



The Primary Day School

Bethesda, MD

Head of School

July 2021

The Primary Day School (www.theprimarydayschool.org) is seeking a new head of school, an educational leader who is deeply knowledgeable and passionate about early childhood education and enthusiastic about serving as the chief ambassador for this school community. Primary Day educates 135 boys and girls in Pre-Kindergarten through Second Grade and is recognized as one of the premier early childhood schools in the Washington D.C. area. This warm and welcoming school community provides young learners a distinctive academic foundation in a nurturing environment that celebrates the joy, energy and curiosity of early childhood. It is a school and a community that engenders enviable loyalty from current families, alumni, and their parents.

Primary Day celebrated its 75th year anniversary during the 2019-2020 school year. It was founded in 1944 as a demonstration school for the Phonovisual Method, a unique, phonics-based approach to teaching reading and language arts. The school flourished, and in the 1950s it began planning for a permanent home. In the fall of 1955, Primary Day welcomed students to its new campus on River Road in Bethesda, Maryland. This four-acre campus, just inside the Capital Beltway and in close proximity to the Holton-Arms and Landon Schools, remains Primary Day's home today.

Primary Day continues to advance the legacy of its founders by giving young children a powerful start on their educational journeys. Graduates move forward to their next schools imbued with a strong academic foundation, self-confidence, an age-appropriate understanding of the individual's responsibility to his or her community, and a love of learning. Alumni, many of whom send their own children to Primary Day, have a remarkable appreciation and affection for what they characterize as the magical place where their schooling began and their love of learning was ignited.

The school community seeks an educational leader who shares Primary Day's commitment to young learners and to the importance of ensuring a warm, supportive community where all stakeholders are welcomed. The successful candidate will be an individual who is comfortably confident in the special role a head of school has in nurturing, inspiring and enhancing community, and who is passionate about the opportunity to lead a small school.

Mission

The Primary Day School provides young children with the finest education for the most important years. In a warm, embracing community where each child is known and understood, our rich, engaging curriculum is distinguished by academic excellence and designed to inspire curiosity, nurture young hearts and minds, and build strength of character. At Primary Day, we guide our students on their journey to a lasting appreciation of learning and exploration. This is who we are.

Philosophy

The faculty and staff of The Primary Day School are dedicated to the principle that success in mastering skills in the primary grades fosters confidence, builds security, encourages independence and creates a positive pattern for the child's future. The school's task is to nurture a love of learning in our students. As the

children become proficient with the core subjects, they experience pride in their daily accomplishments. Efficient and organized work habits are cultivated for productive, enthusiastic learning. When the educational journey begins with a solid foundation, we believe a good end is assured.

Simply sharing Primary Day's Mission and Philosophy would not fully capture the values that guide this community. Beako, the School's wise, loving and magical bird mascot, is an integral member of the community and a symbol to children and families of the principles and spirit at the heart of the school. Monthly community gatherings are named Beakos. These offer opportunities to recognize and celebrate students, and for students to perform and speak in front of their peers and families. The Beako Code of Conduct—*Treat others the way you would like to be treated*—is a guiding community principle.

The Campus

The Primary Day facilities are colorful, bright and welcoming. The approximately 20,000 square feet of indoor space have enjoyed numerous updates in recent years. Renovations to several areas of the school, including the Music, STEM, Art, Library, and Multi-Purpose rooms, have been completed within the last decade. The well-kept grounds include a large, updated playscape and a recently added outdoor classroom. The school building is considered architecturally significant as it was designed by the modernist architectural firm Deigert and Yerkes and was recently included in a bus tour highlighting area mid-century architecture.

Strategic Plan/Capital Campaign

Leading up to its 75th year anniversary, Primary Day engaged in a strategic planning process, which resulted in a plan adopted in May 2019. The plan identifies four over-arching initiatives/pillars: Academic Program, Teachers and Teaching, Social-Emotional and Character Education, and Engagement and Connections. While the challenges of Covid-19 have usurped the focus on the plan during the current school year, it will offer the new head of school a thoughtful road map, with opportunities to add expertise and ideas to realizing the initiatives in partnership with others in the community.

In honor of the school's 75th anniversary, an ambitious capital campaign, the school's first, was launched and all of the funds raised were dedicated to faculty support. The Campaign, *It Starts Here*, "reinforced [the school community's] collective understanding that [its] teachers will always be at the absolute center of the Primary Day experience." Current parents, including families new to the school, and many alumni families contributed generously, enabling the school to reach \$1.25M in gifts in record time. The funds raised offer "a strong, lasting financial foundation for compensating, developing, and retaining teaching staff." In addition, it is worth noting that the community's support is reflected yearly in over 90% of current families supporting the annual fund.

Faculty and Staff

There are 23 full and part time teachers, and 11 full time staff. There are two sections at each grade level. In Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, there are two faculty in each classroom (in non-Covid times), and one teacher at the helm in the First and Second Grade classrooms. Specialists in Art, Literature, Music, Phonovisual, Physical Education and World Languages—French, Chinese and Spanish—and a team of Resource Teachers—STEM, Math, and a Literacy Coordinator/Learning Specialist—ensure a dynamic and supportive program.

In addition to the head of school, a business manager and a director of advancement & enrollment are the other senior administrators. The larger administrative team includes an associate for enrollment, assistant

for engagement, director of diversity and programs, assistant to the head of school, and accounting and office managers.

Governance, Associations, Budget

The Primary Day School Board of Trustees has twelve active members. Board members include the head of school, parents of graduates, alumni and area educators.

The Primary Day School is a member of The Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (AISGW), the Association of Independent Maryland and D.C. Schools (AIMS), the National Business Officers Association (NBOA), and the Association of Independent School Admission Professionals (AISAP). Primary Day successfully undertook its first accreditation process through AIMS in the fall of 2015. The 5-year renewal report due date was pushed back to Fall 2021 in recognition of Covid challenges.

The school's annual budget is \$3.46M. It has \$4.5M in investment/endowment funds and no debt.

Program

Primary Day graduates are recognized by their next schools as possessing well-developed foundational academic skills, self-confidence, and respectful, kind demeanors. As prospective families consider the school, they will see very happy, engaged students who are enjoying a program that is structured and academically rigorous. Candidates are encouraged to explore the website for detailed information about the curriculum.

Primary Day students become confident readers. The Phonovisual Method has been a mainstay of the Primary Day curriculum since the school's founding, and it continues to prove its value, having outlasted countless trends and changes in reading instruction. The Phonovisual Method is a phonics-based approach to teaching reading, writing, and spelling; it influences the entire Balanced Literacy program and is integrated throughout the curriculum. Taught as a separate subject at every grade level, Phonovisual provides security and confidence as the children develop word attack skills and acquire vocabulary. It is used as a supplementary tool for Reading Workshop, the developmental reading program the school utilizes.

Beako's Code of Conduct provides an age appropriate touchstone for underscoring community values and behavioral expectations. The enduring values of respect for others, honesty, patience and cooperation have permeated daily life at Primary Day since its founding. In more recent years, the school has implemented Responsive Classroom, a program that is wholly supported by faculty and is now foundational to the school's social-emotional curriculum.

In normal times, Primary Day offers an afterschool enrichment program, GRASP, which stands for Golden Rule After School Program. The Enrichment Program offers students at all grade levels an opportunity to participate in special classes after school that expose them to an array of activities and skills including chess, yoga, cooking and robotics.

The great majority of graduates attend a variety of area independent schools, with 92% of graduates being admitted to their first choice schools. A team, led by the head of school with faculty and staff who have come to know and appreciate each student and who are knowledgeable about area schools, manages Next School Placement counseling. The guidance they provide to families making the choice for their child's next school is a cornerstone of the Primary Day experience. The Greater Washington D.C. area has numerous independent schools that begin after Second Grade, and Primary Day is one of a few independent schools

in the area founded to meet the specific needs of early learners. Parents are keenly invested in this process and appreciate how invested the Primary Day faculty are in supporting the growth and development of their children. Ensuring that Primary Day maintains its outstanding track record in next school placement is essential to all stakeholders and prospective families considering the school.

Opportunities

One of Primary Day's greatest hallmarks is its strong community. Stakeholders across all constituencies shared that the warm, welcoming, supportive community is a top reason for their love of the school. A remarkable number of alumni enroll their children, and over 80% of families find the school through word of mouth. The challenges of the pandemic have understandably diminished many of the opportunities that build and nurture community. A new head of school will be stepping into a school community that has well-managed Covid challenges in terms of providing both distance learning and in-person instruction for interested families. When public health protocols allow for it, it will be important for the new head of school to engage, support, and nurture this vibrant community.

Primary Day is well positioned in the greater Washington D.C. area independent school community, recognized as providing an exceptional academic foundation to early learners. As a purposefully small school with a unique culture and a commitment to the Phonovisual curriculum, it is essential that the school's successful academic approach and nurturing community are maintained, enhanced, and well represented in this competitive market, where parents seek clear assurance of value. Like many independent schools that serve the youngest children, Primary Day has to continue to work hard to enroll mission-appropriate students and families who understand and embrace the value of a Primary Day education. The next head of school will need to embrace opportunities to connect with, understand, and support parents as their children begin their formal education.

Primary Day is a school of deep traditions. It will be essential for the next head of school to learn the school's enduring traditions and lead from a position of sensitivity to both the pace of change and the importance of balancing innovation with tradition. The school community will appreciate the thoughtful, strategic leadership of a head of school who will take time to learn and understand the school's founding tenets while also ensuring Primary Day's continued consideration of educational best practices in order to remain the leading educational choice for PreK-Grade 2 learners.

A head of school who enthusiastically identifies as a "teachers' Head" will be a good match for the PDS professional community. The isolation of teaching during the pandemic has highlighted for many faculty members a desire for increased professional collaboration opportunities. Faculty will appreciate time established to enable joint planning and sharing, curriculum discussions to ensure scope and sequence, and leadership in strengthening a commitment to a positive professional community.

Many stakeholders are eager to support Primary Day in increasing diversity within its school community. A leader who authentically values a diverse, inclusive community, recognizes the appeal of diverse communities for today's parents, and who will continue to build upon diversity, equity and inclusion efforts will find willing partners within the school community.

As noted earlier, the strategic plan will offer a new head of school tremendous opportunities to lead the school in realizing identified initiatives that enhance key areas of the school.

Leadership Needs

The Primary Day School seeks an educational leader who appreciates the school's mission, philosophy, and commitment to creating a successful, and supportive learning community for young children. Primary Day's next head of school will be an educational professional who:

- Authentically connects with young children and wholeheartedly appreciates the opportunities to engage with students, faculty and families
- Has experience with and is highly knowledgeable of the developmental and educational needs of children ages 4-8
- Possesses well-developed management and leadership skills, understanding how to solicit and listen well to numerous voices, build teams, and effectively balance collaboration with decisiveness
- Has the knowledge and experience to serve as a curricular leader and to recruit, inspire, mentor, and support staff and faculty, ideally possessing relevant classroom teaching experience
- Is energized by engaging and partnering with a highly-educated school community and Board that is committed to maintaining a school environment that is loving, nurturing and magical while providing students with an excellent academic foundation
- Is resilient and able to smoothly navigate challenging situations
- Will serve as an effective and thoughtful strategic leader for this unique school in the competitive and changing landscape of independent schools
- Is comfortable and adept with utilizing various technology solutions and platforms to support educational and administrative functions
- Possesses superb communication and interpersonal skills
- Welcomes and supports appropriate parental engagement, appreciating the needs parents of young children have to connect and learn from their children's educators
- Has the skills to lead conversations and implement initiatives to support a diverse, equitable and inclusive school community
- Will embrace the role of ambassador for the school in the broader community, including establishing relationships with peers and admissions officers at next placement schools, and
- Possesses unwavering integrity, with a sense of humor a plus.

Heading a small school requires a leader who revels in and effectively balances the myriad of tasks and responsibilities that are intrinsic to the position. The ideal next head of school for The Primary Day School will be an educational leader who possesses high emotional intelligence, teaching experience, and a track-record that prepares him or her well for this great opportunity.

For Consideration

Please send electronically: Resume, Letter of Interest and Educational Philosophy or Personal Statement to:
Jane Armstrong or Bill Lyons, Managing Partners
Independent Thinking
it@independent-thinking.com
617-332-3131

All inquiries will be treated confidentially and review of candidate files will begin immediately.

The Primary Day School is dedicated to providing equal employment opportunities to all personnel and applicants for employment without regard to race; color; religion; sex; national origin; handicap or disability; sexual orientation; or status as a veteran, Vietnam era, or special disabled veteran.

