POSITION STATEMENT

The dePaul School for Dyslexia

Clearwater, FL



LEADERSHIP SEARCH

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 1, 2027

The dePaul
School for Dyslexia



The Opportunity

The dePaul School for Dyslexia seeks its next Head of School, beginning July 1, 2027 (or sooner).

This is a rare role. dePaul is one of a small number of schools in the country built entirely around students with dyslexia and language-based learning differences, and the only school for students with dyslexia accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools. The next Head will lead a school where every element of the program, from class size to methodology to how a teacher speaks to a struggling reader, was designed for these children.

The school is at an inflection point. It has purchased property in St. Petersburg and will open a new campus there (expected August 2027). Its reach already extends well beyond its own classrooms, through community screenings and through training that puts structured literacy into the hands of teachers in other schools. The next Head will open the new school and shape how far that reach goes.

The dePaul School

Founded in Clearwater in 1983, the dePaul School for Dyslexia is an independent, 501(c)(3) day school serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade with dyslexia and related language-based learning differences. The school recently added a kindergarten program, the first in its history.

The mission is to enable these students to achieve academic and personal success.
Three core values shape the work:

- **RESPECT** the child, showing understanding and acceptance of their challenges
- **TEACH** the child, with a research-based, proven curriculum and methodologies
- **CHALLENGE** the child to meet their potential, setting appropriate expectations

For many families, dePaul is the place they found after years of watching a bright child struggle and be misread as lazy or inattentive. Students arrive with their confidence worn down. Through meeting a student's personal and specific academic needs, the student grows in their confidence and learning. They leave as proficient readers with academic and self-advocacy skills needed to thrive in their next school setting.

The Program

dePaul teaches through IMSE Institute of Multisensory Learning, a signature Orton-Gillingham-based remediation methodology developed at the school. Instruction is explicit, sequential, and multisensory. Teachers identify each learner's specific gaps and fill them rather than moving a class forward at a uniform pace.

Classes are capped at 12 students, and students are grouped by ability and pace rather than strictly by grade. The student-teacher ratio is roughly 8 to 1.

The program runs across two campuses: the lower school for grades K through 4 and the middle school for grades 5 through 8.

For some students, dePaul is a transitional experience. They receive remediation and return to mainstream schools. For other students dePaul will be their home through middle school. The average student is at the school for three years.



Beyond the Classroom

dePaul's work now extends past its own enrollment through two additional arms.

Outreach and screening. The school conducts at least four dyslexia screenings (typically one per quarter) each year and community outreach across the Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, and Tampa area, reaching children who cannot afford to attend dePaul, cannot travel to it, or face other barriers. Early identification changes the trajectory for these children, whether or not they ever enroll. Outreach and screenings have reached about 100 children since their inception in June 2024. The free screening program has brought three students to dePaul and connected four more families with dePaul tutors. It has also generated referrals from pediatricians and area schools, extending the school's reputation well beyond its own families. dePaul underwrites these screenings and offers private screenings for a fee.

Educator consulting and training. dePaul trains teachers in structured literacy through workshops and consulting. During the 2024-2025 school year, dePaul staff presented at two schools and four conferences. They also do virtual training (including at FCIS) and sometimes at high schools. Education students from the University of Tampa spend time at dePaul learning how to

observe and/or teach students with dyslexia. The dePaul school has written a syllabus for their Intro to Human Exceptionalities class. dePaul goes to the University as guest speakers each semester, and the students (over 200 throughout the years) observe the teaching staff at dePaul on the pursuit of their teaching, psychology, or speech pathology careers. This arm multiplies the school's impact well beyond its own classrooms.

The school itself remains the primary focus and priority. The next Head will help determine how much weight these arms carry and how they are resourced.

A New Campus

dePaul has purchased property in St. Petersburg and will build a new school there. The school currently operates across two locations in Clearwater, but plans to consolidate most of its operations to the new location over the next few years.

The next Head will lead dePaul through this transition and will be the leader who opens the new building.

That is a unique opportunity to offer. Most heads inherit a campus and work within what it allows. This one will open a building and shape what it makes possible, for students, for the screening and outreach work, and for educator training. The decisions made in the first two years will set the school's direction for a generation.



Construction of the new location is expected to commence in November 2026, with completion scheduled for Summer 2027 for an August opening. The new building is expected to support ~110 students at opening, and it is expected that this can be grown to ~200-250 students via future buildouts. In addition to serving more students, the new location will build on dePaul's programs by providing more green space for outdoor activities/sports, auditorium/cafeteria space, and other extracurricular spaces that will be defined over time. The project is primarily being financed with a construction loan, but fundraising is expected to help expedite future buildouts and phases, bringing more offerings to families sooner.

The Community

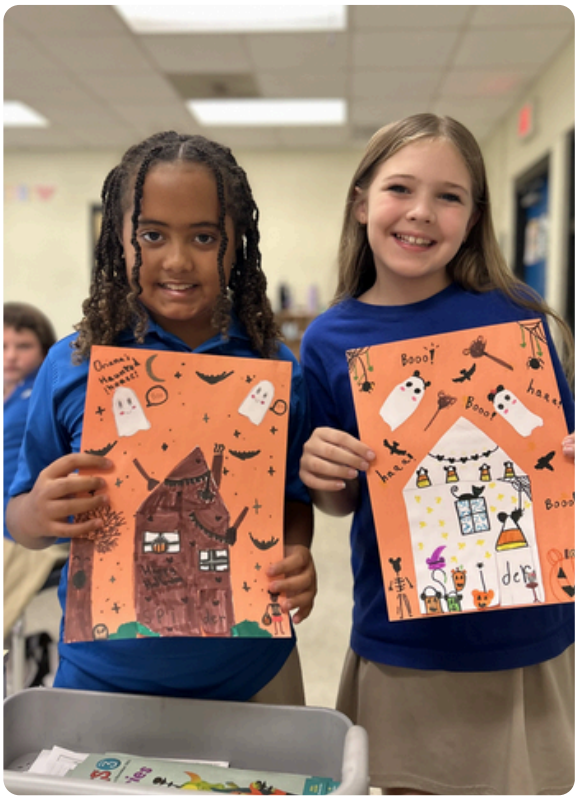
Students. dePaul enrolls approximately 100 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. They come from across Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, many commuting significant distances because no closer option exists.

Families. Parents at dePaul are, almost without exception, people who went looking for this school. Many arrived after a difficult stretch in another setting. They are invested, informed about dyslexia, and deeply attached to the faculty who taught their child to read.

Faculty and staff. The teaching faculty are trained in the school's methodology and committed to a demanding, specialized form of instruction. We currently have 13 full-time teachers, plus three enrichment teachers who work part-time. Average tenure is five years. All content-area teachers are trained in Orton-Gillingham. Structured Literacy teachers have additional levels of OG training, depending on what they teach. We have four OG trained administrators and one teacher working toward OG certification.

Governance and Finances

dePaul is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Head of School reports to the Board. The Board is one of the school's real assets. Trustees are forward-thinking and unafraid of ambitious decisions: they committed to a



new St. Petersburg campus, invested in the community screening and educator training arms, and have consistently looked past the next budget year to what dePaul could become. They are active without being intrusive, and they want a partner in the next Head rather than a report-giver.

The school is accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools.

The school operates on an annual budget of approximately $2.2 million. Tuition for 2026-27 is $24,900. Florida's state-supported scholarship programs make dePaul accessible to families who could not otherwise consider an independent school, and a meaningful share of families use them.

Recently dePaul acquired property with an estimated value of $3.2M, with an additional $1.8M in investment in the Phase 1 buildout of the new property. Prior to the property buildout, the school currently has $5.4M in assets, including ~$0.5M in cash and ~$0.4M in investments.

Over the last few years, the school has operated with an operating margin of approximately 15%. We expect that to diminish to net 0 margins for the next two years as we finish the build project and expand the student population, with margins expected to recover and rapidly increase in 2029

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of our families access the state scholarship, with most qualifying for the Unique Abilities. Seventeen percent (17%) of our students received scholarship funds from the school (donor-provided), and some of those students also qualified for The Francis McGlannan Scholarship.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Next Head

Student well-being. Families and faculty alike asked for greater attention to social-emotional support: resilience, confidence, peer relationships, and access to counseling or therapeutic services. Students arrive having struggled, and the community sees the school's work as extending beyond remediation to the whole child. How dePaul resources this is an open question for the next Head.

Faculty recruitment, retention, and compensation. Teachers trained in structured literacy are scarce, and dePaul's faculty are the reason families come and stay. Compensation at a school this size is a real constraint, and the community named it as the school's highest priority for the next Head.



Building a compensation and professional growth model that holds this faculty together, through the move and beyond, is the work the next head of school should expect to own.

Enrollment. The school is enrolled at roughly 81 students against a budget built for 90. Closing that gap, or rebuilding the budget around current enrollment, is immediate work. Financial sustainability. A $2.2 million budget leaves little margin. The next Head will need to think about revenue beyond tuition, including philanthropy and the consulting and training arm.

Leadership transition. The school's previous head departed in the summer of 2026. Melissa Zeman, dePaul's Principal, has served as Interim Head of School since, and the school year has proceeded without disruption to students or families. The next Head will arrive after a year of interim leadership, with the opportunity to set direction alongside a faculty and staff who have held the school steady through the change.

Defining the dePaul Dyslexia Group. The school, the screening and outreach work, and the educator training arm are three distinct efforts under one roof. How they fit together and what each is resourced to do are open strategic questions.

Life after dePaul. Families want stronger bridges to receiving schools and clearer visibility into their child's readiness. Building relationships with area public and independent schools and giving families a confident handoff is an opportunity the community has identified directly.



Qualifications and Qualities

The Board seeks a Head of School who is:

- **Empathetic**. Toward students who have struggled, and toward the adults who teach them
- **A leader**. Someone who sets direction and brings people with them, with successful school leadership experience, ideally in a school serving students with learning differences.
- **A systems thinker**. dePaul is a school, a screening and outreach program, and a teacher-training arm, soon across a new campus. The next Head will need to see how the parts connect and build the structures that let them work together.
- **A storyteller**. dePaul's work is compelling and under-told. The next Head will need to make the case for the school to donors, families, pediatricians, and the wider community.
- **A fundraiser**. Willing to be visible and persistent in asking, as the new campus and the school's growth depend on philanthropy.
- **A relationship builder**. With families, faculty, the Board, referring professionals, and partner schools.
- **Visible**. Present in classrooms, at pickup, and in the community, known to students by name.
- **Transparent**. Someone who explains the reasoning behind decisions and shares hard news directly.

The Board also seeks:

- Understanding of structured literacy and the science of reading, or the demonstrated capacity to learn it quickly and lead a faculty who live it.
- Financial and operational judgment appropriate to a school of this size, where the Head is close to every line.
- Experience with enrollment and retention.
- Skill in recruiting, developing, and retaining specialized faculty.
- Comfort partnering with an engaged, working Board.
- Unquestioned integrity, humility, resilience, and a sense of humor.



To Apply

Candidates should submit the following as a single PDF:

- A cover letter addressed to the Search Committee
- A current resume
- A statement of educational philosophy
- The names and contact information for five professional references, who will not be contacted without the candidate's permission

Send materials to **headsearch@thedepaulschool.org.** Materials are due by **January 15, 2027**. Applications will be reviewed as received. Nominations and referrals are welcome at the same address.

dePaul At-A-Glance

Founded	1983, Clearwater, Florida
Type	Independent, 501(c)(3) day school
Grades	Kindergarten through 8
Enrollment	Approximately 90
Class size	Maximum 12
Student-teacher ratio	Approximately 8 to 1
Methodology	dePaul Structured Linguistics, Orton-Gillingham based
Tuition	$24,900 for 2026-27
Operating budget	Approximately $2.2 million
Accreditation	Florida Council of Independent Schools
Memberships	National Association of Independent Schools
Address	2747 Sunset Point Road, Clearwater, FL 33759
Website	thedepaulschool.org
Head of School start date	Jul 1, 2027