

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

ABINGTON FRIENDS SCHOOL

Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

abingtonfriends.net

Start Date: July 2024



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

Abington Friends School, founded in 1697 under the care of Abington Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), educates students by integrating Friends principles, practices and testimonies; intellectual excellence tied to strength of character and personal talents; and moral, physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being. AFS is a co-educational, college-preparatory school from age 3 through Grade 12, deeply rooted in Quaker values.

At a Glance



Established
1697



Enrollment
604



Financial aid awarded
\$8.1M



Student-teacher ratio
1:12



Students of color
51%



Total faculty
69 lead teachers;
22 assistants



Faculty with advanced degrees
51



Campus size
64 acres

Zip codes represented: 72

Faculty of color: 22 lead teachers of color;
7 teaching assistants of color

Students receiving aid: 54%

Endowment: \$5M

Annual operating budget: \$16M

Athletic teams: 50

Mascot: Kangaroo



Overview

Founded in 1697, Abington Friends School (AFS) is the oldest school in Pennsylvania to have operated continuously on the same parcel of land, and one of the oldest schools in the nation. Located just north of Philadelphia, the school occupies a 64-acre campus with fields, a creek, an arboretum, and a Quaker Meeting House. When walking the campus, one feels and observes a special spirit in students and teachers, and it is immediately clear that this is a deeply connected community with shared values. “Culture is what sets AFS apart from other schools,” noted a community member. “People are here because of the warmth, the diversity, the kind of community that is fostered here.” The current head of school, Rich Nourie, will complete a highly regarded and transformational tenure in June of 2024; the school is well positioned for continued success.

Now in its fourth century of educating students, the school has remained true to the goal of providing a powerful academic program within a community that values the ethical and spiritual tenets of Quakerism. “I value AFS’s spirituality and spiritual grounding,” reflected one faculty member. “There’s recognition here that everyone has good, everyone has worth, and everyone has value to the community.” Students and their families value the strong academic program, a vibrant arts program, the inclusive athletics offerings, and diverse and accepting community. The school is especially proud of its emphasis on experiential learning that is evident at all grades, and which helps to build individuals who navigate lives of deep meaning and purpose. “The idea of questioning and continuing revelation—experiential ed, focus on deeper learning, value on depth of learning—it’s a gift the kids are given,” noted a faculty member and parent of an alum. “There’s an ethos of ‘we don’t teach you what to think but how to think.’ AFS is an authentic place for learning.”

AFS is a school that welcomes students from all backgrounds and embraces diversity in all forms: race (51% self-identify as students of color), socio-economic status (54% receive tuition assistance), neighborhood (students attend from more than 70 zip codes in the greater Philadelphia area), sexual orientation and gender identification. “Our family is here because of the diversity—racially, socioeconomically, family structures—of the community,” noted one parent. Added a faculty member, “The diversity at AFS is authentic. People can be themselves here.”



Not satisfied resting on its long history, the school has done impressive forward-looking work with the launch of its strategic plan, [Envisioning the Fourth Century of Friends Education](#). A cornerstone of this plan will be their new Fourth Century Center, a state-of-the-art model of research, development and professional learning to power innovation, growth and change. The Center will support a Director and a collaborative team comprised of the Directors of Experiential Learning; Student Support and Wellbeing; and Equity, Justice and Engagement. This is a resilient, confident and aspirational school ready to embrace new leadership and continue its forward progress. AFS's next Head has the opportunity to partner with and lead a warm and committed school community.

Opportunities and Challenges

Share and celebrate AFS's values and distinctions.

The Head, in partnership with community members, will identify ways to articulate, strengthen and distinguish AFS's academic and co-curricular programs. Many community members value AFS's culture of humility and also recognize there is a tension between humility and sharing the achievements and level of excellence in the community. Given that the Philadelphia area is home to many strong suburban public schools and well regarded independent schools, AFS is in a very competitive marketplace and must remain diligent in strengthening and expanding its messaging to continue to attract and retain students, faculty, families, and staff, and to engage alumni, donors and other community stakeholders. While the presence of AFS is strong, it must also grow into and embrace an ever-changing landscape.

Develop frameworks to better support and sustain the community.

The warm sense of extended family and the commitment to fostering unity is part of what makes AFS special and has sometimes inhibited clarity around decision making, accountability, and constructive feedback. Helping to develop and establish clear expectations, feedback structures, and systems to support all community members will be a priority for the next Head.



Continue to advance the strategic plan, Envisioning the Fourth Century of Friends Education.

The community recently engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process and identified priorities that will guide the work of the entire school community and next Head of School for the next few years. Continuing to operationalize the plan, especially the Fourth Century Center, will be an exciting and compelling opportunity for the next Head.

Attend to the health and wellness of both the student and adult communities.

The next Head will need to be attuned to and supportive of the wellness of the community to ensure that teaching and learning continue successfully and to enable the continued growth and evolution of the school. Ensuring that students have access to the academic and social emotional support needed continues to be critical.

Strategize to strengthen AFS's financial well-being.

To support AFS's compelling aspirations around the strategic plan and campus master plan, to recruit, develop, and retain talented employees, and to support and evolve the school's curricular and co-curricular programs, the next Head must partner with, lead, engage, and inspire the internal and external communities to increase financial support of the school. The next Head will also need to be a resourceful and responsible steward of AFS's financial resources.



Qualifications and Personal Attributes

- A personal and professional commitment to Quaker values, and education and practices that drive the mission of the school.
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy, the tactical skills necessary to deftly create and manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy, the organizational fluency to manage multiple streams of information and respond to situations as they emerge.
- A warm, positive, and relational leadership style built on approachability, humility, transparency, presence, and responsiveness, and that includes the ability to set boundaries and expectations.
- Strong interpersonal skills, and the inclination to listen for understanding, and the ability to communicate orally and in writing with inspiration and clarity to both internal and external audiences.
- Personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and the requisite skills to support critical conversations in the design of ever more inclusive culture, curriculum, pedagogy, and programs.
- Experience recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and leading talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty and staff.
- A spirit of curiosity that fuels pursuit of evolving best practices and current research on curriculum and pedagogy and the requisite skills to support inquiry-based instructional practices that foster deep conversation and reflection as a practice.
- Experience in building community for a multidivisional organization and success in making and fostering connections between and amongst constituencies, divisions and stakeholders on and off campus and developing systems and structures to sustain those connections.
- Experience with and interest in managing and enhancing the financial and operational aspects of a complex organization, including effective friend and fundraising.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Abington Friends School.

[School Website](#)

[Equity, Justice, and Engagement](#)

[School History](#)

[Virtual Campus Tour](#)

[Quaker Education](#)

[School Profile](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé; and
- Two recent writing samples that could include speeches, blog posts, articles, or letters to community to:

Jennifer Wong Christensen

Senior Consultant

jennifer.christensen@carneysandoe.com

Robert Vitalo

Vice President, Search and Consulting Practices

robert.vitalo@carneysandoe.com