



Catherine Cook School, in Chicago, is seeking an experienced school leader to serve as head of school, beginning July 2024. Catherine Cook is truly a one-of-a-kind elementary/middle school, an exceptional early childhood to grade eight, independent school providing a whole-child education. It is a school located in the vibrant Old Town neighborhood where curiosity and compassion come together in a strong, inclusive learning community, and where students and their teachers create unique experiences and build skills that enable Catherine Cook graduates to positively impact the ever-changing world around them. Along with reviewing this introductory position profile, candidates will want to explore the embedded links and the Catherine Cook School [website](#).

Mission – Philosophy – Values – Vision

Mission

The Catherine Cook School is a vibrant learning community that fosters curiosity, develops critical thinking and inspires compassionate leadership for students in preschool through 8th grade.

Philosophy

The power of our student-centered approach lies in the purposeful combination of innovation and inquiry-based experiences designed by talented educators within a nurturing and supportive community.

Values

Community: *Our context for learning and leading with purpose, where all individuals are known and valued*

Curiosity: *We celebrate the power of asking questions as a means of nurturing growth and understanding*

Compassion: *We commit to treating others with respect and empathy*

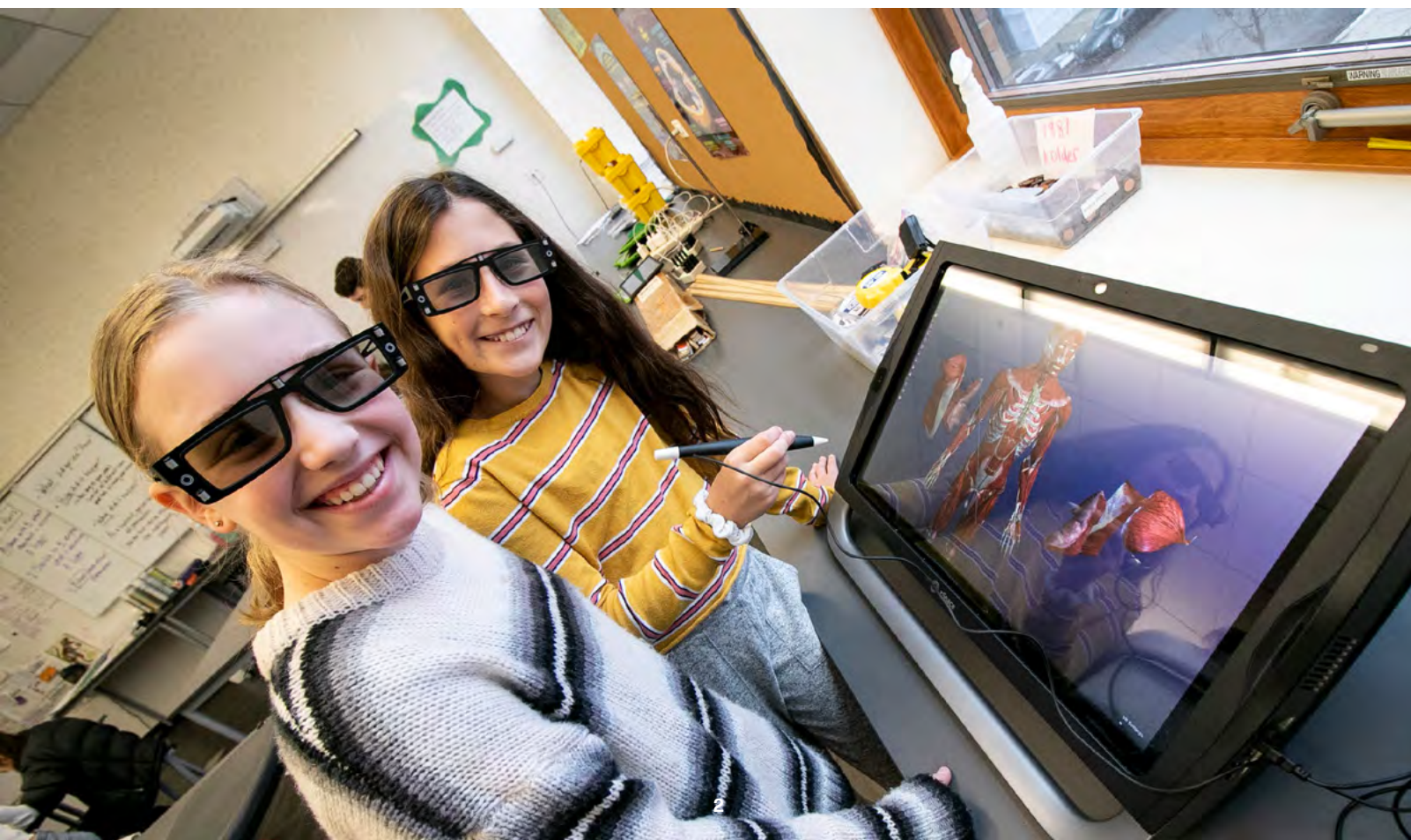
Connection: *We strengthen relationships through communication, collaboration, and community engagement*

Vision

Catherine Cook School is building an inclusive learning community where evidence-based practices, innovative learning design and strong relationships are at the heart of educational excellence. Our learners are challenged to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and confidence to grow, work and contribute meaningfully at school and beyond.

Diversity Statement

Catherine Cook School is committed to creating and sustaining a diverse and compassionate community grounded in a culture of integrity.

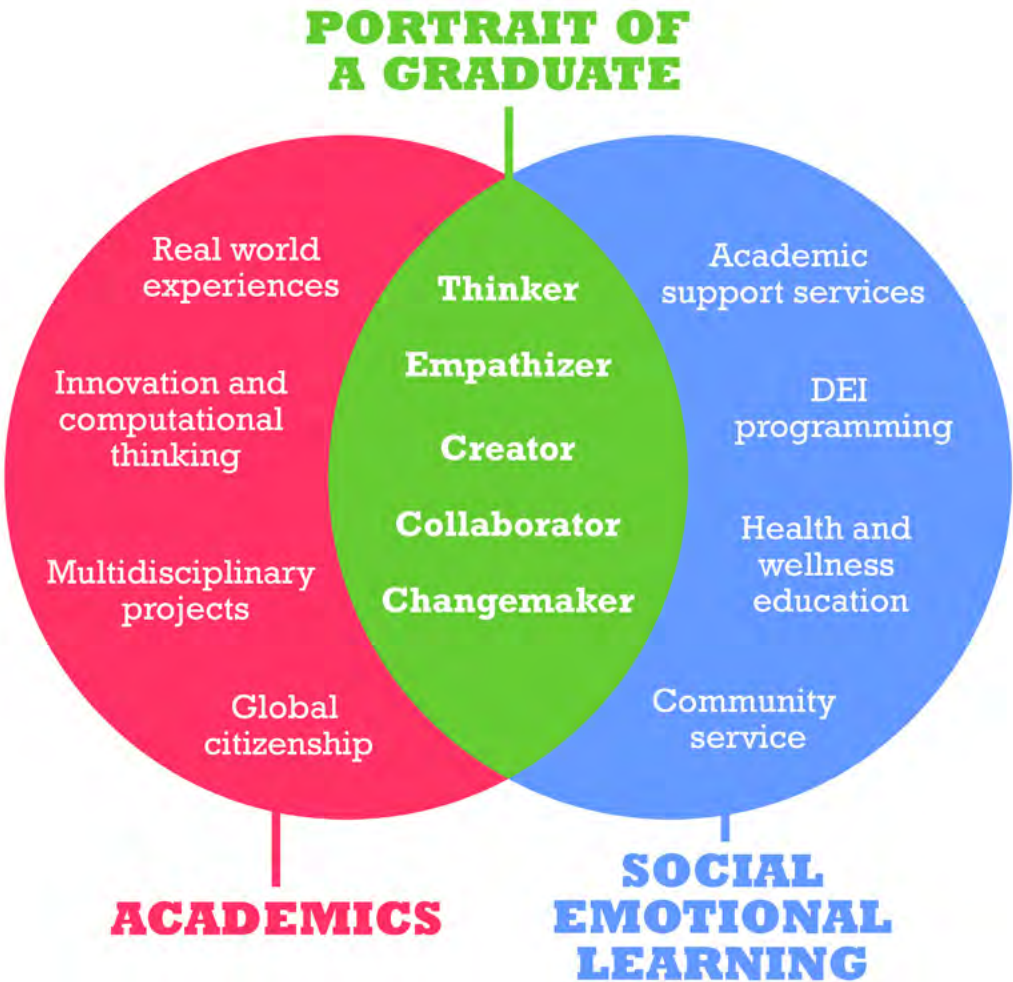


Community – Whole Child – Inclusion – Innovation

True to its mission, Catherine Cook School is an exceptionally vibrant learning community. It is a place where adults are brimming with ideas to find ways to enrich the lives of the children. In turn, students know that they are loved and supported, and they thrive in an innovative environment that celebrates who they are as students and as individuals.

The Whole Child

Catherine Cook combines strong academics with social-emotional learning experiences to create a distinctive “Portrait of the Graduate.” This portrait amplifies the skills and character traits that the faculty and staff strive to instill in all graduates. At Catherine Cook, the commitment to ensuring children are ready for high school and beyond is in the school’s DNA.



Fast Facts

- Founded in **1975**
- Total enrollment is **459**
- Early Childhood (EC-K): **109**
- Lower School: (1-4): **185**
- Middle School (Grade 5 – 8): **165**
- Students of Color: **30%**
- Faculty and Staff: **113**
- Faculty and Staff of Color: **31%**

Board of Trustees

- Members: **13**
- Meetings per year: **8**
(which includes 2 retreats)
- Board Committees:
 - Executive*
 - Trustees and Nominating*
 - Finance and Facilities*
 - DEI and Wellbeing*
 - Advancement and Communications*
 - Head of School Evaluation and Support*

Tuition 2023 – 2024

- Early Childhood: **\$24,650 – \$29,710**
- JK – Grade 4: **\$32,000**
- Grades 5 – 8: **\$33,620**
- Operating budget: **\$17.9 million**
- Tuition Assistance: **\$1.3 million**
- Annual Fund: **\$908,000**

Community

The new head of school, like all community members at Catherine Cook, will become a part of a warm and inclusive community where each person is valued. **Academics** and **Community** are the words most often mentioned when students, teachers, and parents are asked to describe Catherine Cook. Along with building strong relationships with faculty and staff, parents and guardians value the relationships they have with each other, and the school provides opportunities for parents to engage in educational programs and social events. An active [Parent Association](#) provides meaningful ways for families, faculty, and staff to support and enjoy community events.

Inclusion

Few schools are as intentional as Catherine Cook in creating a welcoming and safe environment for children, faculty, staff, and community members to feel a strong sense of belonging. The programs that support [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#) efforts make clear that Catherine Cook School is committed to sustaining a diverse and compassionate community grounded in a culture of integrity. The school has identified four strategic objectives for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- Seek, support, and retain families, faculty, staff, and board members from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in elite institutions or in positions of power.
- Build our own cultural competence through formal and informal professional development in order to create a welcoming environment for all.
- Develop and implement curriculum that enables children to become culturally competent
- Incorporate mechanisms or systems to measure the school's progress.

Please see the complete [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives here](#)

Innovation

The school takes pride in being able to employ talented and dedicated educators who thrive on developing [unique programs](#) to enrich the students' educational experience. Every classroom holds opportunities for innovation, and special spaces like the Innovation-Design-Engineering and Art (IDEA) Lab, Audio-Visual Studio, Art Studios, Science and Tech Labs, along with the rooftop playgrounds serve as environments for enriched learning for children of all ages. Innovation within the curriculum separates Catherine Cook from local competitors. Along with instruction in sound fundamentals, innovation honors the school's commitment to academic excellence.



The Program

Catherine Cook School is organized into three divisions: Early Childhood (PK-K), Lower School (1-4), and Middle School (5-8). Developmentally appropriate programs and lessons blend traditional learning with inquiry and research-based approaches, hands-on learning. The faculty has collaborated and researched a variety of community-based and open-source programs to strengthen the curriculum and to enrich experiences for children. For example, science teachers are working with the Museum of Science and Industry in the development of the [Next Generation of Science Standards](#). The curriculum coordinators and math teachers have incorporated [Illustrative Mathematics](#) program to strengthen and expand the math experience for children.

In [Early Childhood](#), children experience a joyful environment where pre-academic skills are built in the context of play. The curriculum builds social emotional, critical thinking, and cultural competency skills along with literacy, art, mathematics, music, science, movement, social studies, French and Spanish. Technology is gradually introduced to the youngest learners to augment both learning and communication. Each classroom has a lead and assistant teacher who work together to integrate hands-on, inquiry-based projects. Building strong relationships is at the center of the Early Childhood experience at the school, and children learn to appreciate and relate closely with each other as well as the adults in the community.



[Lower School](#) students are offered new possibilities through friendships and collaborative partnerships with hands-on activities. Like each Early Childhood classroom, all Lower School grade levels have a teacher and teaching assistant. Students engage in authentic literary, mathematical, scientific, and research experiences both within and beyond the classroom. World Languages and lessons within the curriculum are used to build empathy and celebrate diversity of all students. Teachers know their students intimately, and they strive to inspire each child's growth and development. Technology is integrated to support inquiry and collaboration beyond the classroom, encouraging technological confidence and instilling lifelong learning. The Social-Emotional well-being of the children is honored as teachers simultaneously encourage academic excellence.

In the [Middle School](#), teachers balance the developmental needs of emerging adolescence and the interests of the students with the goal of preparing them to thrive in high school and beyond. Middle School teachers are attuned to the powerful intellectual, physical and social - emotional changes their students will experience. The curriculum is designed to take full advantage of the gifts and challenges students bring to various classrooms. Integrated humanities, math, laboratory science and world language programs are complemented by art, music, physical education and public speaking. Middle Schoolers are provided with elective periods and service learning opportunities, and students are offered a variety of leadership opportunities. Students work with laptops and continue to develop skills and interests that enhance learning and prepare them for secondary school expectations. All students have access to the [tech support team](#) to ensure they can stay ahead of projects and lessons that integrate technology. Catherine Cook's [high school placement](#) is excellent. With a comprehensive program that begins upon enrolling in the school, students are consistently placed into the high schools of their choice.



Co-Curricular Programs

Catherine Cook students have a variety of [Extended Day](#) options. The “After School Adventures” program provides enrichment and is based upon a variety of subjects and areas of student interests. Middle School students may participate in auxiliary clubs, and students interested in advancing their musical skills can sign up for music instruction.

Catherine Cook has an extensive athletic program that offers 11 [team sports](#) including volleyball, soccer, flag football, cross country, basketball, cheer, track and golf. Nearly 80% of middle school students participate in sports at the school.

[Summer Programs](#) offer theme-based camps with two-week sessions. Teachers and students make use of the full range of resources and facilities at the school to provide stimulating, fun, and enriching experiences.

Diversity and Social Emotional Learning

Over the last four years Catherine Cook has focused on developing an inclusive, welcoming community for all. The School hired a full-time Director of Diversity who is a member of the senior leadership team. The DEI Director collaborates with faculty, staff, parents and students to intentionally cultivate an empathetic and open climate to foster relationships of integrity and a sense of belonging. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with a strong sense of belonging is a way of life at Catherine Cook, and it is integrated into all aspects of the community.

As one aspect of the work to sustain an inclusive, warm, welcoming community of belonging, the school has infused Social Emotional Learning into the daily lives of all people and programs serve to strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. A Catherine Cook teacher is trained in the [Responsive Classroom](#) principles and practices supported by the [Second Steps](#) curriculum in the lower grades and middle school teachers utilize the practices and skills of the [Institute for Social & Emotional Learning](#) (IFSEL).



The People & Their Work

One hundred and thirteen professionals are serving 459 students and their families at Catherine Cook School. The leadership working with the Head of School includes three division heads with a Director of Curriculum Integration & Innovation, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Enrollment Management, Director of Advancement, Director of Information Technology, and a Director of Facilities. The 47 classroom teachers work with 22 teaching assistants and just over a dozen professionals who provide learning and counseling support.

The leadership team and the professional staff are supported by an engaged Board of Trustees which is composed of 13 highly committed individuals. “The board, which meets eight times a year, which includes two retreats, has six standing committees and is seeking a head of school who will fully embrace a strategic partnership to develop a high performing governance and leadership organization to realize the full potential of Catherine Cook School in the greater Chicago area.

Admissions & Advancement

While Catherine Cook navigated the pandemic skillfully and effectively, the school has experienced a significant decline in overall enrollment over the last five years with young families moving to the suburbs and a decline in the overall school age population. The school has engaged [Mission & Data](#) to investigate and analyze enrollment trends in greater Chicago and at Catherine Cook School. The next head of school will work closely with the enrollment management team, the leadership team, and the board of trustees to establish optimal enrollment for Catherine Cook School.

The Advancement team, which includes marketing and communications, raised just over \$900,000 for the annual fund last year with parent participation at 69%. The school also runs an annual gala, which in 2023 raised over \$800,000 with just over half of the funds raised going towards the [Thatcher Swanson Grant for Diversity and Inclusion](#). Overall, Catherine Cook had 91% of families participating in both the annual fund and gala. The next head of school will want to be actively engaged in advancement efforts with an eye towards a future campaign.



Strategic Plan 2022

In 2022 the school adopted the [Catherine Cook Strategic Plan 2022](#) with a commitment to three pillars in support of their mission and vision for teaching and learning. The head of school will fully embrace the strategic plan, utilizing the three pillars as guides in building organization capacity and for continuous improvement mindset. Those three pillars are:

I. Inspire Learning

Further our commitment to leading with a robust and challenging student-centered academic program, defined by authentic experiences, purposeful learning, and innovative practices, focused on the whole child.

II. Embrace Community

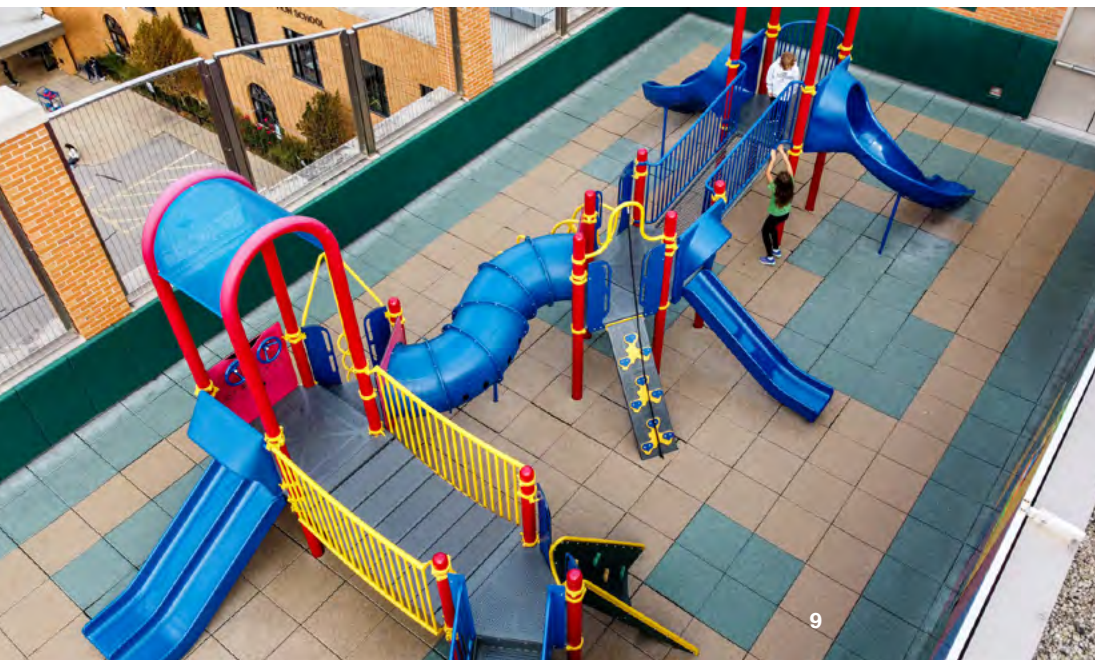
Ensure a strong and inclusive community to support the learning, connection, and development of our entire school and external partners.

III. Prioritize Investment

Develop long-range financial and facilities plans that prioritize intentional investment and growth to achieve our vision and enhance our impact.

Place

Located in the [Old Town](#) neighborhood in the Near North Side and Lincoln Park area of Chicago, Catherine Cook School was established in 1975 as a cooperative nursery and moved to an independent school model in 1997. As with many nurseries, the school began in the basement of a neighborhood church, and in 1990 when their lease expired, the school purchased and renovated the [B & B Shoe Company](#) building at 226 West Schiller Street, adjacent to the church. Alex Anagnost, the owner of the building, agreed to sell the property to the school if the trustees would rename the school after his deceased mother, Catherine Anagnost Cook, a Greek immigrant who became the first woman in Illinois to pass the bar without attending law school. She was well known in the community as an attorney and civic leader.



Opportunities and Expectations for the next Head of School

Catherine Cook School has a shining spirit brought to life by dedicated faculty, joyful students, and committed parents who are eager to support and strengthen all aspects of the community. The next head will have the opportunity to build on the school's core strengths, clarify and solidify the strategic vision, and lead the school community to ensure all children are ready to thrive in high school and beyond.

The next head of school will be committed to driving forward the following areas of strategic importance:

Leadership: The head of school should lead in a manner that distributes leadership responsibilities clearly and act decisively in a transparent fashion that builds a shared sense of purpose and vision. There will be an opportunity to clarify the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the administrative team and program leaders. It is expected that the head of school will develop the leadership capacity of the school while fully executing the initiatives of a dynamic strategic plan.

The leadership at Catherine Cook must ensure the viability of the school by appropriately weighing income and expenses, including tuition affordability, faculty and staff compensation, annual and capital fundraising, and other revenue opportunities. The head of school should be an experienced educational leader focused on developing a diverse, inclusive, performance-based leadership model that will include institutional planning for continuous improvement and change management in a world-class educational marketplace.

Faculty and Staff: The recruitment, professional development, compensation and retention of high-quality faculty and staff is an ongoing, essential priority. Along with finding the best people who will drive student success, the new head must empower their staff to achieve school goals, measure progress, and encourage positive accountability at all levels.

Academic Excellence: Catherine Cook resides in a highly competitive independent school climate, and the school must further define and strengthen its innovative, inclusive academic programs to distinguish itself among its competition. Both parents and teachers hold the strong desire for the school to be differentiated by programs that are diverse, student-centered, inquiry-based, innovative, and grounded in fundamental academic skills enhanced by the latest technology.

Communication and Enrollment: The head of school is “the face” of Catherine Cook School internally and externally. Catherine Cook relies on enrollment to be financially sustainable. The head of school will work closely with the admissions team to enhance efforts to achieve optimal enrollment for the school. The next head will need to be a highly effective communicator in all senses of the word. Working with the board, leadership team, and the professional staff, the head will continue to clarify the message around Catherine Cook's innovative program and elevate the profile of the school within the Chicagoland area, if not nationally, as a leader as an inclusive, inquiry-based teaching and learning experience for early childhood to eighth grade students.

Climate and Culture: Catherine Cook has made significant strides in becoming a model of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of school and community life. This inclusive and warm atmosphere has been bolstered by intentional efforts to ensure that the social and emotional health of students, faculty, and staff are well-supported and celebrated. The new head of school will be challenged to maintain the school's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and continuing to strengthen initiatives that support equity and justice.

Ideal Candidate Attributes and Experiences

The successful candidate to serve as the next Head of School at Catherine Cook School will be an energetic and focused, decisive leader committed to engaging the greater community around a well-articulated vision. Have an exceptional commitment to leading a student centered, highly academic program with a balanced approach that respects the importance of inclusion and innovation in all areas of school life is essential.

Candidates will be able to demonstrate successful experience in the following:

- Being a relationship builder who will unite the community around a shared mission and vision that holds the individual child at the center of all discussions and decisions.
- Team-based leadership that is collaborative, inclusive and transparent, with the ability to empower and delegate effectively
- Proven ability to think strategically and be a thought leader on education (innovation) while creating a culture of continuous improvement
- Aptitude for and commitment to financial management and fundraising
- Recruiting, retaining, supporting and compensating diverse, high quality faculty and staff.

Candidates should demonstrate the following executive leadership and management abilities and credentials:

- A record of achievement with at least seven years of senior administrative experience, with previous head of school experience preferred
- Clear, consistent, and timely communication skills—listening, speaking, and writing
- Exceptional organizational and interpersonal skills
- Promotion of a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging throughout the community
- An advanced degree and demonstrated professional development.

Candidates for the Head of School at Catherine Cook will have well developed personal qualities including:

- Being accessible and approachable – a visible and engaged school presence
- Possessing a love for children and the commitment to their learning and development
- Having commitment and respect for the importance of the school-family partnership
- Being wise, collaborative and compassionate, yet decisive in their decision-making
- Being innovative and inspiring with exceptional emotional intelligence
- Being authentic, humble, and practical
- Comfortable in all social situations with exceptional cultural competency and strong interpersonal skills.

Information on the Search Process

A search is underway to identify a new Head of School by January 30, 2024, who will assume the position on July 1, 2024.

Catherine Cook School is a member of the *National Association of Independent Schools* and will follow *NAIS Principles of Good Practice regarding Head of School searches*.

The School has engaged the national executive search firm, Educational Directions to assist the Search Committee and the Catherine Cook School community with the search. Please direct all inquiries, applications, and nominations in confidence to:

Dr. Jerry Larson jerry.larson@edudx.com

Mike Murphy mike.murphy@edudx.com

Candidates should express their interest and begin the application process as soon as possible. It is expected that interested candidates will contact the consultants prior to submitting their application portfolio for additional information. Catherine Cook School and Educational Directions seek a wide-variety of candidates, including those who have been traditionally underrepresented in positions of leadership in independent schools.

Candidates should submit:

- A letter of interest addressed to the Search Committee explaining their clear interest in Catherine Cook School
- Current resume
- The names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and affiliation to the candidates of five (5) professional references. References will be contacted, though after obtaining permission from the candidate. (Finalists will be expected to provide seven (7) additional references.)
- A personal statement regarding their professional journey and educational and leadership philosophy
- Any additional information that supports your candidacy (letters of reference, professional writing, speeches, presentations, etc.)
- Semi-Finalist Candidates will participate in a preliminary video interview and also be asked to submit to a third-party background check and may be asked to participate in a leadership self-assessment.



Calendar for the Search

Declaration of Interest	<i>November 1, 2023</i>
Completed Application Deadline	<i>November 10, 2023, if not sooner</i>
Candidates notified of status	<i>November 29, 2023</i>
Semifinalist Interviews	<i>December 9 & 10, 2023</i>
Finalist Interviews	<i>January 9 – 19, 2024</i>

Educational Directions and Catherine Cook School reserve the right to accelerate the search timeline for highly qualified candidates.

Compensation will be highly competitive with similar ISACS schools.

Catherine Cook School is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer and actively seeks a diverse and broad spectrum of qualified candidates for the head of school position.

Catherine Cook School and Educational Directions do not discriminate against qualified applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, sexual identity, religion, age or physical disability.