



# Position Statement Head of School Seacrest Country Day School



Naples, Florida  
Start Date: July 1, 2025



# Head of School Position Statement



## Overview

Seacrest Country Day School was founded in 1983 with just 18 pre-kindergarten students in a rich and beautiful setting on the edge of the Florida Everglades. The school has grown over the last 40 years to become what it is today; an early-learning through Grade 12 mission-driven college preparatory school in Naples, Florida. Founding Head of School, Dr. Jane Kern, focused on a whole-child education and placed curiosity and a love of learning at the center of the Seacrest experience where they remain today, among the educational principles of the school:

- **Intellectual Engagement:** Students are challenged each day to achieve their full academic potential; intellectual risk taking and creativity are expected and rewarded.
- **Authentic Learning:** Students discover the joy of learning as a lifelong process that enriches our lives.
- **Collaboration and Integrative Thinking:** Students and teachers come together to learn, explore and discuss; wrestling with essential questions and real-world applications across disciplines leads to deeper overall understanding.
- **Integrity and Community Responsibility:** Students count and are counted upon; they are responsible for their words, actions, and attitudes.
- **Leadership, Empathy, and Service:** Students become leaders who understand the needs of others and harness the power of community to effect change and build lives of significance.

Seacrest is, above all things, a mission and values driven school and a strong sense of community among learners, faculty and parents is one of the most notable and commented on characteristics among faculty, staff and parents alike. Students and parents can often be found on campus after the school day ends, joining in rich after-school programming, free play in the Lower School community garden or participating in athletic training or events. It is often remarked that students don't want to leave campus when their work in the classroom is done.

As Seacrest looks towards the 24/25 academic year it is clear that this is a moment of transition for the school. The Board has hired an experienced Interim Head of School who began his tenure at Seacrest in March of 2024 and will continue with the school through the end of the 24/25 academic year. The summer period will see the school focusing on the onboarding of a new Head of Upper School and several other key positions. Clear action items for the year ahead include a continuation of recent school-wide curriculum project, a renewed focus on faculty professional development, campus improvements and upgrades, enhanced donor stewardship and a refocus on attraction and retention of students and families as the business of each member of the team.





# Head of School Position Statement



## Mission and Values



**We believe:** Within each student is a source of unlimited potential and opportunity. Leadership, ethics and character, creativity, and joy-guideposts of our school culture-are woven through the curriculum and serve as the underlying principles of a Seacrest education.

**Our Mission:** Seacrest Country Day School is committed to fueling intellectual engagement, teaching ownership of the educational experience, cultivating quality of character, and inspiring students to lead lives of significance.

**Our Guiding Values:** Our values guide us in the choices we make, the words we speak, and the actions we take.

- **Curiosity:** We think deeply and find solutions where obstacles once existed. We employ curiosity as the fuel for innovation and discovery.
- **Integrity:** We are honest and dependable in our actions and words.
- **Kindness:** We treat everyone we meet with kindness and compassion. Before we speak or act, we consider its impact on others.
- **Perseverance:** We are steadfast in meeting our obligations and reaching our goals.
- **Respect:** We treat everyone we interact with respect and dignity. We seek to understand alternative viewpoints, and perspectives.
- **Responsibility:** We are accountable for our words, actions, and our futures. We consider how our actions will affect others.

# Head of School Position Statement



## The Place

Imagine a flat, 40-acre campus in lush, subtropical Southwest Florida, adorned with flowers and dotted with palms, abuzz with the hum of busy students and the occasional cackle of a hen rising from the student-tended chicken coop. As you explore further, you are amazed by a spotless campus that is home for Baby Rays all the way up to high school seniors soon heading off to college. You have discovered Seacrest Country Day School.

Once inside the campus, the lay-out becomes self-explanatory, with play spaces, classrooms, buildings and labs arranged according to students' ages. Gardens, picnic tables and outdoor play spaces surround the Lower School and an aquaculture pond, organic garden, apiary and chicken coop enhance sustainability programming in the Upper School. Computer labs and robotics spaces, performing and visual arts spaces along with a soccer and track complex, softball and baseball fields and two gymnasiums anchor elective arts and athletics programming. The central Courtyard space, home to an outdoor "stage", hums with activity during the day, particularly on a Friday morning for Flag Ceremony, and a second outdoor Canopy area is home to lunch tables and special school events.

This is a family-centered school where parents are often on campus, encouraged to take part in school life and where they develop a true sense of belonging. The feel of the campus is that of a family environment, reflecting warmth and togetherness. Indeed, students and adults alike comment on the inclusiveness of the environment and a pervasive sense of kindness throughout the buildings and walkways. A teacher says, "I work with wonderful people," and you get the sense that she really means it. To learn more about the Seacrest Parents Association:

<https://www.seacrest.org/community/parent/spa>



The Naples area is vibrant, known for its natural beauty, including pristine Gulf Coast beaches, crystal clear waters, and abundant wildlife. The school's location offers multiple opportunities for outdoor activities on campus as well as more widely. There is an active arts scene in Naples with thriving galleries, theaters, and museums, all of which help to contribute to a strong sense of community with friendly people and a safe, welcoming atmosphere. Seacrest's surroundings provide a rich and supportive setting for students to grow and thrive.

# Head of School Position Statement



## The Program

Parents speak appreciatively of Seacrest's whole-child approach to education and the school's willingness to accommodate a variety of learning styles. But more than that, what they really appreciate is the caring faculty. To an extent unusual in all but the finest independent schools, the Seacrest faculty really live the Mission of the school; fueling intellectual engagement, teaching ownership of the educational experience, cultivating quality of character, and inspiring students to lead lives of significance.

What parent wouldn't respond favorably when a child says, "My teachers understand me"? As another student says, "The faculty believe in you and are willing to go above and beyond for you." The curriculum emphasizes sequential skill development as well as character education. To learn more:

<https://www.seacrest.org/academics/seeds-of-seacrest>

Intellectual engagement is the driving force behind the mission of the school, along with the belief that students should own their educational experience. Instilling in students a sense of agency is a major step on the road to independence and intellectual maturity. Not content to educate the mind alone, Seacrest is also committed to character development and physical education. "Do well and do good" is one of the program's aims and is emphasized throughout.

### Lower School

Integrated learning is the approach taken in the Lower School (Grades K-5), where a parent says, "You can feel the heart of the school; lower schoolers are known and cared for." Literacy, science, technology, and math are taught through a problem-based approach that emphasizes skills acquisition. The faculty has worked to align the curriculum across the division. Enhanced by a Math Hub and a STEAM Center, the Lower School curriculum is rich and varied, emphasizing a hands-on approach to learning that includes Art and Music and Spanish for all students.

The performing arts play a key role in developing confidence, strongly supported by required public speaking instruction. Whether it's James and the Giant Peach in the Lower School or Six, a sophisticated recent Broadway musical, there is room for everyone in the performing arts. To learn more about this school-wide program:

<https://www.seacrest.org/arts/performing-arts>

The hands-on approach to learning is particularly evident in the LEGO Robotics program, instruction in pre-coding SMART games, two computer labs and the STEAM Center. The Lower school students initiate the whole school Poultry Project by tending to the hatching of chicks who are cared for by the Middle School and they watch as the Upper School students harvest, package and sell the eggs.

### Middle School

By the time they reach Middle School (Grades 6-8), Seacrest's students are ready for pre-Algebra and to be introduced to the principles of physics, chemistry, and biology that will form the bases of their subsequent study of science. To learn more:

<https://www.seacrest.org/science>





# Head of School Position Statement



They have the opportunity to continue their study of Spanish or to add French. As part of Seacrest's whole-child approach to education, Music and Art continue to be important parts of the program throughout Middle School, along with Health and Physical Education. The integrated humanities program culminates each spring in the creation of a student-created Film Festival framed by information from history, with a story board written by the students that includes a sound track. Then to cap it all off, the film has subtitles in Spanish and is presented to an audience of appreciative parents and teachers.

The daily Advisory meetings are a pillar of the Middle School program; an important component of the school's commitment to social-emotional wellness and to the development of executive functioning skills. Emphasizing the values of Integrity and Respect, Responsibility and Accountability, Pride and Humility, and Relationships, Middle School is a pivotal time in a young person's life and recognizing the importance of healthy relationships and self-concepts is a hallmark of Seacrest's Middle School experience.

## Upper School

The aim of the high school program is to present a strong curriculum with practical hands-on learning

opportunities. Honors level and Advanced Placement classes and electives challenge students to become independent thinkers and the elective opportunities are intriguing: courses like "Literature and War," "Detective Fiction," and "Global Sustainability" all stretch the mind and the imagination, just as the Poultry Project and Beekeeping address the practical side of the brain. The opportunity to study at a nearby Gulf Coast beach or the Florida Keys as part of the school's Marine Biology program is a gift almost too good to be true for a high school student. The result of such a strong and balanced program is a senior class ready for the rigors of college, used to independent thinking, creative problem-solving, efficient time-management and committed to good citizenship (as evidenced by the 120 hours of service each senior has performed).

Throughout the Middle and Upper Schools, athletics play an important role. The school has fielded outstanding teams in a variety of sports, with notable recent success in volleyball (3 consecutive Florida 2A State Championships in 2022, 2023 and 2024). There are 32 interscholastic teams at Seacrest, many students are two or three sports athletes, and some 10% of their graduates go on to play sports in college. To learn more: <https://www.seacrest.org/athletics/our-teams>



# Head of School Position Statement



## College Counseling

The College Counseling program at Seacrest sets the school apart with a customized, student centered journey that prioritizes the right fit college for each student in the Upper School. The small size of each class allows for a focused program that sees each student and family spend quality time with the College Counselor and feel extremely confident in the process and the outcome. To learn more:

<https://www.seacrest.org/academics/college-counseling>

## The Learning Lab

The Learning Lab at Seacrest is a place where students with language based learning differences thrive. Students in each of the academic divisions have access to the school's Learning Lab and the Learning Specialists who support the program. The Lower School program uses Orton-Gillingham based instruction and the Middle and Upper School programs are based in a coaching and mentoring model. Seacrest's ability to enable and encourage students with positive reinforcement through the Learning Lab is noteworthy. There is no stigma at Seacrest attached to a student with dyslexia, dysgraphia or ADHD, just awareness that help is always at hand. To learn more: <https://www.seacrest.org/academics/learning-lab>

Seacrest is dual accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools and the Southern Association of Independent Schools and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools.

## Operations and Finance

### Buildings & Grounds

When wandering the 40-acre campus, it is nearly impossible to appreciate that there is only one groundskeeper – noteworthy in any school but more so in a campus as spread out as Seacrest's. Much of the credit, of course, goes to the students who help keep the campus tidy, and that itself is unusual and commendable. Ordinarily, one would expect such

neatness in an oppressive environment, but there is nothing oppressive about Seacrest. Again, one is left with the very real sense of a school where kindness and thoughtfulness are parts of the daily life. The condition of the campus notwithstanding, there are items of deferred maintenance that need attending, but overall the plant is in good shape, paralleling the school's financial condition. Over the years since its' founding, Seacrest has purchased multiple parcels of land to expand its campus to the 40-acres it enjoys today.

### Finances

The financial strength of the school has varied over the years and there is agreement that financial stewardship remains a key focus moving forward. Leadership instability, lasting impacts from the pandemic and increased attrition have led to budget constraints and operating deficits. School leadership and the Board of Trustees have worked hard in the last several years to bring the school budget back in line and ensure fiscal responsibility remains top of mind in all decisions. The school has taken on a manageable amount of debt recently as a part of financial and budgetary restructuring with an affordable repayment plan fully in place.





# Head of School Position Statement



The school will start the 24/25 academic year with a sound financial plan and a sense of ownership across all divisions. Salaries are not yet at the level the Trustees seek, but increased enrollment and improved giving will help the school move in that direction. Seacrest has a strong commitment to its' financial aid program which comprises an above average percentage of the annual budget. The school will be making an investment in financial reserves, the first time it has been able to do so, and a sign of positive financial progress.

## Development

Development is both an area of success and opportunity at Seacrest. The school's annual gala has a long history of generosity in the community and that continues to this day. The Seacrest Fund will enhance its ability to support the school annually with continued education and increased participation. The Interim Head is taking leadership in fundraising under his wing and that augurs well for its continued growth. He has secured over \$350,000 in gifts for capital and technology improvements which will be undertaken this summer and conversations continue with donors to enable the school to increase this short term investment.

## Faculty and Administration

Relations between students and teachers at all levels of the school appear to be exemplary. Each group speaks thoughtfully and appreciatively of the other. The faculty are especially to be lauded for the way in which they have kept issues related to leadership turnover in recent years from creeping into the classroom; the business of teaching and learning has continued unabated. It is often remarked the faculty are the heart of Seacrest and this is universally supported by parents and leadership alike.

Change in headship at the school has occurred in recent years which has, at times, left the school without clear strategic direction. The Board of Trustees has taken recent steps to ensure this turnover comes to an end. It is clear that the Board is moving in a positive direction both with a strong interim head appointment and a professional search for a new leader. The Board is being strongly led and able to speak with one voice as it supports its new leadership.





# Head of School Position Statement



## Strengths and Opportunities

The next Head of School at Seacrest Country Day can build on the following established strengths:

- Strong, clearly understood and well supported mission, values and guiding principles;
- Engaged and talented faculty and staff;
- Passionate and supportive parent body;
- Clearly articulated strategic plan;
- Strong college counseling program;
- High quality Learning Lab supporting students with language-based learning differences; and
- A beautiful, spacious campus with outdoor space for students to learn and grow.

Seacrest has several challenges and opportunities the next Head of School will need to be prepared to address:

- Sustain and enhance the school's academic standards while adapting to changes in curriculum and pedagogy;
- Ensure the financial stability of the school by managing budgets effectively and seeking ways to increase revenue streams;
- Recruit and retain students in a competitive environment;
- Further incorporate technology into the curriculum;
- Increase professional development opportunities for faculty and staff; and
- Build strong relationships with parents, alumni, and the surrounding community.



It is important to note, the school's current Interim Head has done an excellent job at addressing the school's major issues. They won't all have been tended to by the end of the coming school year, but candidates can be assured that Seacrest will continue to make positive progress in the coming academic year, thanks to the good work of the Board and the Interim Head.

We believe the upside for Seacrest is tremendous. With a Head who is committed to the school long-term, who is a worker and a builder, someone with an entrepreneurial bent, the sky is the limit. Increased enrollment, improved giving, a unified parent body, winning teams and bright students will all be signs of a veritable rebirth of Seacrest Country Day School. There is no reason this can't, or won't, take place. The potential that resides in Seacrest's students, teachers, parents, and trustees strikes us as limitless. A Head who brings a visible work ethic, gravitas in academics coupled with levitas in human relations will be a resounding success. Sound leadership, good faith, serious education, and an environment that promotes both enjoyment and accomplishment will enable Seacrest to become the school it has long sought to be. As of right now, there's nothing in its way.

# Head of School Position Statement



## The next Head will likely be:

- Adept at bringing people together;
- Decisive in hiring and evaluating teachers and administrators;
- Approachable and open;
- An optimist with a “can-do” attitude;
- Likeable, with a sense of humor;
- Experienced in K-12 schools, ideally as Head;
- Have a track record as a fundraiser;
- Speak well in public and enjoy “telling the story”;
- Be at home leading a community of learners – students, teachers, and parents alike;
- Know about admissions and marketing;
- Understand the business of school and balance it with the Seacrest culture;
- Go to games and plays and concerts, be visible; and
- Be committed to enabling Seacrest to flower in all the ways it can.



## To Apply

Upload a cover letter, a resume, and a writing sample through the candidate portal on <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>.

The deadline is: **September 1, 2024.**

Tom Hudnut  
[tom@tomhudnut.com](mailto:tom@tomhudnut.com)

and

Debbie Reed  
[dereed2014@gmail.com](mailto:dereed2014@gmail.com)