



**Position Statement  
Head of School Search  
The Gow School**

**South Wales, NY  
July 1, 2023**



# The Gow School

Head of School

POSITION STATEMENT | START DATE: JULY 1, 2023



## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Gow School's next head has a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in one of the world's premier schools serving students with dyslexia. Our new head will begin with a solid foundation—financially strong with a cohesive and committed board, supportive parents, distinguished and caring faculty and staff, motivated students actively engaged with the world around them, and a proud history unlike any other school serving this population. Gow is looking for a dynamic leader with whom the board, faculty, parents and students can partner in crafting, articulating and executing the strategic direction for the next decade and beyond.

Since its founding, The Gow School has been a global leader in dyslexia education. Gow is unique among independent schools, embodying that rare and compelling alignment of strong vision and programmatic integrity that sets it far apart from its

peers. Its next head of school will have both the privilege and the responsibility to nurture the heart and soul of this extraordinarily, terrific school and to lead Gow into its next successful chapter.

Imagine a school where every child learns to read and write with confidence; that about says it all. The Gow School develops life changing academic skills, self-confidence, and character in students who have been diagnosed with language-based learning differences. This is a school that is clearly transformative, a school that lifts spirits and changes lives. The opportunity to lead such a school is both energizing and inspiring. Many educators go into education to make a real difference in the lives of families and students; here is a chance to do just that.

Historically, The Gow School has been one of the top schools in the nation (even globally) that provide specific programming for children with language-based learning differences. The school has grown and prospered over the years and

particularly so over the past 18 years with a very strong head of school, and now needs a new leader to oversee the next generation of strategic growth and development for this very important school. Gow is ready for strong institutional leadership to continue and to advance its position in the community of schools for students with learning differences.

The Gow School made two significant changes seven years ago by going coeducational and also enrolling day students for the first time. One hundred percent of graduates each year go on to college or university. The school takes great pride in this success. Here are a few things that members of the community had to say about The Gow School: "Kids come here broken, we fix them, then they realize new dreams." "We build confidence and self-esteem on a daily basis." "There is an unconditional positive regard for everyone here. It's organic and authentic." "Each student's intellect is highly respected here."

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## FAST FACTS

- Grades 6-12
- 126 students
- 40 faculty
- 47 faculty children on campus
- \$28Million endowment
- \$0 debt

## THE STRENGTHS OF THE GOW SCHOOL

One would be hard-pressed to find many schools in the world that can match The Gow School's commitment to the success, growth and development of each student. The Gow School can proudly point to many strengths, but of note are the following:

- A dedicated faculty who models collaboration and actively supports the students and each other.
- An experienced senior administrative team with complementary skills that are used to fulfill the mission and enhance the school.
- A strong board of trustees, generous with their time and expertise and understanding the principles of good governance.
- A family friendly and very welcoming environment, often referred to as one big family. In fact, faculty children often referred to each other as "Gow cousins."
- A clear and compelling mission that is committed to the social and emotional growth of students.
- A powerful connection between the faculty, administration and students.
- A strong educational technology program that is woven throughout the school and provides multiple opportunities for students as evidenced by the B.O.T. Lab.
- A very strong financial base including a \$28 million endowment and zero debt. This is remarkable and highly unusual in the independent school world.
- Everything a student needs is here, from academic support to emotional and mental health support, and additional language training is built into the daily program here to help students achieve maximum success.



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## HISTORY AND MISSION

The Gow School has led the way and educated students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities since 1926. That is when Peter Gow, Jr. founded the school in a visionary effort to rethink the learning process. Gow theorized that the key to success lay in small classes and intensive drills. He moved his family to South Wales, NY and converted the farm where he had run a summer camp into a boarding school for boys.

Shortly after the school opened, Gow met Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a pioneering neurologist whose research pointed to a phonetic approach to educating those suffering from “specific language disabilities.” Through thousands of hours of teaching and experimentation, Gow developed the Reconstructive Language program, similar to the Orton-Gillingham method and still used at the school to great effect.

Over time, The Gow School has continued to evolve and innovate. The campus has expanded from one main building to more than 30 buildings. In 1990, the coed school summer program began, and in January 2012, the school made the decision to become co-ed offering day and boarding options. The school remains committed to its foundation of the curriculum, has kept current with the latest technology, and has been validated by ongoing research. A growing cadre of loyal and grateful alumni with a wealth of success stories speaks to the success of the school.

### Mission

A leader and innovator in dyslexia education with a commitment to the values of kindness, respect, honesty and hard work, since 1926 The Gow School has been helping students with language-based learning differences develop the skills and confidence to succeed in higher education and beyond as creative, compassionate adults and engaged citizens.

### The Four Pillars

- Honesty
- Respect
- Hard work
- Kindness



## THE PROGRAM

The heart of our success is Reconstructive Language (RL), a researched-based, time-tested methodology that gives students the tools to learn. RL is Gow's remedial language skills program, created by school founder Peter Gow, Jr. with guidance from pioneering neurologist Dr. Samuel T. Orton. Our highly trained faculty break down the English language to then build it back up in a way students will understand. Our committed teachers understand their students. Our students understand each other's challenges because they face them too. This inclusive community meets those challenges head on. At Gow, learning is rethought, fuses are lit, and lives are reignited together.

In addition to Reconstructive Language, content-area courses are also designed and re-designed with student success in mind. Multisensory instruction, executive function skills, and study strategies are emphasized throughout the program. Faculty members receive ongoing training in methods that maximize student learning potential, and they are committed to providing individualized attention and extra help. Gow teachers know that students' futures depend on this expertise and dedication.

Gow students attend classes of three to seven students, six days a week. They take at least six academic courses. A daily 30-minute tutorial and supervised two-hour evening study hall provide time to complete assignments and to receive faculty

assistance. Assistive technology, including a laptop program, is integrated into all courses and plays a central role in supporting student success. You can learn more about The Gow School program [here](#).

In addition to academics, The Gow School program includes a variety of student activities including athletics. Gow provides a structured interscholastic program that allows students of various abilities to compete at different levels. Gow fields co-ed varsity, junior varsity, and modified teams in basketball and lacrosse, and varsity and modified squads in soccer. Smaller programs include cross country, volleyball, outdoor education, golf, wrestling, squash, recreational skiing and snowboarding, alpine ski racing, and tennis.



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### LOCATION AND CAMPUS

The Gow School is centrally located in beautiful western New York State. Located 25 minutes south of Buffalo, NY and next-door to East Aurora, NY, Gow is a wonderful combination of rural life attached to a large urban city.

East Aurora is a terrific town! Serving a population of roughly 6,200, provides very strong local public schools, and is unique as it is a small town feel with a big worldview. East Aurora provides a creative vibe as it's known as the home of America's Arts and Crafts movement, as it began here a century ago. There are tons of live music venues and a terrific restaurant scene. Outdoor activities are plentiful year-round.

Buffalo is the second largest city in New York State and is currently enjoying a Renaissance with a reinvigorated waterfront, restored architectural treasures, and epic food scene. Buffalo enjoys expansive natural areas, and is known as the "city of good neighbors."

The Gow School campus is a park-like setting and it's beautiful. Situated on 125 acres in the charming town of South Wales, the school campus is in excellent shape with a committed facility staff and an annual budget that supports ongoing maintenance of the campus.

The Gow School is one and a half hours to Toronto, three hours to Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and 45 minutes to Niagara Falls.



### OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Gow School seeks to appoint a new head of school for July 1, 2023. The next leader of Gow will provide stewardship for a singularly unique and successful school and will take on the opportunities and challenges ahead, as described here:

- Culture Carrier: commitment to The Gow School mission and culture, keen understanding of the school's promise to support the academic, social, emotional and ethical development of each student. Appreciation for Gow's approach in all its programs is designed to bring out the best in each student and ensure that their future is filled with success. A willingness to stand firm in upholding the cultural norms of the school is critical.
- Strengthen the dedicated, experienced and committed faculty and staff by recruiting, and compensating high-quality faculty while supporting professional growth.
- Sustain and appropriately grow a stable enrollment by articulating a coherent and compelling value proposition in an increasingly challenging enrollment environment. The Gow School's next head will have the opportunity to make an early and important impact on enrollment strategy for the school to move forward.





- Effectively manage the competing leadership demands of being present for students, faculty, and staff on campus with the necessary demands of off-campus outreach.
- Continue to elevate Gow's pursuit of a diverse, equitable, and sustainable school community.
- Continue to oversee and manage a strong financial position for the school while balancing the potential impact of the school's high tuition on enrollment.
- Work with the leadership team and the board to address serious implications of continuing the triple-threat model. The Gow School faculty and staff work incredible hours in a very demanding, yet rewarding environment. The school may need to look into visionary and innovative ways to maintain its incredible support of the students while looking at various new models that will provide a positive impact on the lives of the families who serve on the faculty.
- Covid-19 and the challenges that come from the pandemic have brought into sharper focus issues around mental health and support. In working with the board, administration, faculty and staff, the next head of school should be able to assist the school at strategically looking at the whole concept of mental health and figuring out ways in which to make the model even stronger for the Gow community.
- Work with the leadership team to focus on getting the school to be more co-educational in a variety of ways.

### THE POSITION

The next head of school will need poise, patience, confidence, energy and wisdom to effectively balance the demands associated with this exciting leadership opportunity. A successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following talents, skills, attributes, values, and experiences:

- Effective relationship-builder who leads by genuinely knowing and caring about students, faculty, and families with the highest of integrity.
- Excellent listener and superb communicator in writing, speaking, and interpersonal relationships.
- Embracing the joys of being an engaged presence on campus, approachable and available to students, faculty, staff, families, and alumni. A visible leader with warmth, empathy and a very high EQ is a must.
- Collaborator working with others regarding best practices to ensure the school remains a global leader in educating dyslexic students.



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- Visionary, one who can incorporate the best of The Gow School into a shared aspiration for what the school can be. Critical to this effort is understanding it's unique DNA, which will be the foundation for moving the school forward.
- Strong administrative experience in an LD independent school at the middle or upper school level.
- Prior teaching experience and genuine appreciation and respect for teachers.
- Capacity to be a leader in fundraising and a strong partner in enrollment and financial management.
- A connector who authentically demonstrates empathy, humility, resilience, humor, and fairness.
- Someone who loves taking a wonderful school to a new level of greatness.
- Experience working in a boarding school environment is important.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Those interested in being considered as the next head of school for The Gow School may apply online: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

Applications include a letter of interest, updated résumé, a writing sample which can be an educational philosophy, personal statement or published articles or letters. References will be requested at a later date.

If you have any questions, please contact John Farber: [jfarber@rg175.com](mailto:jfarber@rg175.com) or 330-310-1270 (c)

**Timeline:** The school seeks to make an appointment for the next head at The Gow School for July 1, 2023. All applications should be submitted expeditiously no later than **March 1, 2022.**