



Upper School Division Head Position Statement

# The Nueva School

San Mateo, California

July 2020





The Nueva School seeks a dynamic, collaborative, inspirational Upper School Division Head to provide leadership on its brand new Upper School campus in San Mateo, California, for July of 2020.

### THE NUEVA MISSION AND VISION

The guiding mission, vision, and values of Nueva are central to the life of this extraordinary school. The community appears to speak as one: committed to the visionary and engaging education of gifted learners. As Nueva seeks its next leader of the Upper School, the most common wish for its future is to “Keep Creating the Magic!”

At Nueva if you sit with faculty, lunch with students, or attend a community meeting, you become convinced that its mission and vision are uniformly understood and serve as a source of inspiration and action for students, parents, faculty, and staff. All are keenly aware of the school’s commitment to meeting the needs of imaginative children authentically: “stage, not age,” “choice and voice,” and the vital importance of social-emotional support for each child.

Unique to Nueva is its intentional commitment to two Missions. Mission I is to provide an outstanding, personalized education to each Nueva student. Mission II is to engage and to share with the greater educational community the benefits of the latest research into pedagogy and best practices in education.

Mission I seeks to inspire a passion for lifelong learning, foster social and emotional acuity, and develop a student's imaginative mind. Self-directed students are encouraged to take intellectual, social, and academic risks and find comfort in knowing they have the environment to ask questions, make mistakes, and enjoy the journey of learning. Nueva students possess agency over what, how, when, where, and with whom and why they learn.

Operating on a larger stage to meet Mission II, Nueva sponsors its own Innovative Learning Conference, where the Nueva community engages the educational community, worldwide, in the discovery of the science and craft of innovative teaching and learning. Faculty and administrators at Nueva regularly

present their learning at regional and national conferences, and they conduct several summer institutes on campus on topics ranging from “Giftedness” and “Equity and Inclusion” to “Design Thinking,” the latter held in the school’s groundbreaking I-Lab.

Nueva has grown dramatically over the last six years. For many years, the school hovered around 400 students, PreK–8, on the Hillsborough campus. In 2014 the Upper School program for Grades 9–12 was opened on the San Mateo campus. The PreK–12 school today reports a total enrollment of 940 students and is nearing its enrollment cap of 967. The current Upper School enrollment is 423 students. The Nueva senior class of 2020 includes 91 students.

The deep knowledge and passion of retiring head of school Diane Rosenberg have guided the school inspirationally and well for the past nineteen years, a time of unprecedented program innovation and success. The current head of the Upper School is Stephen Dunn, who, after 4 years of thoughtful guidance and solid leadership in shaping the early direction of the Upper School, is leaving Nueva to become the next Head of the Parker School in Waimea, Hawaii.

Having already reached a position of worldwide influence, Nueva continues to lead the way as the school seeks a new Head of Upper School who will continue the commitment to gifted education and to the bold and visionary leadership of this truly remarkable school.





### THE NUEVA SCHOOL COMMUNITY

“Nueva is a vibrant and dynamic ecosystem that thrives because of the profundity and diversity of its relationships—and because all of these relationships exist to center and support the students we serve. Those students crave an exceptional depth of thinking and of their scholarship. We are a school committed to our mission and to uplifting and upholding the rights and needs of our gifted population.” (Accreditation self-study report, 2019)

“Vibrant and dynamic.” Appropriate adjectives to describe all constituencies of the Nueva community: students, faculty and staff, and families, as well as the governing body.

**Students:** Characterizing “the Nueva student” is no easy task. Few generalizations can capture the range and depth of their interests and accomplishments or their backgrounds. Currently, students of color (African American, Asian American, LatinX, Middle Eastern, Biracial/Multiracial, and Native American) make up 57% of the student body. Nearly 20% PreK-12 and 25% US students receive some level of financial assistance to attend the school; the school awards over \$5.5M in financial awards each year. Students arrive from 70 different zip

codes, from San Francisco to San Jose, encompassing the entire Silicon Valley.

Admission is highly selective. Upper school students are admitted with a combination of test scores and current-school evaluation and records in addition to interviews and visits to campus. Also important in the admissions process is evidence of motivation, curiosity, creativity, the ability to transition, as well as social and

self-help skills. The Upper School currently includes 57% students of color. The Nueva Class of 2019 included 54% students recognized by the National Merit program. Their average SAT and ACT scores place Nueva students in the top tier of independent schools in America. College acceptances and matriculation of Nueva’s first three graduating classes are impressive and diverse.

Beyond exemplary academic statistics, students at Nueva are inquisitive, intense, perceptive, creative, articulate, tenacious—and kind. They freely and enthusiastically express their appreciation for teachers who are their intellectual partners in exploring their questions and ideas.







## The Nueva School — Upper School Division Head Search

One Upper School student said, “Our ideas are appreciated here. Our teachers and head of school listen to us with an open mind. We are trusted and allowed to take our own research in our own direction.” The same student went on to say that “one of my research projects was turned into a class.” Confidently, another student observed, “We are quirky, but our definition of the word is that we are excited, passionate, and focused on what we are learning.”

**Faculty:** The faculty at Nueva is extraordinary, full stop. Well-versed in the benefits and challenges of gifted learners, they feel deeply the responsibility of knowing and supporting the children in their care. They appreciate the creative freedom that comes from the schoolwide commitment to constructivism and the responsibility of attending to individual students. They relish the “joy of learning” that characterizes the program, and they acknowledge the inspiration that comes from teaching such imaginative, creative learners, and helping to guide and shape their questions.

One teacher commented that, “This is a place that leads with ‘yes’ and values kindness and civility.” Faculty members provide multiple narrative assessments for each student, each year, and faculty members collaborate and revise curriculum every summer. In short, the responsibilities are significant, and at the same time, “it is a privilege to walk into Nueva every day.”

Nearly 80% of the Upper School faculty hold an advanced degree. Many have taught at the university level and have been recognized by local, state, and national organizations for leadership, excellence, and innovation in teaching. Teaching institutes are conducted for all faculty new to the Nueva program: one each in gifted learning or social-emotional learning, design thinking, and diversity and inclusion.

High-performing professionals in every area of school administration, from admissions and development to operations, are dedicated to the mission of the school.





**Parents:** The Nueva parent body is noteworthy for its enthusiastic commitment to the school. Many parents lend their expertise and professional backgrounds to serve on school-wide task forces that have led to significant new initiatives for the school. Most of all, they are deeply appreciative of what the school has meant for their children. One Nueva parent shared, “We want our child to experience the magical love of learning and to risk to pursue learning, not grades. At this school I’ve watched my child become her whole self.”



**Board of Trustees:** The governing body at Nueva numbers 30, and their commitment to the mission and vision of the school is unwavering. Sophisticated and thoughtful, the Board is keenly aware of the importance of their productive partnership with and support for the school’s leadership. The Board engages regularly in strategic planning and maintains appropriate stewardship over the financial resources of the school. Board members understand the roles and responsibilities of a high-performing Board, and in every way seek to make certain that the school practices mission-driven and student-centered decision-making.



**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** A heartfelt community-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices also characterizes the Nueva community. Through the cultivation of empathy, students and the wider community learn that “reflection and action” on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are expected of all members of the community.





## THE PROGRAM: Learn by Doing, Learn by Caring

Nueva's approach to curriculum is carefully constructed and curated, subject to yearly revision and development. This uniquely progressive, constructivist program inspires intellectual growth through integrated curricula, guided by talented faculty with deep subject-area expertise. Choice is central: choice about homework, choice about topics, choice about the language of expression in product and materials. Learning is carefully guided and yet open-ended and child-centered; there are no ceilings and few limitations imposed on where students want to venture.

A well-earned and popular phrase at Nueva, when it comes to students, programs, and the spirit of innovation, is, "Yes, and..." It is the notion of always being ready to do possibility thinking with young people, their teachers, and the community at large. Learning at Nueva is both engaging and original, PreK–12, and the program has deep roots in each of the following areas.

**Giftedness:** Nueva recognizes that gifted learners have specialized educational needs. Gifted learners may experience asynchronous development, in terms of intellectual and social capacities or in different content areas. The educational model employed at Nueva is designed to meet students "where they are," no matter the topic, the grade, or the age of the students. Pursuing deep learning experiences, co-created with faculty, Nueva

students become "practiced explorers who know their questions really matter." Critical to the success of the Nueva program is having faculty members who understand and nurture the talents of all students.

**Problem-Based Learning:** The hands-on, project-based approach throughout the program honors student choice and interest as well as promoting independent, informed trajectories for students. Inquiry-based and interdisciplinary, problem-based learning is closely aligned with real-world issues, requiring students to be creative and iterative in order to achieve results—and to change the world for the better. Upper School students participate in self-directed but mentored projects, the year-long Quest projects. Creativity and critical thinking are encouraged, directed by the students themselves, with oversight from an adult. And as the projects change course over time, the students must be flexible and resourceful. Students also develop their capacity to work collaboratively.

**Social-Emotional Learning:** Throughout the school, students learn and embrace the importance of self-knowledge, the power of active and empathetic communication, and the commitment to respecting differences and "upholding human dignity." The Upper School extension of social-emotional learning is Science of Mind (SOM). Students learn to care for others. Teachers reinforce social-emotional skills in all classrooms through the use of Open Sessions, Appreciation Circles, conflict resolution methods, and restorative justice practices.





**Design Thinking:** Nueva uses design thinking as an ethos for everyday thinking and collaborating to solve problems at the school, in the local community, and on a global scale. Upper School students have used design thinking to solve scheduling problems or address pressing social issues like homelessness or texting while driving. Nueva asserts that “this wholesale adoption of the model is what we aim for, as it will continue to inform our students’ thinking and problem-solving well into the future.”

**Environmental Citizenship:** Nueva has a long history of students interacting with nature and of a commitment to environmental stewardship. Students throughout the grades engage in outdoor education, from Nueva’s garden to camping trips. Students at many levels study the environment in their courses. The school’s

operations and facilities showcase a commitment to environmental citizenship, from compostable food service items to LEED-certified construction. The school is currently constructing a new facility to house expanded environmental programming and articulating specific curricular objectives in environmental citizenship.

Students at Nueva “Learn by Doing, Learn by Caring.” It’s a place for authentic learning where students are trusted as co-creators of their own learning, developing as resilient, self-reliant, and innovative individuals—and to be good people. The vision for student success at Nueva is expansive. An Upper School student quoted her current head of school, “We’re not college prep here, we are about life prep.” Nueva cultivates a complex and textured learning experience for all students and the larger community.



### FACILITIES AND FINANCE

Nueva provides 180,000 square feet of facilities—including the recently completed state-of-the-art, LEED gold certified, AIA award-winning Upper School at the San Mateo campus—that sit on nearly 37 acres across two campuses centrally located in the world-renowned Bay Area of Northern California, nestled between San Francisco and Silicon Valley.

Annual revenues are projected to exceed \$52 million, including over \$5 million in annual giving. In addition, the school provides \$5.5 million in annual tuition assistance to approximately 180 students, PreK–12. A positive net operating surplus and cash generated from operations consistently service debt and annual capital requirements.

A community of financial supporters has already pledged \$58 million towards a current \$100 million capital campaign target. In the last 15 years, over \$130 million in new equity and \$40 million in debt has funded the school's expansion in enrollment, staffing, a second campus, renewed facilities, program, and a current endowment of \$12 million.

In August 2014, Nueva expanded to a Grade 9–12 Upper School on the new San Mateo campus, with the objective of reimagining the traditional upper school experience. Often referred to as the Bay Meadows campus, the Upper School campus is intentionally designed to evoke a futuristic addition to the student experience. The new open-design campus was built to enliven Nueva key hallmark programs with multiple flexible spaces, open space, and cozy nooks for small groups of students to gather. The Upper School was also built to the gold standard of energy and environmental design.



### THE POSITION OF UPPER SCHOOL DIVISION HEAD AT NUEVA

The position of division head of the Upper School at Nueva is one of the premier independent school leadership opportunities in America.

Graduating only its 4<sup>th</sup> senior class this school year, the Nueva Upper School is a “start-up adventure” that is still being shaped. The Upper School is blessed with a deeply held vision and mission, extraordinary students, talented and dedicated teachers, and a wonderful new facility. Along with strong demand for enrollment and healthy finances, and with the new head of school and division head of Upper School beginning together, it is primed for leadership into its next era of evolution and maturity.

That next era will include:

- Translating an elegant vision and mission into more consistent practice for the Upper School
- Implementing clear systems, frameworks, and organization to support students and teachers
- Continuing to review and refine the assessment and reporting of student learning
- Refining a framework to ensure faculty feedback, growth, renewal, well-being, and retention while finding an appropriate balance of faculty autonomy and curricular coherence
- Working collaboratively with other school leaders to create a PreK–12 school environment on two campuses
- Working with students to continue to create new school traditions and a sense of community and school spirit





## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND QUALITIES

The next division head of Upper School will bring a set of key leadership skills and attributes to the work, including:

**A commitment to gifted learning:**

Uncompromising commitment to gifted learners at the heart of the school's mission and growth. Deep alignment with the importance of social-emotional learning for gifted learners. Unequivocal clarity about personalized, problem-based learning in an environment where the importance of "caring" is equal to the importance of "doing." Recognition and support for the needs of gifted, passionate learners.

**A shared educational vision:** Work collaboratively to ensure Nueva's ethos of driving educational innovation through experimentation, prototyping, and implementing new ideas. Preserve capacity to pivot toward the best research-based teaching and learning.

**Support for an outstanding faculty:** Proven track record to attract, develop, and retain a well-qualified, passionate, and diverse cadre of faculty members who embrace the mission for teaching gifted learners. Build robust and useful systems for professional evaluation, growth, and renewal.

**A proven curricular leader:** Understand and support the power of co-creating impactful teaching and learning experiences with and between students and faculty.

**A community-builder and communicator:** Proven capacity to nurture and deepen the culture of Nueva across the school community, ensuring continuity for a "one school, two campuses" setting. Ensure a culture of transparency and trust.



**A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Demonstrated personal and institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion work evidenced by a track record of attracting and retaining diverse students, families, faculty, and staff. Ability to envision and implement mission-aligned DEI practices.

**A systems thinker:** Track record of establishing the necessary systems and infrastructure to address the significant growth and organizational changes of the Upper School. Delegate responsibility and accountability to bring about greater role clarity and efficiency within the Upper School.



## PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

The successful Nueva Upper School division head candidate will have the background, experiences, and disposition characterized by the following professional and personal qualities:

- An effective and respected teacher with an intellect that reveals scholarship, creativity, abiding curiosity, and a growth mindset.
- An ability to build consensus and forge relationships among diverse and strong constituencies through a participative, collaborative, and inclusive leadership style.
- A capacity to effectively manage a complex, vibrant, and vocal organization—with a demonstrated ability to develop supportive frameworks, to delegate, and to follow through.
- An excellent judge of people and possessing a nose for talent; experienced and skilled at hiring, while thoughtfully matching people with appropriate roles and positions.
- An ability to energize and inspire others—a personal presence that instills trust, confidence, and warmth.



## APPLICATION PROCESS

The Nueva School has retained the firm Resource Group 175 to support its search for the next Upper School Division Head.

Interested candidates may apply at <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup> If you have any questions about the search or would like to nominate candidates for this position, please email:

Robert P. Henderson, Jr.  
[rhenderson@rg175.com](mailto:rhenderson@rg175.com)

or James K. Scott  
[jscott@rg175.com](mailto:jscott@rg175.com)

All applications and nominations will be treated in confidence.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2020**

