



Phoenix Country Day School

Head of Upper School

July 2026

Overview

Phoenix Country Day School (PCDS) is looking for a charismatic and innovative leader to serve as the Head of Upper School. Building on a robust academic and co-curricular foundation, the ideal candidate will play a pivotal role in charting the course for what the next generation of college-preparatory high schools will look like. In particular, school leadership is keen to find a teammate who can emphasize “Relevance over Routine” while carefully threading the needle of “Rigor without Ruin.”

In addition, the Head of the Upper School will be joining and leading a community dedicated to a “Triple H” culture: Happy, Healthy, and Hardworking. As noted in the PCDS Strategic Plan, “the real magic in the internal PCDS community derives from our deep commitment to people who are happy, healthy, and hardworking. In every employee we hire, every student we accept, every student we support, and every family with whom we partner, we must value and promote these critical traits.”

Attractive candidates will possess a demonstrated passion for working with high school-aged students; a strong ability to foster positive and meaningful interpersonal relationships with students, parents, and colleagues; and a commitment to nurturing an environment of intellectual engagement, independence, collaboration, creativity, and integrity. In sum, PCDS seeks a Head of Upper School who leads with a balanced approach – protecting what’s best about the school while advancing new initiatives that prepare students for a changing world.



Phoenix Country Day School is an independent, nonsectarian college-preparatory school serving 750 students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Founded in 1961 by East Coast visionaries looking to create a dynamic educational setting out West, PCDS has long been recognized as the top independent school in Arizona and one of the premier schools in the Southwest.

Located on a beautifully maintained 40-acre campus nestled against the dramatic backdrop of Camelback Mountain, PCDS offers a rigorous liberal arts curriculum grounded in the values of intellectual engagement, independence, collaboration, creativity, and integrity. Students benefit from small class sizes and enjoy access to outstanding facilities, including a new state-of-the-art performing arts center, science labs, arts and music studios, two gymnasiums, swimming pools, athletic fields, and comprehensive technology infrastructure.

PCDS prepares promising students to become responsible leaders and lifelong learners through an education that emphasizes intellectual engagement, independence, collaboration, creativity, and integrity.





Portrait of an Upper School Graduate

I am a graduate of Phoenix Country Day School.

I am an individual.

Where I come from, where I am headed, and the path I have chosen make me unique. I know things other people don't know and I have the courage to ask questions others haven't asked. I am proud of the things that make me different from others. I give myself permission to chase the things that challenge my mind and move my heart.

I am part of a whole.

I am an individual, but I am not alone. I am curious about others. I acknowledge that my experience is valid but that it does not tell me everything I need to know about the world. I seek out opportunities to understand the world outside of my experience. I am careful and compassionate, empathetic and effective in my communication, in speaking and listening. I am not just tolerant of difference; I believe the diversity of human experience is its strength.

I know how to think.

I am knowledgeable, literate, and conversant in many subjects. I am proud of the things I know, but I joyfully acknowledge that there is much I don't know. I am not ashamed of the limitations of my knowledge, because I love learning. I use what I know to learn what I don't know. I seek to apply and practice concepts and skills in new and original ways, and I am not afraid of failure. I ask questions. I look for patterns and connections among disciplines. Having learned what I've learned, I know that I can learn.

I am inclined to action.

I solve problems with courage, ingenuity, resourcefulness, and dedication. I have made a difference in my community and I will continue to make a difference in the communities I join. I will use my education and my individuality to benefit someone other than myself. Because I know myself and I am curious about my world, I will identify an impact only I can make, and I will make it.

PCDS Fast Facts

306 Upper School Students

47 Upper School Faculty/Staff

115 Upper School Courses Offered in 2025

8:1 Student-Teacher Ratio

Average Class Size of 16

12 Upper School Sports

60+ Student Clubs in Upper School

115 Different College Destinations for last 4 years

38 Independent Studies in Spring 2025



First Friday

At the end of the first week of school, the entire PCDS student body gathers to look forward to the year. Seniors escort their kindergarten buddies into the assembly, and a special welcome to the youngest PCDS students, the Pre-K students, highlight the community experience that sets the tone for the year.

Blue & Gold Day

Our version of homecoming – the annual Blue & Gold celebration – welcomes back to campus scores of alumni spread far and wide with a fun, all-school carnival atmosphere. After cheering on the varsity volleyball team's match, all students, families, and alumni gather for food, carnival rides, and games, capped off by a mesmerizing fireworks display.

Senior Speeches

The Senior Speech Program at PCDS is one of our proudest traditions and encapsulates the four pillars of the Upper School Portrait of a Graduate. By affording every student the opportunity to speak to our community, we emphasize the distinct individuality of each student as well as the interconnected nature of our ideas and experiences.

Every senior is required to give a 7-9 minute speech to the entire Upper School. Students work closely with a faculty advisor to develop and deliver a speech that reflects awareness of how the student's unique perspectives and experiences are located within the wider culture, history, and/or scholarship.





Opportunities for the next Head of Upper School

Champion a Unified Vision

Working collaboratively with the school community, articulate a clear, compelling vision for the Upper School that honors the whole-child philosophy while defining academic excellence in the 21st century. This includes establishing rigorous standards and measurable outcomes that demonstrate the program's effectiveness, particularly as the school continues to differentiate itself from traditional curricula.

Inspire Curriculum Innovation and Academic Excellence

Lead efforts to enhance and expand academic offerings, ensuring they remain relevant and challenging for the student body. This includes developing innovative course pathways, exploring emerging fields such as technology and entrepreneurship, and creating opportunities for acceleration and advanced study that meet the evolving needs of students and their post-secondary goals.

Expand and Strengthen the Performing Arts Program

With the completion of two new structures – The Ahsan Center for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts and Reese House for Music, Art, and Theater – oversee the revitalization of performing arts programs and leverage these state-of-the-art spaces to enhance community engagement and elevate the profile of arts education at PCDS. This represents a unique opportunity to create signature programs that distinguish the school in the region.

Prioritize Community Building and Communication

Strengthen connections across the school community by developing meaningful engagement opportunities for families, improving transparency in school operations and communications, and fostering greater integration between academic and co-curricular programs. Through visible, accessible leadership and regular interaction with students throughout campus life, this role offers the opportunity to model the relationship-building that is central to the school's culture while creating authentic connections that enhance the student experience.

Faculty Development and Culture

Leading a talented and dedicated faculty and staff who embody the ideals of Happy, Health, and Hardworking, create systems that support professional growth while honoring teacher autonomy and creativity. This includes developing common pedagogical approaches, implementing fair and transparent evaluation processes, and fostering collaboration across and within departments to ensure consistency and excellence in educational delivery.





Key Responsibilities

Leadership and Vision

- Serve as the educational leader of the Upper School, ensuring alignment with PCDS's mission and strategic priorities.
- Provide vision and direction for the continued development of an innovative, engaging, and rigorous 9–12 program that prepares students for college and life beyond.

Academic Program

- Oversee, with the Assistant Head of Upper School/Dean of Academics, the design, articulation, and evaluation of the Upper School curriculum in collaboration with department chairs and faculty.
- Support and expand opportunities for interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, experiential, and signature programs.
- Partner with faculty to ensure best practices in pedagogy, assessment, and student engagement.
- Collaborate with student support staff – including counselors, learning specialists, and advisors – to ensure all students are challenged and supported equitably.

Faculty Support and Development

- Collaborate with the Assistant Head of the Upper School/Dean of Faculty to recruit, hire, supervise, and evaluate Upper School faculty and staff with a focus on excellence, professional growth, and retention.
- Create a collegial culture rooted in collaboration, respect, and joy in teaching and learning.
- Lead meaningful faculty meetings and establish clear, constructive evaluation processes.

Student Experience and Community

- Foster a vibrant school culture that values achievement, character, leadership, and service.
- Partner with the Assistant Head of Upper School/Dean of Student Life and other program leaders to oversee advisory, student life, discipline, and restorative practices.
- Maintain a visible presence in classrooms, hallways, and at student events, modeling authentic investment in student life.

Administration and Operations

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the Upper School, including scheduling, policies, discipline, and coordination of activities.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across divisions in areas such as athletics, arts, diversity and equity, counseling, and college counseling.
- Partner with Admissions in the recruitment, retention, and onboarding of Upper School students.

Schoolwide Engagement

- Serve as an engaged member of the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to strategic planning and whole-school initiatives.
- Act as a key ambassador for the Upper School within and beyond the PCDS community, including parent associations, alumni, and prospective families.
- Participate actively in major school events, community gatherings, and extracurricular activities.

Desired Qualities

- Unshakable personal and professional integrity
- Vibrant personality with compelling charisma
- Penchant for innovation and comfort trying new things
- Approachable and relational; high EQ
- Decisive and clear
- Strong communication skills, both in writing and public speaking
- Strategic thinker with attention to detail and ability to manage multiple priorities
- Warmth, good humor, and genuine sense of humility

Qualifications

All below qualifications are preferred, although not absolutely required.

- Master's degree or higher in education, educational leadership, or related field
- Minimum of five years of teaching experience with grades 9–12, preferably in an independent school
- Minimum of three years experience of successful academic leadership advancing academic programs and supporting faculty development

How to Apply

Phoenix Country Day School is partnering with Educational Directions on this search. Interested candidates should send a resume, a letter of interest, a statement of education/leadership philosophy, and a list of five (5) professional references to search consultant Highley Thompson at Highley.Thompson@edudx.com.

Please do not contact the school directly.