

MORE ABOUT OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Andy Abbott came to Burroughs in the fall of 2001 as an English teacher, coach and principal of the upper grades. Five years later, he was named director of college counseling and assistant head of school. In July 2009, he became head of school.

While continuing to teach, serve as an advisor, run our all-school daily assembly and even ‘work a lunch table’, Andy’s tenure as head of school has been distinguished by transformational initiatives around DEI, faculty professional development and campus improvements. He is also an active member of the larger educational community, both locally and nationally.

Advocate for Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity

Burroughs has long valued diversity. Under Andy’s leadership and in partnership with the director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity, Burroughs moved deliberately from awareness to commitment to action:

- The percentage of students of color has risen from 28 to 43 percent.
- In the 2020-2021 school year, 167 students are receiving tuition assistance, up from 124 in the 2009-2010 school year; as a percentage of the student body receiving tuition aid, this reflects an increase from 21.1 to 25.5 percent. Over that same period, tuition aid as part of the school’s operating budget has risen from 11.6 to 15.6 percent.
- The curriculum has been reconfigured so that every student takes a four-year seminar sequence to ensure all students receive cultural competency training.
- In addition to a Board of Trustees diversity committee, a faculty/staff committee was created to focus on curriculum, professional development and the overall campus environment. (About a third of the faculty/staff are directly engaged.)
- Every faculty and staff member is required to commit to cultural competency training and coaching.
- Student affinity and culture groups (African American, Asian, Jewish, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Christian, LatinX, Alliance for Whites against Racism Everywhere) have been launched to give students space which help them engage inter-culturally and contribute to community-wide conversations.
- Students are surveyed annually with what we call an inclusivity index (now used by other schools around the nation) to seek a deeper understanding of the student experience at Burroughs and to guide our actions and efforts, accordingly.
- The school has received two EE Ford grants to help build and host The Equity Exchange, a summer workshop bringing together public and private educators from across the nation to share strategic solutions, including discussions of White supremacy culture.
- Our Community & Equity Partnership engages parents/guardians, faculty/staff and alums in ongoing programming and education.

And Andy has made clear that he is committed to elevating and broadening all of these initiatives.

In 2014, he was honored by the National Conference for Community and Justice of Metropolitan St. Louis with the Brotherhood and Sisterhood Award for igniting change in the St. Louis region—the only secondary school educator to be honored.

Professional Development

As a longtime teacher, Andy continues to lead a senior English seminar, and his commitment to the faculty runs deep. He has grown the sabbatical program and developed a partnership with the Bogliasco Foundation in Italy where teachers have the opportunity to do independent work and research. Most recently, he established the Burroughs Fellows Program which brings young aspiring teachers to campus for a two-year training to become world-class independent school teachers and coaches. Since the 2009-2010 school year, the professional development budget has risen by more than 40 percent and continues to support independent work with an added emphasis on departmental and interdepartmental group work and DEI training.

Campus Improvements

Acutely aware that to maximize support of the talents of our students and faculty, Andy has led the school through careful identification and planning of campus improvements, and has led multiple capital campaigns to see them to fruition. Over the past decade, the school has built or rebuilt nearly 75% of the campus, including a performing arts center, student commons, athletic center, the STAR building for science, technology and research, multiple new athletic fields, a greatly expanded quadrangle, and, most recently, a new natatorium and squash center. All of the buildings are LEED certified and designed with sustainability in mind.

Beyond Burroughs

Andy serves on the leadership council for Aim High St. Louis and the education council for the Biome School in the Central West End. He serves as the president of ISSL, the Independent Schools of St. Louis, and is a member of the board of directors of INDEX, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing data, analysis, and research for the top independent schools in the nation.