



Job Description: Upper School Head (Grades 9–12)

Kirby School | Santa Cruz, CA

Role Overview

The Upper School (US) Head is the primary educational and administrative leader for the high school division. At Kirby, this means fostering a courageously different environment where students are known deeply and challenged wisely. The US Head ensures that the high school experience remains intellectually vibrant, academically serious, and emotionally safe, preparing students not just for college, but to be capable, grounded people.

Key Responsibilities

1. Academic Leadership & Innovation

- **Purposeful Rigor:** Oversee the Upper School curriculum in coordination with the Middle School Head and the Academic Innovation Dean to ensure scaffolded rigor with purpose.
- **Intellectual Risk-Taking:** Utilizing the faculty mentorship and evaluation process and in-service training opportunities, foster a classroom culture where students feel safe taking the kinds of intellectual risks that promote real learning.
- **Innovative Pedagogy:** Champion forward-thinking instruction that encourages students to think deeply and ask real questions.

2. Faculty Management & Culture

- **Supportive Leadership:** Directly supervise and evaluate the high-school facing Faculty/Dept Heads and the College Counselor, emphasizing the 5:1 student-to-faculty ratio as a tool for deep connection.
- **Values Alignment:** Ensure faculty model Kirby's commitment to respect, care, and belief in every student's potential.
- **Professional Growth:** Collaborate with Kirby Admin Leadership (KAL) to develop in-service programming that elevates both instructional excellence and student wellness.
- **Faculty Contract Build and Hiring:** Work with KAL to optimize class loads in faculty contracts. Take the lead on hiring new faculty for high school courses, including job descriptions, job postings, and interview process.

3. Student Life, Wellness & Behavior Management

- **Student Government Leadership:** Serve as the primary advisor and mentor to the Student Government, fostering leadership skills and ensuring student voices are active participants in the school's cultural and social evolution.

- **Behavioral Leadership:** Oversee all high school student behavior management, serving as the primary authority for the adjudication of Family Handbook violations.
- **Handbook Enforcement:** Manage disciplinary responses for a full range of infractions, from academic dishonesty and attendance issues to serious conduct violations, such as the use or possession of alcohol or controlled substances at school events.
- **Safe Environment:** Partner with the School Psychologist to manage student behavioral, social, and emotional development, ensuring that belonging fuels bravery in all aspects of student life.
- **Human-Centered Schooling:** Maintain an emotionally safe environment where students can stretch their comfort zones—whether in the lab, on the stage, or in the community.
- **8th Grade to High School Look-Ahead Meetings:** Invite all 8th grade families to look ahead to the high school academic and extracurricular journey, planning courses and learning about the Intensive Paths and the senior projects that go along with them.

4. College Counseling & Future Readiness

- **Integrated Search:** Ensure the college search process is a journey of self-discovery, providing strategic oversight to the College Counseling office.
- **Capable Graduates:** Focus on developing graduates who are ready for the academic demands of college and the human demands of the world.

5. Strategic Leadership

- **Mission Alignment:** Serve on KAL to align Upper School goals with Kirby's Mission.
- **Community Presence:** Act as a visible leader who embodies the school's commitment to staying in the conversation with students and families. This includes attending occasional high school team games, arts shows, performances, and any other opportunities to support Kirby student efforts and achievement.

Qualifications

Education

Bachelor's degree required

Master's Degree and/or therapeutic licensure (LMFT, LCSW, LPC, LPCC) preferred

Experience

5+ years of experience in independent secondary school leadership

3+ years of independent school classroom teaching at the high school level

Leadership & Management Skills

- **Academic Leadership:** Ability to oversee curriculum and foster a classroom culture that encourages intellectual risk-taking.
- **Faculty Supervision:** Experience directly supervising and evaluating faculty and department heads.

- **Strategic Thinking:** Ability to align division goals with a school's mission and act as a visible leader within the community.
- **Data-Driven Oversight:** Proficiency in managing specific performance metrics, such as student retention rates (90%+) and college application submission rates (100%).

Student Life & Wellness Expertise

- **Behavioral Leadership:** Capability to serve as the primary authority for handbook violations and student discipline, with a focus on growth rather than just punishment.
- **Mentorship:** Experience advising student government and fostering leadership skills in students.
- **Emotional Safety:** A deep understanding of how to maintain an emotionally safe environment where students are engaged with unconditional positive regard.
- **Collaborative Care:** Ability to partner with School Psychologist and learning services to support student social and emotional development.

Core Philosophical Alignment

- **Human-Centered Schooling:** Evidence of prioritizing deep connections between faculty and students (5:1 ratio) while maintaining professional boundaries and high academic standards.
- **Mission Alignment:** Commitment to an intentionally small school model that values purposeful rigor and innovative pedagogy.

Interested and qualified candidates should email us at divisionheadhire@kirby.org. Please attach a cover letter, current resume, and at least two letters of reference.

Job Type: Full-time (40 hours/week), in person

Pay: \$110,000-\$140,000 per year, depending on experience and qualifications.

Kirby School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by law.