



Seattle Waldorf School

Seattle, WA

Head of School

July 2022

Seattle Waldorf School, SWS, (<https://seattlewaldorf.org/>) is a preschool through high school, coeducational school currently serving 318 students on three campuses. At SWS, outdoor experiential education is important for all ages; social-emotional learning is part of the academic journey; relationships and collaboration are essential to healthy development, and creating a strong community means prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The school's founding roots begin in 1980 when individuals active in the Seattle Anthroposophical community created the Waldorf School Association of Seattle. Classes met in a series of temporary locations until the school's Meadowbrook campus opened in 1988. In 1984, the independent Early Childhood Kinderhaus Waldorf program merged with SWS; Kinderhaus continues to operate in a school-owned large house in the Woodland Park section of the city. In 2008, SWS expanded to include the high school program after it was approached by Hazel Wolf High School, an independent Waldorf school that had become unable to sustain its endeavor alone. In 2014, through a partnership with the City of Seattle, the high school moved to beautiful Magnuson Park, a 350-acre urban park on the banks of Lake Washington.

Currently under the leadership of an experienced independent school leader who has chosen to pursue another professional opportunity, Seattle Waldorf is seeking a new Head of School for July 2022. The next Head of School will be an experienced school leader with strong Waldorf as well as other educational experience, who possesses the energy and abilities to inspire others, implement strategic initiatives, and support a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Mission and Guiding Statements

Mission

Daily we strive to inspire learning, courage, and joy in the developing human being.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commitment Statement

At Seattle Waldorf School we are committed to creating a community that is inclusive for all students, families, faculty, and staff, especially those who have been impacted by racism and oppression, and to create a culture that supports racial equity by changing our existing systems and practices.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that we reside on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples who have stewarded this land for generations. We pay our respect to the Elders and their descendants, past, present, and future, and honor with gratitude the land, plants, and animals.

Enrollment and Programs

SWS is organized into three divisions with a Director at the helm of each division: Early Childhood, which encompasses Preschool & Kindergarten and serves 86 students this year, Grade School, currently serving 156 students Grades 1-8, and High School, which serves 75 students, Grades 9-12.

SWS's Early Childhood program is grounded in exploration, play, and building social connections with teachers and friends. Students spend much of their day outdoors (fully outdoors during these Covid times) playing and exploring in creatively designed play yards and on neighborhood walks. The curriculum emphasizes rhythm, simplicity, and balance, and stories, music, and art are integral each day. Program materials include wooden toys, beeswax crayons, and items found in nature, and students assist teachers in meaningful work in the garden, classroom, and play yard.

The Grade School curriculum is rich in story, music, art, movement, math, science, and history. Under the guidance of a main class teacher, supported by specialty teachers, students collaborate to solve rigorous academic and social challenges. Main class teachers stay with their class for multiple years during Grade School. The curriculum includes lesson blocks in language arts, science, math, and history delivered through imaginative stories and supporting activities. Students learn World Language through stories, cooking, and crafts. They create useful and beautiful treasures in handwork and woodwork, activities which build fine-motor control and opportunities to learn persistence. Vocal and instrumental music lessons (pentatonic flute, string instruments), and frequent movement in active lessons, recess, games, gardening, and Eurythmy are all important parts of the Grade School curriculum. SWS's middle school years are designed to support and challenge students to think for themselves and accept more responsibility as academics increase in complexity. The continuity of a strong community of educators and peers give middle school students a safe space to be known and supported while they explore their emerging sense of self.

The High School program fosters adaptability, ingenuity, and creativity. Academic courses expose students to the great ideas of humankind, the events that shaped civilizations, the beauty of mathematics, the power of the arts, and the phenomena of the scientific world. Small class sizes enable faculty to know each student's strengths and abilities, and students appreciate the sense of community and feeling known. There is a strong emphasis on experiential education, encouraging students to learn by doing, and the program includes numerous opportunities for outdoor and environmental experiences. Students in their senior year research a chosen topic in depth and present to the community as a capstone project. Seattle Waldorf School graduates are distinguished by their curiosity, intellectual flexibility, and advanced capacity for synthesizing ideas.

The pandemic negatively impacted enrollment during the 2020-2021 school year, which resulted in an enrollment total 100 students below the 2019-2020 level. The current school year saw an uptick in enrollment, and there is confidence that this will continue to grow. The Board has designated funds to market SWS more vigorously to encourage greater interest in and awareness of the school.

Administration, Faculty and Staff

In addition to the Head of School, SWS's senior leadership team includes an Assistant Head of School & High School Director, Director of Advancement & Enrollment Management, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Director of Finance, Early Childhood & Education Support Director, Grade School & Parent Education Director, and IT & Operations Manager.

SWS employs 70 administrators, faculty, and staff to serve the needs of its students and campuses. There is a good mix of faculty members who are newer to the school and members who have devoted many years of their professional careers to the school. Numerous faculty, although not all, are Waldorf trained.

Governance, Associations, Budget

SWS's Board of Trustees numbers nine individuals; the Community Association Chair and the Head of School serve in an ex-officio capacity. The Board is fully engaged, understands well how to support a Head of School, and adheres to appropriate independent school governance practices. It is a Board that will serve the Head of School in strong partnership for the work ahead.

Seattle Waldorf School is a member of National Association of Independent Schools, NAIS, Northwest Association of Independent Schools, [NWAIS](#), Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, [AWSNA](#), Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, [WECAN](#) and is an active member of the Puget Sound Independent Schools. Accredited by AWSNA and NWAIS, SWS is due for reaccreditation in 2025.

SWS's yearly budget is \$8.1M. While the pandemic's impact on enrollment has resulted in a budget shortfall, SWS has strong reserves, which enables the school to move forward proactively. Additionally, the school has received grants and funding to offset a good portion of this deficit. While the school does not have a formal endowment, it does have invested funds, which provide good income. The school received nearly \$300K in contributions in 2020-2021. 20% of the budget is designated for financial assistance, which supports approximately 35% of enrolled students.

Opportunities

This is an incredibly exciting moment to take on the leadership of Seattle Waldorf School. The school's Board is committed to moving forward strategically and thoughtfully to ensure SWSs a modern Waldorf independent school.

With a strong commitment to being a school community that supports and celebrates diversity, equity and inclusion, as societal focus on these issues heightened, conversations within the SWS community also heightened. The school's leadership has delved further into its work in this arena, engaging with [Haakmat Consulting](#) to thoughtfully examine and support ongoing efforts. SWS is eager for a Head of School who will embrace SWS's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and who can serve as an informed and inspiring leader in this work.

Traditional Waldorf schools have utilized a College of Faculty leadership model and/or have moved to a model of an administrative Head of School who is focused on operations and administrative tasks. SWS seeks to be a school with a Head of School who is an inspiring educational leader, not one who is simply focused on operations. SWS's leadership has recently engaged faculty in conversations to further clarify the work of the Head of School, outlining the breadth of responsibilities managed in this role. Moving forward, it will be important for the work ahead for the next Head of School to instill a strong sense of teamwork and trust in leadership, built through thoughtful and respectful communication.

Many Waldorf schools have operated as and defined themselves not as independent schools, but as something different that shouldn't be burdened with the concerns and competition of independent schools—a belief held by some traditional Waldorf teachers. Seattle Waldorf School is an independent school in a competitive independent school market, and it needs an administrative and governance structure to lead it as a financially viable entity in today's world. Its educational programs and value added *is* its Waldorf educational underpinnings. A Head of School who can serve as a compelling ambassador for the school in the Seattle independent school market and understands the structure of well-functioning independent schools will serve SWS well at this stage of its history.

SWS is working:

- To ensure that all that is good and valuable about Waldorf education is infusing its programs;
- that there is a respectful and collegial professional community that is inclusive and supportive of all;
- and it lives its structure as an independent school with a Board of Trustees governance structure and a Head of School and senior administrative team who are respected and valued for their leadership and educational expertise.

It is examining how anthroposophy, which brings numerous faculty to their deep commitment to Waldorf teaching, is infused in the school's traditions and curriculum, and its influence at SWS going forward. To do all of this requires some cultural shifts, clear messaging to faculty and staff about direction and the need to stand with and uphold the school's values. This work is underway and will need a Head of School who will continue it forward with vigor in the 2022-2023 school year and beyond.

While the above outlines opportunities of aligning culture and uniting the internal community, there are important strategic opportunities ahead for SWS as well. A new Head of School will have the opportunity to partner with the Board of Trustees and other stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to intentionally determine priorities and action items that will guide the school ahead and strengthen its financial sustainability.

The combination of both people centric and strategic opportunities ahead requires an astute relationship builder and an energetic, optimistic action-oriented builder.

Leadership Needs

The opportunity to lead Seattle Waldorf School is an opportunity to partner with a committed and visionary Board of Trustees to further establish and strengthen this preschool through high school Waldorf program. SWS has great potential to serve as a leader in modern Waldorf education, and it needs an enthusiastic, talented Head of School at its helm. As noted above, the school is at a critical juncture in its history, and the Board recognizes that finding a leader with the right set of experiences and competencies is essential to realizing the school's potential and setting its future course. SWS's next Head of School will be an individual who:

- Is a Waldorf educator who possesses the experience with, and a commitment to, evolving Waldorf curricula and philosophies to meet the needs of today's students
- Is a leader who has additionally gained experience in non-Waldorf educational settings, bringing a breadth of perspectives to informing the work ahead for SWS
- Is authentically aligned with SWS's guiding tenet that *"creating a strong community means prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion,"* and is in possession of meaningful experience

leading conversations and implementing initiatives to support a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school community

- A community builder who can lead efforts to build positive cohesion between faculty, staff, administration, and Board and, in post-pandemic times, amongst the parent/guardian-family school community
- Possesses well-developed, personable management and leadership skills, valuing and understanding how to solicit and listen well to numerous voices, respecting the tradition of the Waldorf College of Faculty while astutely recognizing and balancing the necessity of decisiveness when appropriate
- Will serve as an effective and thoughtful strategic leader, possessing a successful track record of partnering with others, inspiring, garnering support for, and implementing change
- Possesses strong communication and interpersonal skills and is enthusiastic about serving as chief ambassador, building connections within the school community and throughout Seattle to heighten the school's profile in a competitive educational environment and garnering financial support
- Genuinely connects with children and wholeheartedly appreciates the opportunities to engage with students, faculty and families
- Is good-humored, optimistic, persistent, and resilient.

The right next leader for SWS is an individual who has a strong appreciation for Waldorf education and understands how it can and should evolve and inform educational practices in the 21st century. They should be appropriately ambitious and determined to lead and inspire this school community to serve as a model, modern Waldorf educational community that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

Potential candidates are encouraged to review the school's website for additional information.

For Consideration

Please send electronically: Resume, Letter of Interest, and Educational Philosophy or Personal Statement to:

Jane Armstrong

Independent Thinking

Jane@independent-thinking.com

617-332-3131

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