



ST. THOMAS SCHOOL

# Head of School

## Opportunity Statement

November 2023







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# St. Thomas School

## Medina, Washington

St. Thomas School (STS) is one of the most highly regarded PS-8th schools in the Pacific Northwest.

After 19 years of growth under the leadership of Dr. Kirk Wheeler, STS seeks a visionary leader to build upon the school's successes and to create even greater opportunities for its students.

The strength of the STS community is matched by its distinctive blend of cutting-edge educational approaches and its strong sense of tradition.

This is a compelling position for educators seeking a place to lead and to grow within an extraordinary school culture.

## MISSION

The mission of St. Thomas School is to develop responsible citizens of a global society. In partnership with parents, we inspire and motivate intellectually curious students. Our small, nurturing environment supports the acquisition of a broad academic foundation with an emphasis on critical thinking, leadership skills, and the development of strong character and spiritual awareness.

## VISION

A recognized leader in early childhood through eighth grade education, St. Thomas School provides an educational journey defined by a cognitively rigorous program with an emphasis on developing character, leadership, and a passion for learning and achievement.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At St. Thomas School, our day-to-day decisions, policies, and programs are based on a core set of guiding beliefs. These beliefs provide a framework designed to help us thrive as a community. Our goal is to provide a learning environment that nurtures our students and celebrates their accomplishments. In order to do so, we believe we must set forth clear expectations and essential principles that help shape the school as a vital, growing community of learners.

- Curriculum with Coherence
- Commitment to Character
- A Community of Learners
- Climate for Learning

## CORE VIRTUES

Gratitude	Courage
Compassion	Tolerance
Integrity	Perseverance
Respect	Responsibility
Generosity	

## DIVERSITY STATEMENT

We commit to an inclusive and diverse community in which everyone can say, "I belong."

We will foster:

- A diverse, safe, and equitable school environment.
- Actions and advocacy that support our Core Virtues.
- Cultural competence, anti-bias, and social justice.
- Intellectually curious and engaged global citizenship.





## DISCOVERY OBSERVATIONS

Within minutes of stepping onto the STS campus, one sees happy students being greeted and supported by nurturing members of the faculty and staff. The school building and grounds are beautiful and spectacular, full of color and natural light, sustainably built, and optimally designed for community and learning.

*"We come here seeking growth and want a leader who can help provide this growth."*

This was the first comment we heard at an early-morning faculty meeting at the start of the Discovery visit. Heads were nodding throughout the room – it was an impressive introduction to the vibrant and talented STS faculty.

Other comments in the meeting included:

*"You are encouraged to be innovative here. You can make mistakes."*

*"There is a sense of community, among us all."*

*"We want to create the best learning environment possible."*

*"We are constantly innovating and learning, about both education and the world our students will enter. We are futuristic."*

Later in the day, it was no wonder that parents said things like:

*"The teachers here are best in class, thoughtful and intentional!"*

*"This school is happier than a lot of places!"*

*"The teachers here are amazing – consistent, caring, and able to set high standards."*

*"Every single day I'm reminded that I made a good choice enrolling my child at STS. It is so well balanced. Students have fun."*

As the visit continued, we saw it ourselves: hard-working teachers at work, in classrooms where students were consistently engaged in meaningful individual and group tasks. It was very impressive.

STS's curriculum, spread across three age-appropriate divisions, is research based and rich on all counts. Few schools have so effectively integrated educational technology into students' lives, which is not surprising given the school's status as a Microsoft Showcase School with many Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts on the faculty.

STS is a global leader in this regard, often hosting schools from around the world hoping to emulate the school's approach in its Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI).

As befits the high-tech Seattle/Bellevue/Medina region, STEM is everywhere, but so is art, music, theater, outdoor activity, and play. The recently-completed Athletics and Performing Arts Center (APAC) is a state-of-the-art facility for these endeavors, as is the expansive play and athletics area.

There are markers of community throughout the campus. Students are warmly greeted as they arrive in the morning (moving through an impressive, but not oppressive, security protocol).

When you walk into a classroom, the current student "class ambassador" quickly greets you and explains what the class is working on. As you enjoy observing the effective and immersive, work at hand, it is hard to move on to the next classroom. You can see the impact of the school's strong emphasis on character development as you meet students and watch them interact.

STS also has a thoughtfully structured system of student support in its Center for Responsive Learning (CRL) – we witnessed caring one-on-





one work meeting individual student needs there.

Chapel is a community tradition: a time for gathering, sharing, reflection, and togetherness. Though the school is non-sectarian and welcoming to all, this program provides a spiritual component to a student's overall development.

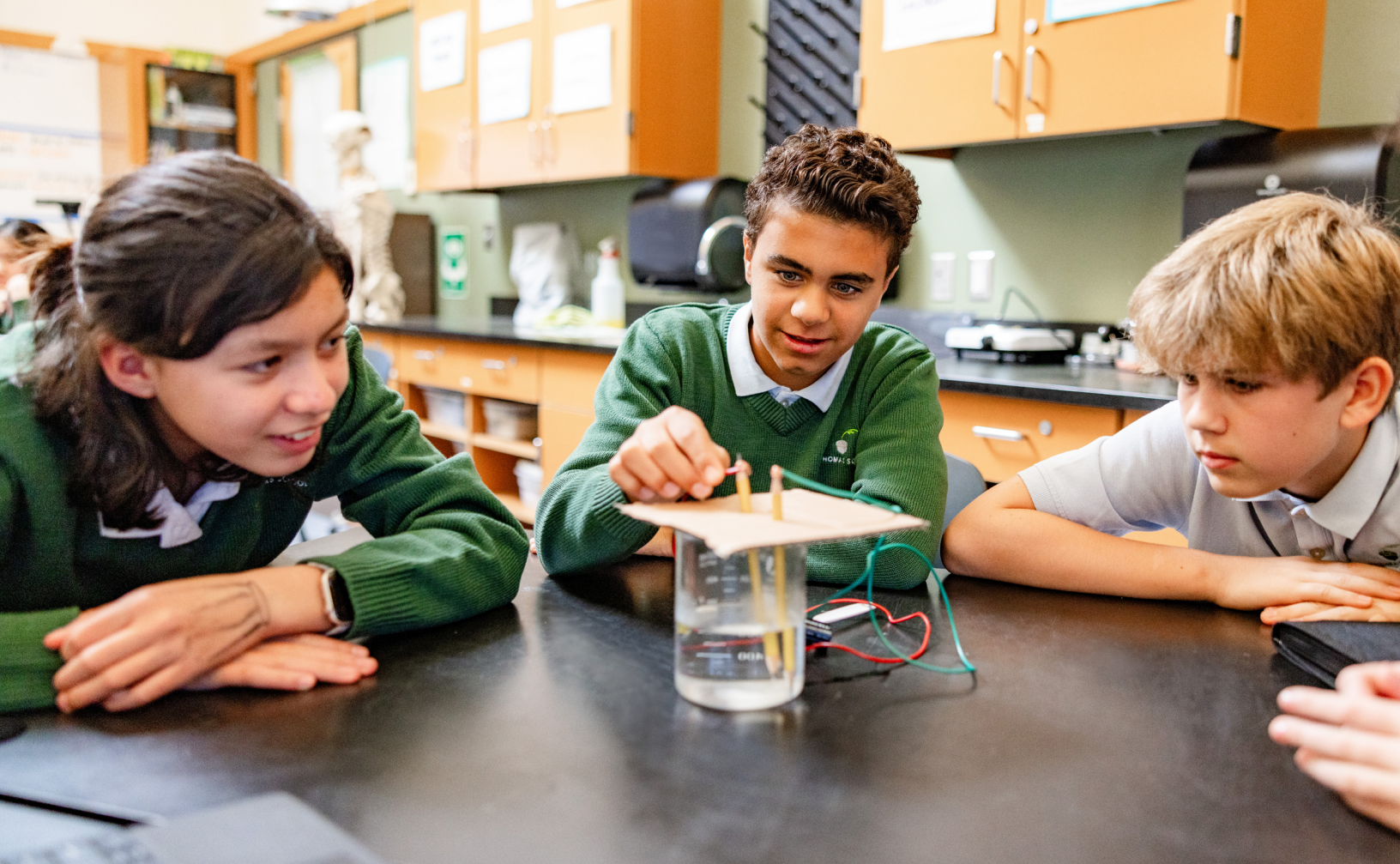
Another place of gathering is the dining hall, full of good food and spirit provided through Sage Dining – it gets high marks from the community! There was a strong response to the community survey conducted after visiting the school. When asked for strengths and attributes of the school that would attract candidates to the head of school position, over 35 ideas were shared, evidence of connectedness within the community and the desire of all constituencies to attract a new, mission-consistent, and visionary leader. They included:

- Talented and caring faculty and staff.
- Overall strength of the school culture and community.
- Emphasis on building student character, leadership, and other interpersonal skills.
- Academic excellence, curriculum, STEM, and future focus.

- Supportive parent body and board of trustees.
- Remarkable physical plant and grounds.
- Commitment to innovation, experimentation, and edgework.
- Overall school resources.
- Campus safety and security.
- Focus on the whole child.







As in all schools, challenges were mentioned as well. As the search unfolds, the Committee will be looking for candidates prepared to take on work such as:

- Hiring and retaining excellent faculty and staff, and providing strong compensation, against the backdrop of the cost of living around Seattle.
- Addressing conflicting parental views about providing more academic focus vs. those hoping to maintain strong academics in a balanced whole-child program.
- Growing enrollment in and decreasing attrition from the Middle School.
- Reconciling the varying opinions about diversity, inclusion, and belonging work within the school community. The community, at the moment, is more bicultural than multicultural, calling for different approaches in this work than in many schools.
- Exploring the collaborative relationship

between our non-sectarian school and St. Thomas Church, determining how the chapel program can both honor our heritage and embrace a more diverse community.

- Continuing to meet the needs of diverse learners on campus along with a thoughtful approach to supporting students who may ultimately need a different learning environment.

Given the rising tendency for people in schools, and beyond, to differ on essential questions, the next head of school's ability to foster community and a generosity of spirit among constituents with differing points of view will be important. To assist with this and provide clarity for the community, the board of trustees will create and share a "charge" for the new head of school.

Dr. Wheeler's timely announcement of his departure and continuing service through June 2025, as well as the board of trustees' thoughtful



and expeditious search, will assist in this transition.

## THE POSITION

The head of school will carry out the broad educational policies established by the board and act within the limits of the financial policy set by that body. Within these basic guidelines, the Head will:

- Determine the methods for carrying out board policies.
- Create operational policy.
- Oversee the business operation.
- Develop and evaluate student programs, services, and curriculum.
- Provide administrative and professional leadership for faculty and staff.
- Orchestrate external relations including advancement and admission work.
- Assume responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school.
- Maintain an effective relationship with St. Thomas Church.

Above all, the head of school will be a consistent and positive presence in the lives of students, faculty and staff, and parents.

## COMPETENCIES

From a list of desirable traits for the new head of school, community members most selected:

- Effective communicator.
- Positive attitude.
- Ability to inspire others to act.
- Strategic thinker.

The board of trustees also went through a Competency Generator exercise and collectively arrived at six important skills for the new head of school (see below).

In summation, STS's leadership and innovation in education, its culture and community, its resources, and its location make this one of the most compelling independent school headships open for July 2025. If this opportunity sounds exciting, we welcome you to apply soon.

### St. Thomas School- Head of School Competency Model



#### Drives Vision & Purpose

Painting a compelling picture of the vision and strategy that motivates others to action.



#### Instills Trust

Gaining the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity, and authenticity.



#### Communicates Effectively

Developing and delivering multi mode communications that convey a clear understanding of the unique needs of different audiences.



#### Strategic Mindset

Seeing ahead to future possibilities and translating them into breakthrough strategies.



#### Cultivates Innovation

Creating new and better ways for the organization to be successful.



#### Builds Effective Team

Building strong teams with a strong identity that apply their diverse skills and perspectives to achieve common goals.



### ANTICIPATED SEARCH CALENDAR

Application Deadline: February 9, 2024  
 Semifinalist Interviews: March 4 – 6, 2024  
 Finalist Visits: March 11 – 21, 2024  
 Starting Date: July 1, 2025

### SALARY RANGE

\$360,000-\$420,000 with generous benefits package. Eligible for performance based bonus.

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND SEARCH PROCESS

DRG Talent Advisory Group is conducting this search on behalf of St. Thomas School. To discuss this opportunity in more detail, contact our consultants:

- Andrew Watson, senior search consultant  
[awatson@drgtalent.com](mailto:awatson@drgtalent.com)
- Peter Thorp, search consultant  
[pthorp94109@gmail.com](mailto:pthorp94109@gmail.com)

Candidates should submit, as soon as possible, materials including the following:

- A cover letter indicating why they are particularly interested in and qualified for the position.
- A current resume.
- A statement of educational/leadership philosophy.
- The name, email address, and telephone

number of five references, to include the relationship with the references. (We will obtain permission from candidates, at the finalist stage, before contacting references.)

- Optional: other supporting material (articles, speeches, videos, or letters of recommendation) that would be useful to the Search Committee.
- Candidates should upload materials directly to the DRG website by visiting the St. Thomas School listing at [St. Thomas Head of School Search](#).

### NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

St. Thomas School does not discriminate on the basis of age (over 40), sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, creed, color, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability, or other characteristic or status protected by applicable federal, state or local law. This policy applies to all aspects of employment and, except for age, to student admissions, athletics, educational policies, financial, and other school-administered programs.

This position description is based upon material provided by St. Thomas School, an equal-opportunity employer.