



NORWOOD-FONTBONNE
ACADEMY



PRESIDENT

July 2025

Philadelphia, PA

An Independent Catholic academy for preschool to eighth grade students located in the heart of historic Chestnut Hill.

A Sponsored Ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph since 1920

MISSION

Founded in 1920 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Norwood-Fontbonne Academy is a Catholic Independent academy for preschool to eighth grade students. Committed to a strong academic program, Norwood-Fontbonne Academy offers both Montessori and a creative interactive education enriched by service learning, outreach, and co-curricular experiences. Within a faith-filled community, students are challenged to become self-directed persons who live gospel values, enjoy learning, make reflective choices, and treasure themselves, others, and the earth.

ACADEMY VISION

The Norwood-Fontbonne Student is one who...

- enjoys learning,
- treasures self, others, and the earth,
- lives Gospel values, and
- makes reflective choices as a self-directed person.



NFA BY THE NUMBERS

ENROLLMENT

- Montessori Pre-School (3-5 year-olds): 78
- Pre-Primary (3-5 year-olds): 17
- Kindergarten: 10
- Junior Level Montessori (grades 1-3): 45
- Primary School (grades 1-3): 41
- Intermediate School (grades 4-5): 48
- Middle School (grades 6-8): 104

STUDENT DIVERSITY

- 26% students of color and 40% of students are non-Catholic

FACULTY

- Montessori: 6 faculty, 6 assistants
- Pre-Primary and Kindergarten: 2 faculty, 1 assistant
- Primary: 3 faculty
- Grades 4-8: 13 faculty
- Enrichment: 9
- Administrators: 2
- Directors: 9
- Staff: 19
- Faculty with advanced degrees: 65.6%

TUITION

- Pre-Primary and Montessori Pre-School
 - \$12,925 (half days)
 - \$15,700 (full days)
- Kindergarten and Montessori 5-year-olds
 - \$14,820 (three full days)
 - \$15,700 (five full days)
- Grades 1-8: \$15,700





THE OPPORTUNITY

Norwood-Fontbonne Academy has opened a national search for a new president to begin leading NFA by July 2025. The school seeks an experienced Catholic educator whose inspirational leadership is student-centered and will ensure an excellent academic program. The president will embody the educational mission and values of the Sisters of Saint Joseph (SSJ) of Philadelphia who are the sponsors of the school.

Norwood-Fontbonne Academy provides an exceptional independent school experience deeply rooted in the Sisters of Saint Joseph's commitment that "We live and work so that all people may be united with God and with one another." The school empowers students through its self-directed approach to learning, its diverse and inclusive community of families and its meaningful service experiences. A physical representation of the school's core strength is the expansive 14-acre campus in the Chestnut Hill Community of Philadelphia which provides students with an environment that fosters independence, openness and active experiences. NFA is comprised of Pre-school through grade 3, with Montessori and Primary options; Intermediate, grades 4-5; and Middle School grades 6-8. The school is accredited through the Middle States Association and the American Montessori Society.

The president will lead an administrative team consisting of the Principal, Director of Institutional Advancement, Director of Business Operations, Director of Facilities and Director of Technology, Director of Admissions, Director of Marketing and Communications, and Director of Mission and Ministry.



HISTORY & HERITAGE AT NFA

The Sisters of Saint Joseph arrived in Philadelphia in 1847 and soon had works in various locations including Center City Philadelphia, Pottsville and McSherrystown, PA. In 1858, at the urging of Bishop (Saint) John Neumann, they moved their Motherhouse from McSherrystown to Chestnut Hill and established Mount Saint Joseph Academy, a boarding school for girls located in the Mount Saint Joseph Convent. In 1878, young boys were admitted into the newly created St. Joseph's Seminary for Little Boys, also housed in the convent building. These two schools formed the nucleus for the present Norwood-Fontbonne Academy. In 1920, Norwood Academy for Boys was established to accommodate 48 boarders, six day students and nine Sisters. The school became a day school in 1969.

In the meantime, during the early 1920s, girls in the elementary level of Mount Saint Joseph Academy were moved to the newly purchased property located at 9001 Germantown Avenue and Fontbonne Academy for Girls opened in 1924. Fontbonne Academy remained open until 1959. At that time, an addition named the Postulate was built next to the school and was used as a house of formation and studies for the new Sisters of Saint Joseph.

In 1971, the Sisters decided to return the formation program to Mount Saint Joseph Convent and the Postulate was renamed Fontbonne Academy. In 1973, it reopened as a girls' school with the addition of a Montessori preschool program similar to that introduced at Norwood Academy in 1969. That year, Norwood Academy for Boys and Fontbonne Academy for Girls merged, forming Norwood-Fontbonne Academy, one school on two campuses. Since then, Norwood-Fontbonne Academy has enjoyed a continuous expansion of programs and facilities. New construction in 2006 included the Fontbonne Commons, a multipurpose building on the Fontbonne Campus, and the addition of the sixth, seventh and eighth grade classroom wing in Sister James Anthony Hall.

In May 2023, Norwood-Fontbonne Academy received \$400,000 from the Local Share Account Grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to support enhancements to the Fontbonne campus, including new pathways, nature trails, lighting, enhanced outdoor learning and recreation and environmental conservation. These outdoor initiatives, from the strategic plan, help NFA fulfill its mission and vision to treasure the Earth.





THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

In a very real sense, NFA is a home for its students and families, alumni, faculty, staff, board members, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, former parents and friends. Within a nurturing community, students feel a strong connectedness to God, their school, their teachers and each other as they are challenged to shape a more compassionate and socially responsible society.

The moment one steps across the threshold of the school's scenic and spacious campuses, one is immediately immersed in the school's joyful and welcoming community. NFA is proud to continue the Sisters' legacy of faith, character and service as integral components of campus life, with the lived experience of the academy's vision being very much alive from the hallways to the classrooms.

While the school remains committed to its Catholic faith and values, it is open to families of all faiths, and the community is supportive of diversity and plurality. To that end, the school aims to ensure that curriculum and facilities address the needs of their diverse community and students learn first-hand the understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Students themselves speak to the friendly atmosphere of the school, that the faculty are supportive of them. They appreciate the independence and collaboration they learn in class and feel that the school has a true sense of community about it. Faculty appreciate the community feel as well and the traditions of the school. They like the small classrooms and the open space that can be utilized around campus. They feel that students leave well-prepared for their high school years.





PROGRAM

Norwood-Fontbonne Academy's two educational programs in the younger grades, Montessori and Primary, provide options for parents with young children to work in partnership with the school to identify the best educational path for each student's learning style. The fundamental educational philosophy of both paths empowers students to be confident and self-aware, make reflective choices and take ownership of their learning. This approach combines academic challenge and a spiritual foundation with abundant opportunities to participate in athletics, the arts and community service.

Norwood-Fontbonne is one of only six accredited programs in Pennsylvania that offers a Montessori program from ages 3 through grade 3. Montessori offers a hands-on, individually paced learning experience in a multi-aged classroom where the teacher is a facilitator. The Primary path (through grade 3) offers an innovative project- and theme-based learning experience in single-age classrooms with teacher-led activities and lessons.

In fourth grade, students from both programs merge seamlessly into the Intermediate program, transitioning into content-specialized curriculum, and continue to grow in self-direction, independence and confidence. Curriculum highlights include enrichment classes in art, music, PE in addition to core subjects; STEM curriculum that uses the design process for students to solve authentic problems; and age-appropriate use of technology.

Middle School focuses on the formation of young adolescents as they prepare for high school. They continue to grow in independence, passion and confidence within cooperative and increasingly demanding academic settings. Students engage in research projects, experience real-world learning opportunities in and out of the classroom, use technology to communicate and collaborate during projects and thrive on the variety of learning settings on the NFA campus. In addition, as the oldest students on campus, they are encouraged to be positive leaders within the school community.

PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

As a sponsored ministry (link to mission and ministry) of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the school is deeply rooted in the Sisters' commitment that "We live and work so that all people may be united with God and with one another." To that end, the school's program includes religious instruction, student-focused school-wide liturgies and prayer services as well as daily classroom prayer experiences. Confirmation preparation is offered for middle school students, in conjunction with their parishes. Students also put their faith in action by participating in service-learning, promoting social justice and being civically engaged. Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching, the school's comprehensive service-learning program encompasses all grades and partners with local non-profits and SSJ -sponsored ministries. As students process the meaning of their service-learning experiences, they develop a raised social consciousness and lifelong commitment to personal and social justice.

Athletics is open to students in grades 4 to 8 participate in the Catholic Academy League (CAL) and through co-curricular sports opportunities, the Norwood-Fontbonne Academy Parent Association (NFAPA) intramural basketball team (grades 1-8). The athletic program is enhanced by its dedicated coaches and mentors who use their abilities, training, time and talents to teach and to enrich the athletic education of the student-athlete in competitive and non-competitive situations. The school offers a variety of team offerings including baseball, lacrosse, field hockey and basketball.





Governance

Norwood-Fontbonne Academy is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph (SSJ). Through their support of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy, the Sisters of Saint Joseph continue to fulfill their mission of unity. The SSJ are committed to working toward active inclusive relationships with the people with whom they serve. They believe that their commitment to collaborate with others helps unite all persons to God and with one another. Nearly 700 Sisters of St. Joseph serve in “any good work” across 19 states as well as overseas. [READ MORE.](#)

Norwood-Fontbonne Academy has experienced a variety of governance structures throughout its history. With the guidance of the current president, Norwood-Fontbonne Academy moved to a new governance structure. The advisory board supports the president with advancing the mission of the school and maintaining its essential character and integrity as articulated in the SSJ’s mission and core values. The advisory board consists of 20 members. Of the 20, five are Sisters of Saint Joseph, with the remainder being current parents, former parents and alumni. Board members bring a broad range of experience and expertise and serve as a tremendous resource to the president.

It is clear that the advisory board is heavily invested in and highly committed to the mission of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy and the school’s success. The work of the president and the board is guided by its current strategic plan “[Directed Toward Tomorrow—2020-2025 Strategic Plan.](#)” The new president will find an exceptional board with a great deal of expertise, one with which the president can form a strong partnership.





THE FUTURE

The board and the president will focus on areas which are guided by the Directed Toward Tomorrow strategic plan, working with all Norwood-Fontbonne Academy constituents to maintain a clear understanding of the mission of a Sisters of Saint Joseph education and the unique identity of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy. The new president of NFA must be comfortable in the role as a Catholic faith leader, committed to excellence in Catholic education and a servant leader within the school community. In addition, the candidate will need to be capable of developing relationships with the Chestnut Hill business community and with school leaders in the surrounding region.

With the completion of the current strategic plan in 2025, the new president will work in close collaboration with the advisory board and the school community (faculty, staff, administration) to establish the next compelling vision for the school, laying out a future for Norwood-Fontbonne Academy that identifies what truly comes next to ensure continuation of being the premier independent elementary school grounded in the mission and values as a ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. To ensure the realization of this vision, the new president will need to focus on:

Sisters of Saint Joseph Catholic Identity: The new president will fully embrace the mission and vision of the Sisters of Saint Joseph to ensure the continuation of a culture that promotes a transformative educational experience for all students. It is critical that the president actively engage with students, faculty, staff, families, alumni and the local community to ensure the school's true sense of community. The ability to promote this sense of family and the tremendous value of the entire Norwood-Fontbonne Academy experience is absolutely essential.

Institutional Advancement: To ensure that Norwood-Fontbonne Academy has the resources to fulfill its mission and vision, the next president will take a leading role in a comprehensive advancement program, which includes fundraising, marketing and outreach, with an understanding of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy's position in the market and the highly competitive landscape. In this context, the president will work with the board and administration on a strong economic model that will support the needs of the school and address critical areas such as affordability, the endowment, capital fundraising efforts and alternative revenue sources.

Enrollment Management: The president will take the lead in enhancing and implementing a wide-ranging, strategic marketing and outreach program, considering Norwood-Fontbonne Academy's position in the Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia area. Specifically, there is opportunity to clearly articulate the unique identity of Norwood-Fontbonne Academy, the values of the school, the outstanding community that is present and its excellent program, all to ensure strong enrollment of mission-appropriate students and families. In addition, the president will promote Norwood's education as an important investment in a child's future as it ensures not only a student's success in high school but a foundation of education and mission-based values for life. The president will actively engage Norwood-Fontbonne Academy constituents in this important endeavor and help them understand the role they play in promoting the school.



THE FUTURE (continued)

Faculty and Staff: NFA has a committed, dedicated and professional faculty and staff. The president will continue to effectively galvanize and appropriately mobilize this talent to carry out the mission of the school. The new president will work with the principal, leadership team, faculty and staff to support and facilitate its commitment to academic excellence and ensure the continued growth of all. It is critical that the new president is attentive to retaining and recruiting faculty who will fully embrace, model and live out the core values of the SSJ charism and Catholic ethos to ensure that the distinctive characteristics of the school's culture are maintained. The next president will honor this commitment to excellence and provide the support and guidance of exploration and experimentation among faculty as they strive to provide a program that meets the needs of today's students and prepare them for the challenges of the future.

Belonging and Inclusion: Consistent with the core values of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, as articulated in "love of dear neighbor without distinction" and "to live and work so that all people may be united with God and with one another," Norwood-Fontbonne Academy is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion as articulated in the current strategic plan. Nevertheless, the community recognizes that understanding and caring is an ongoing process. The next president will fully embrace this commitment to belonging and inclusion and always be guided by SSJ Catholic values, Catholic social teaching and social justice.

Organization: The school has embraced several different leadership models throughout its history and currently operates under the president/principal model. It is believed that this administrative model best meets the needs of the school at this juncture in its history. Given this, it will be important to further refine this administrative model so that there is clarity around the distinct roles and responsibilities of both the president and principal. In addition, it is essential to continually educate all Norwood-Fontbonne Academy constituents about the president/principal mo





THE IDEAL CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES & EXPERIENCE

Norwood-Fontbonne's next president will be a cutting edge and creative educator, who is a practicing Catholic and a reflective and spiritual individual. NFA will be best served by an educational leader whose vision matches the goals, values and charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The president will have significant leadership experience and skills, along with a steadfast resolve to honor the history and purpose of the school's mission and philosophy while innovating for the future. The successful candidate should possess significant and successful executive leadership and management experience, including:

- Being a faith leader for the NFA community, having an understanding of and commitment to the Sisters of Saint Joseph's charism and how that informs the mission of the school;
- Being ready, willing and able to be an integral part of the community and a visible presence in all facets of school life. Norwood's president position is a community-facing position and requires a strong and active presence;
- Developing and delivering on a clear educational vision and speaking clearly about the school's identity;
- Having a passion for and experience in education and the willingness to enhance a culture of learning and high expectations. Have experience in or an appreciation of Montessori education;
- Being a strategic thinker and thought leader, one who is not only able to clearly establish the key priorities of the school but able to engage the appropriate stakeholders and execute the plan;
- Engaging with and supporting a comprehensive external affairs program, including being a leader in fundraising and representing the school in the community;
- Possessing a strategic management style and working closely with the administrative team, faculty and staff to inspire a commitment to excellence throughout the school and to build strong working teams, empowering and delegating appropriately while ensuring cohesive functioning of the school;
- Working closely and comfortably with the advisory board in building a true partnership in leadership; and
- Working in partnership with the newly created role of Sisters of Saint Joseph "Director of Education."

Candidates should possess:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills in a variety of settings, with a variety of constituent groups;
- Ease in engaging with and forging relationships with multiple stakeholder groups;
- Strong organizational and interpersonal skills with exceptional follow-up;
- A commitment to diversity, multiculturalism and globalism;
- Familiarity with the fundamentals of business and the economics of running a school; and
- Prior experience in fundraising.

Norwood-Fontbonne's culture embraces the spirit of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and celebrates the individual gifts of the students. The ideal candidate will exude joy and be an inspiration to those around them, while being humble and empathetic. The new leader will have an appreciation for and be comfortable with young children, be a role model to them and lead them with grace and humor. Finally, they will be someone who wants to be an integral part of the fabric of the school and be an inspirational school community leader, to learn and grow with the community.



THE SEARCH PROCESS

The new president will assume the position in July 2025. The school has engaged Educational Directions, a national executive search firm, to assist the search committee.

Candidates should submit all information as soon as possible, but not before first speaking with one of the search professionals:

Mathew Heersche, Ed.D. mathew.heersche@edudx.com

and

Risa Oganessoff Heersche risa.heersche@edudx.com



Electronic submission of materials is required. Candidates must submit:

- Cover letter explaining why they are interested in and qualified for the president position at Norwood-Fontbonne Academy
- Brief educational leadership statement that includes the candidate's thoughts on leading NFA
- Current resume
- Names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of five professional references

Please send materials in confidence in a consolidated pdf format.

