively illustrating the value of independent school education for young learners;
- Excellent interpersonal and communication (verbal and written) skills with an ability to inspire others and galvanize support;
- A highly collaborative leadership style with the ability to engage with the school's senior leadership team to identify opportunities across divisions;
- A desire to be a highly visible presence on campus, demonstrating warmth and empathy in daily interactions with students, parents, faculty, and staff;
- A strong work ethic, the highest level of personal integrity, and ability to handle sensitive information with discretion and tact; and,
- A joyful approach to learning and a sense of humor.
- Prior experience working in independent schools will be viewed favorably.
- Bachelor's degree is required, graduate degree preferred.





Please send all nominations, inquiries,
and expressions of interest in confidence to:

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