



Head of School Search The Girls' School of Austin

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thegirlsschool.org

Appointment for July 2019

The Girls' School of Austin provides an academically challenging education for girls in a community that fosters creative learning and personal excellence. Our mission is to develop confident young women who lead intellectually vibrant & fulfilling lives.

The Girls' School of Austin (GSA) is the only private, non-profit, K-8 girls school in Austin, with an enrollment of 150 students. The School is located in the historic established neighborhood of Tarrytown in West Austin. GSA began in 2002 with funding from a visionary donor, and the doors opened in a small home in West Austin with 5 students and more faculty than students. In 2004 the School purchased and moved to the Dill Elementary School, which had been closed by Austin Independent School District (AISD).

The commitment to having a viable and robust school for girls was spearheaded not only by the trustees, but also by parents, teachers and students who stepped up in support of the endeavor. The motivating factor for the K-8 model was the result of believing in the research that a school for girls could provide its students with many advantages at a crucial learning stage in their lives. In 2012 GSA celebrated its 10th Anniversary. And to quote Lisa Schmitt, who became Head of School in 2007, "may she live to be a wise old woman!" The School today enjoys full enrollment, a successful fundraising community, and financial stability. With that in mind, the School continues to look forward to growing and building on the strong foundation of education, innovation and community.

The Girls' School of Austin is committed to actively fostering a diverse, and culturally competent community through focused dialogue and learning experiences.

The Position

The person chosen to assume the Head of School will be offered an extraordinary opportunity. The national search will identify candidates and subsequently a finalist who will inherit a qualified and versatile faculty, devoted families, students who embrace learning and enthusiasm for outside activities and a sustainable school with a highly respected reputation in the Austin community.

Candidates who demonstrate effective leadership in overseeing day-to-day School operations, hiring and retaining outstanding teachers and having experience with shaping the quality of life in the School, will be carefully considered. Finally, the ideal candidates will have girls' school experience and clear vision for the traditions, relationships and practices that determine the climate and culture of the campus.



The Campus

In June of 2013, the original AISD building was bulldozed to the ground and work began on building a state-of-the-art, sustainable, green facility. To make way for the construction, the School embarked on a "Semester Abroad", which actually took place at a Unitarian Church about 5 miles away! In March, 2014, the new facility was completed and a special viewing was staged on the day it opened.

New classrooms, new outdoor environmental learning spaces, an activities center, and new play equipment greeted the excited eyes and minds of the students. In addition to all of the students and many parents, the construction team and the architects were also on campus for the grand viewing.



The Faculty and Program

The Girls' School of Austin (GSA) offers a liberal arts education. The curriculum includes math, science, Spanish, humanities, fine arts, music and physical education. The belief at GSA is that a liberal arts curriculum encourages resilience, intellectual risk-taking, integrity, and mutual respect and collaboration among students. This is a curriculum where girls are valued for their curiosity, their brains and their enthusiasm for learning. The School also encourages competence in the visual arts, social-emotional learning (SEL), music (strings or piano) and physical activity. The study of Spanish begins in Kindergarten.



Our culture puts love of learning first and provides opportunities for girls to develop their talents. They learn to succeed individually and collectively and to interact well with each other and their community.

The campus serves as an environmental textbook, where students can make daily connections between the material they are studying and the world around them. Of note recently was the Kindergarten class on a campus “field trip” to search for different types of leaves in surrounding trees and bushes and then to take them back to the classroom for identification. GSA is working to increase the diversity of the school as well as the cultural competency of their faculty, staff, students, and parents/families.

The faculty are described as curious, confident and courageous in their teaching methods. All are highly educated, dedicated to their craft, and work hard to create the best environment for girls to learn, grow, and develop. Faculty participate in a wide range of professional development opportunities, such as the National SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) project, ISAS New Teacher Institute, Columbia Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project, NAIS People of Color Conference, Wilderness First Aid and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics regional conference, to name a few.

Middle School: grades 5-8, one class per grade of 16-18 students, and a school day from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. The philosophy behind the 5-8 grade choice for MS is that by age 10, girls are eager to apply their communication and problem-solving skills to more complex topics. MS teachers promote more independence and responsibility in students as they progress toward high school.

As a result, graduates of The Girls’ School have a wide range of choices, both public and private.

Lower School: grades K-4, one class per grade of 16-18 students, and a school day from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. The philosophy behind the LS curriculum is that of balance and integration. A nurturing environment is provided where learning takes center stage and where students can become confident thinkers, leaders, citizens and friends. With each year progressing to Middle School, students are taught to be responsible in and for their actions and to take charge of their learning as the interdisciplinary curriculum becomes more challenging.



The GSA begins to develop artistic and musical skills at a young age. Beginning in Kindergarten, students study the visual arts and begin the study of a musical instrument (piano or strings). By the time they reach middle school, most of the students will enter one or more pieces into the regional Scholastic Art competition, where Girls' School students receive considerable recognition -- and some have advanced to the national competition. Many of the strings students will prepare for and participate in the All-Region Orchestra competition and will achieve a seat in the Regional Symphonic or Philharmonic orchestra.



The Physical Education program at The GSA is creative and fun, introducing girls to a variety of sports and activities, including occasional guest instructors. The 4th grade, as part of their service learning work, participates in physical education classes at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Students in grades 5-8 continue to build upon the relationships they formed at TSBVI through optional after-school activities.



Administration

When Lisa Schmitt arrived in '07, the School had experienced 4 Heads of School in the previous 5 years. Needless to say, this "colorful" early history presented many obstacles, but with the strong leadership of Lisa and her team of dedicated faculty, staff and parents, obstacles were overcome, and the School emerged as the resilient and steadfast institution that it is today. The internal and external entities of the School report directly to the Head. There is a team of curriculum coordinators in math, science, Spanish, SEL, language arts and social studies who assist in teacher evaluation and curriculum development.



To Apply

Interested candidates should provide a resume, cover letter highlighting their interest in and fit for the position, a statement of educational philosophy, and a list of five references with all contact information by November 20, 2018, as a single document to:



Consultants

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Qualifications

- An advanced degree with strong background in core curriculum
- Teaching experience ideally in both Lower and Middle School
- Demonstrated ability to recruit, supervise, retain and empower faculty
- Financial acuity, experience with admissions process, advancement and fundraising experience and public speaking skills
- Dedication to promote and maintain high standards for the academic program
- Sensitivity to current School culture and traditions
- Recognize and continue to build on the successes of this young school in the areas of program, facilities, enrollment, development and financial stability

Personal Qualifications

- Ability to inspire, engage and bring joy and creativity to the community; sense of humor; compassionate, understanding, and steady
- A genuine warm, approachable, positive personality; open-minded, willingness to create a program of collaboration and autonomy among faculty and staff
- Values and promotes diversity and SEL at all levels; open to change and innovation; listens to all the voices; has straight-forward and data-based approach to problem-solving
- Has moral ethics and values; is a role model and a “presence” throughout the School as well as the community at large
- Effective communicator; has vision for the sustainability of the School