

Head of School

Leadership Opportunity
July 2012

The New Community School



Richmond, Virginia
100 students
6-12th grade
www.tncs.org

Carney, Sandoe  Associates

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THE POSITION

The New Community School (TNCS) in Richmond, Virginia, seeks a Head of School to lead a community of 100 sixth through twelfth grade students and 29 faculty members. TNCS is Central Virginia's only secondary school devoted to addressing dyslexia and improving basic language skills while simultaneously preparing students for college-level studies. The next Head of School will find a welcoming community that fosters lifetime learning skills and creativity while building strong foundations for student success. New Community students are bright, resilient and hard-working. The school is soundly governed by a Board with a deep and personal understanding of the difference TNCS can make in the lives of its students. When the New Community School began, it was seen in the eyes of many as attempting the impossible, but the school has become a place where educational and personal achievements abound. The board, faculty and staff are uniquely and loyally committed to the TNCS mission.

The current Head of School, Julia Ann Greenwood, will be retiring next year after 37 years of exceptional service and outstanding leadership. During her tenure as Head of School, Julia Ann and her team have demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to improving the lives of hundreds of bright students with dyslexia. They have grown TNCS from meager beginnings in a church building to the leading school of its type in Virginia.

Mission

The New Community School provides a program of college preparation for dyslexic (specific language learning disabled) students, grades 6-12. The program includes both remediation of language skills and academic challenge appropriate for students of average to above-average intellectual potential. The school also provides an environment that values and fosters personal growth, positive self-regard and the personal characteristics of a productive citizen. The New Community School serves as a resource to the educational community in the education of dyslexic boys and girls. The school is an independent, non-sectarian and non-profit day school accessible to dyslexic students of all races, creeds, ethnic origins and socio-economic backgrounds.

THE SCHOOL

The New Community School is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit, day school accessible to students with dyslexia. The school's purpose is clear: "We help young people who learn differently to be the very best they can be." What makes TNCS



distinctive is its ability to combine a stimulating curriculum of college-preparatory academics with intensive, daily, and direct instruction in the basics of reading, writing and spelling. The direct teaching of organizational skills and academic independence with an Orton-Gillingham approach to improve language skills (structured, phonetic, multi-sensory, diagnostic, and prescriptive) lie at the heart of the school's



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success. The school's supportive environment also fosters personal growth, well-earned self-confidence, and productive citizenship.

Many students come to TNCS after struggling in traditional schools which were unable to meet their needs. One student noted "Before TNCS I hated school so much that I even went so far as to throw my shoes out the car window so I wouldn't have to go." Some are skeptical when they enroll, as well as unsure of their own potential. TNCS is successful because it remediates weaknesses and strengthens strengths, helping students realize their ambitions and unfold successful futures. Students acquire specific strategies to overcome their learning disabilities as they improve their reading comprehension by applying organizational and time management plans to their schoolwork. Throughout this process, students grow into confident and actively engaged leaders.

Although students remain at New Community for from one to seven years, the average length of stay is two to three years. Students leave New Community for a number of reasons: (a) they complete diploma requirements and graduate; (b) they close the gap between their intellectual potential and their skills; (c) they determine that a college preparatory program does not meet their needs; or (d) it becomes apparent that the primary impediment to their progress is no longer their specific learning difficulty.



The New Community School was founded in 1974 by a concerned group of parents who worked together to create a school devoted solely to reaching dyslexic students. It was founded on the belief that intelligent, middle and high school students with specific learning differences deserved an educational experience that both addressed their needs and challenged their minds.

These parents called on Jean Dickinson, one of the area's first psychologists to diagnose specific language learning difficulties. She trained New Community teachers to use the Wechsler Intelligence Scale to diagnose strengths, weaknesses and learning styles. Jean has served on the school's admissions committee since the school's founding. Julia Ann Greenwood had been privately tutoring children with dyslexia when she became a Language Fundamentals teacher in the school's first year. She chaired the department before being asked to serve as Head of School in 1977. New Community has become a place where educational and personal achievements abound, educating more than 800 alumni, 85% of whom pursued higher education immediately after graduation.

Diploma requirements at The New Community School meet or exceed Virginia State standard diploma requirements and, with the exception of foreign language, meet or

exceed the units required for entrance to most colleges. Credits earned are accepted for transfer by both public and independent schools. The New Community School has earned national and local recognition as a leader in the education of students with dyslexia and has long been committed to serving as an educational resource for the community. TNCS has been accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) since 1987 and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

CAMPUS AND SETTING

The 9.1-acre New Community School campus includes several classroom buildings, a gymnasium and an athletic field. A new activities building is on the drawing board.



The campus is in North Side, within the City of Richmond, just minutes from I-95 and I-64. North Side includes many diverse neighborhoods with a variety of architectural styles, from Georgian, Romanesque Revival and Victorian homes to Arts and Crafts bungalows. Originally one of Richmond's streetcar suburbs, the Hermitage Road historic district is now one of the city's treasured neighborhoods. Nearby college campuses include Virginia Union University and Union Theological Seminary. Joseph Bryan Park is a short walk from the New Community campus and offers over 260 acres of hiking and biking trails and gorgeous azalea gardens.

New Community School at a Glance

Grades: 6-12

Current enrollment: 97

Faculty: 29

Faculty with advanced degrees: 62%

Operating budget: \$2.9 million

Indebtedness: None

Endowment: \$2.9 million

Annual giving most recent year: \$389,000

Parent participation in giving: 64%

Faculty participation in giving: 92%

Financial Aid: \$315,000

Students receiving need-based aid: 27%

STUDENTS

New Community students are bright and capable with an unending potential for learning. Despite their intellect, their development of skills in reading, spelling and writing and/or math is often weak. The students arrive to improve basic skills they were not successfully taught in earlier schooling. Once they see their skills improve, they sense they can do even more. With the right setting and support, they are inquisitive, social and productive. Many are also artistic or athletic and all bring talents and diverse experiences and contributions to this school community.

FACULTY

The New Community faculty is well educated and over half have a master's degree or higher. They are practical, yet idealistic in their philosophies of



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education and united in their commitment to work together to make a difference in the lives of students. The teachers hold themselves to a high standard and seek measures of accountability and substantive approaches to include in their teaching strategies. They love to solve the puzzles of learning and to use the student's strengths to overcome any weaknesses. They are fully aware that their work will increase the life options of their students. All faculty members serve as advisors to students and have the opportunity to assist in other aspects of the program, including extra-curricular activities and athletics.

As the school demonstrates success in alternative strategies, approaches, and programs for dyslexic young people, teachers and administrators determine ways in which the school can serve the broader educational community. The school encourages professional



growth, educational research, and the sharing of proven approaches and instructional strategies that benefit their students. TNCS teachers conduct local and national workshops and seminars to share their knowledge and have developed and published teacher manuals which are now used in public and private school settings. TNCS also hosts a Professional Institute for educators and parents.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The students who come to The New Community School enter with specific language skill deficits. These impair their ability to acquire knowledge and their ability to demonstrate what they know. While standardized testing reveals deficits in reading, spelling, and math computation skills, deficits in written expression, organizational skills, and study skills are more difficult to quantify, but are no less crucial for academic success at the secondary level.

All of the academic departments have built-in structures and strategies that are designed not only to help students to compensate for their skill deficits but to help them develop reliable and effective organizational and study techniques. As students develop the skills needed to succeed in future educational settings, supports and structures are gradually withdrawn and students are expected to exercise greater independence.

All students at The New Community School take one daily period of language remediation in a course called Language Fundamentals. This daily work is aimed at the remediation of each student's specific language learning deficits and is critical to their success. Each student's instruction in this class is individualized to meet specific needs and priorities in reading, spelling, handwriting, written expression, organization, and study skills. The tailoring of instruction takes into account the student's learning style,

strengths, and difficulties. Language remediation is carefully sequenced and structured and emphasizes a multi-sensory approach to learn patterns in the English language. The goal of language remediation is to realize maximum progress as soon as possible in an effort to raise language skills to a level commensurate with intellectual potential.

The English curriculum combines the study of literature with instruction in basic composition skills. Students also have one daily period each of social studies and science and in addition to the academic curriculum, these classes focus on developing independent study and organizational skills. A detailed course catalog is available at http://www.tncs.org/academics/coursecatalog_09_10.pdf.

TNCS is continuously improving, reassessing its state-of-the-art teaching methodologies and curriculum. Students complete course evaluation forms in each of their classes once a year. These offer them the opportunity to share their perceptions of the class and of the instructional techniques used, to tell the teacher which topics and activities they most or least enjoyed, and to identify the most important thing they feel they have learned. These evaluation forms are a private communication between students and teachers and are not shared with administrators. Teachers evaluate each of their courses in June on a one-page form that becomes the final section of the course objectives for the class. This offers them



the opportunity to share their perceptions of what worked and did not work, how the course might be modified in the future, and to offer suggestions for new materials and activities. These are helpful to teachers in planning their classes in the fall and are also extremely helpful to department heads and the Director of Studies, as they consider changes in the curriculum.

Last year, 46 students received Final Academic Honors for finishing the year with As and Bs in every subject and pass or honors in Language Fundamentals and practical or fine arts. The 11 seniors in the class of 2010 earned 29 college acceptances and are enrolled at James Madison University, Virginia Wesleyan College, J. Sargent Reynolds Community College, Frostburg State University, Lynchburg College, Davis & Elkins College, High Point University, Ferrum College and Ohio State University.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

A primary focus in the middle school is the remediation of reading, handwriting, spelling, composition, and math skills. When fully developed these are *the* skills that can create independence in traditional academic settings. Middle School classes focus on developing independent study and organizational skills. The curriculum is designed to

make sense of the world and establish dependable patterns of exploration and information gathering in each discipline. While students are acquiring basic skills they cannot be expected to demonstrate academic skills they do not yet possess. Accordingly, the school makes appropriate accommodations, allowing untimed tests, oral testing, reading of assignments, etc. in order to give a student full access to the academic curriculum and to ensure successful, productive experiences. The program emphasizes “hands-on” learning experiences and is designed to allow all students to participate fully, regardless of the level of their language skills. Middle school students also receive regular instruction in health, physical education, and practical and fine arts. These classes meet four times per week. The practical and fine arts program includes instruction in keyboarding skills.

UPPER SCHOOL

A typical upper school student’s schedule includes daily classes in English, math, history, science, and language fundamentals. Academic and Language Fundamentals classes carry one unit of credit per year. Upper school students also take classes in health and physical education and practical and fine arts. The average class size in upper school academic classes is six to eight students. Elective and physical education classes may be somewhat larger. Language Fundamentals classes in the upper school typically have two or three students. In grades 8-12 academic courses have comprehensive semester exams.



PRACTICAL AND FINE ARTS

Practical and Fine Arts elective classes at The New Community School expose students to activities and skills of a non-academic nature. These courses offer opportunities to learn new skills, develop artistic talent, or pursue a well-defined interest. Typically these courses are heavily weighted with “hands-on” productive activities and emphasize both individual growth and positive group interactions. Each course has goals that address subject knowledge, social and recreational opportunities, community involvement, and leadership. The middle school art classes integrate historically appropriate art projects with the history and social studies curriculum. Middle school students may select among classes in visual arts, drama, and music. Upper school students select from a wide array of classes in the visual arts or may select drama or creative writing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS

The athletic program is designed to involve as many students as possible in a variety of interscholastic sports. To this end, it is both instructional as well as competitive. Coaches strive to develop fundamental skills using appropriate instructional techniques that are in keeping with the philosophy of the academic and remedial programs. In addition to

improved individual skills, participants in the program develop self-discipline, an understanding of teamwork, a sense of fair play, cooperation, sports etiquette and sportsmanship, and the concept of the intrinsic rewards of hard work. They develop pride in building an athletic tradition in a small, close-knit school. Sports offered at TNCS typically include soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball and golf. More than 75% of students participated in at least one team sport during the 2009-2010 school year. Twenty-seven students earned the Golden Saber Award for participating in all three athletic seasons.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Extracurricular activities include Student Advisory Board, sports, drama, school newspaper, club and committee memberships, and yearbook. TNCS students participate in community service activities throughout the year -- and seniors contribute time as part of their graduation requirements. For example, students have collected food for the Central Virginia Food Bank, conducted a book drive for William Byrd Community House, collected school supplies for children in Ghana, and made gifts for residents of local assisted living facilities.



GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Sharing a deep commitment to the mission of the school, the 21-member Board of Trustees includes individuals who are closely connected to the school either as alumni, current or alumni parents, professional educators, or community friends.

The 2009-2010 Annual Fund raised \$389,000 with parent participation reaching a high of 64% and faculty participation reached 92%. The trustees recently named the school's legacy society the Dickinson Greenwood Society, in honor of Jean and Julia Ann for their continuous devotion to the lives of young people struggling with language learning difficulties.

RICHMOND

The capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond lies on the James River in the rolling hills of the piedmont region of Virginia, 100 miles south of Washington, D.C. The climate includes four distinct seasons with average summer temperatures of 88 degrees Fahrenheit and winter snowfall totals of two to fourteen inches. Richmond retains a small-town feel with southern charm though the city has a population of 193,000 and a metropolitan area population of 1.2 million. The city is home to seven colleges and universities, including the University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University. Richmond has a strong banking and financial services community with eight

Fortune 500 companies headquartered there. Money Magazine named Richmond “the best medium-sized city in the South in which to live.”



Richmond has a thriving arts scene with world-renowned performing artists, top museums, dozens of galleries, major arts events and festivals. With over 22,000 works of art from around the world, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts exhibits noteworthy collections of Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Modern and Contemporary American art. The museum is currently the only East Coast venue for the seven-city international tour of *Picasso:*

Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris. The Virginia Historical Society is one of the largest historical societies in the country with 13 exhibition galleries and a broad focus covering all of Virginia’s history. Capital of the Confederacy from 1861-1865, Richmond is home to many museums and battlefields of the Civil War, including the Museum of the Confederacy, the Davis Mansion, and the Civil War Battlefields National Park Visitors Center. The Science Museum of Virginia and the Children’s Museum of Richmond are side-by-side popular family destinations. The Richmond Region also offers a year-round schedule of musical, theatrical, artistic and dance performances, including the Richmond Ballet, Richmond Symphony and Virginia Opera. A new 179,000 square foot performing arts center, Richmond CenterStage, opened in the downtown area in 2009.

Richmond boasts more than 40 parks comprising more than 1,500 acres within the city. The Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden is one of many public gardens. The James River attracts kayakers, hikers, walkers, cyclists and climbers and Richmond is the only urban setting with Class IV rapids. Miles of trails and bike paths are open to the public on the islands of Belle Isle and Brown’s Island. Brown's Island hosts outdoor concerts and festivals throughout the warmer months. Richmond is also a destination for extreme sports enthusiasts, welcoming mountain bikers and triathletes to the trail system of the James River Park and the Xterra East Regional Championship is held in Richmond each June.



For more information about living in Richmond, see www.visitrichmondva.com, www.hellorichmond.com and www.virginia.org.



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THE OPPORTUNITY

The Head of School is the chief executive officer of the School, reporting to the Board of Trustees. He/she will execute the mission of the School and carry out the policies determined in conjunction with the Board. The Head of School's responsibilities include oversight of all academic, extracurricular, enrollment, and personnel matters, as well as management of the school budget and external relations. The new Head will be expected to be the inspirational leader of the School, broadly informed about academic matters, committed to excellence, and possessing both a moral and educational vision to take the School forward. This person should have experience working with students who have learning disabilities and enthusiastically support the mission statement and core values of The New Community School.

SPECIAL STRENGTHS OF NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOL

At TNCS every decision by the staff, faculty and board is required to be made with the best interest of the student foremost in mind. The school takes a great deal of pride in adhering to and accomplishing their mission. The school is nationally recognized for its ability to elevate dyslexic students' math and language skills and preparing them for college. One family relocated from as far away as Texas and students daily commute well in excess of an hour to attend TNCS. Rather than force students to fit into the mold of a particular educational system, TNCS *truly* makes education fit the child. "They saved my child" and "I wished I had known you were here sooner" are comments frequently made by parents.



CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

In its 36-year history, TNCS is more stable than ever. The fact that nothing is broken, however, does not mean that there are not challenges. Within the context of the number one priority, the fulfillment of the mission, there is the continuing need to test new and better teaching methods to ensure that TNCS remains a leader in the field of educating dyslexic students. As with most independent schools, the TNCS staff and faculty are disproportionately older and there is a need to renew those ranks in a timely fashion. A small downturn in enrollment due to the recent economic times has highlighted the need for increased external relationships and elevated community awareness. Beyond tuition, TNCS is dependent on a few family foundations for funding. Increased outside funding would lessen the school's financial vulnerability and allow more aggressive campus and facility expansion while improving scholarship opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- A graduate degree in a field related to helping young people with learning disabilities.
- Certification by the Va. State Department of Education in Learning Disabilities or the willingness to expediently obtain that certification.
- Experience in teaching and a record of success in a leadership role.
- A demonstrated depth of knowledge in field of dyslexia and special education.
- The ability to manage the educational, business and external relations of the school.

QUALITIES DESIRED IN THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

- A passion for educating dyslexic children.
- Empathy for students and their families.
- The abilities to communicate well to all constituencies.
- A “can do” attitude.

TO APPLY:

Interested and qualified candidates should submit *electronically* and as separate documents the following materials:

- *cover letter expressing interest in the New Community School position*
- *current résumé*
- *statement of educational philosophy and practice*
- *list of 5 references with name, phone number, and email address of each to:*

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