

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

AUSTIN WALDORF SCHOOL

Austin, Texas

austinwaldorf.org

Start Date: July 2024



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

Nurture, inspire, engage: enlightening the journey toward a more humane, just, and sustainable future.

Overview

Austin Waldorf School is thriving, one of the fastest growing (58% in two years post-COVID) Waldorf Schools and already the third largest Waldorf school in the US. It is located in a city that is always cited as one of the best places to live. With Austin's eclectic mix of music, technology, academics, government, and the slogan "Keep Austin Weird," the school is riding the growth of its hometown, one of the fastest growing cities in the country. Beyond that, not only has the school rebounded from having lost about 30% of its students during the pandemic, but its 416 current PK-12 enrollment exceeds pre-COVID levels, with more growth on the way. It is the only PK-12 accredited Waldorf School in the State of Texas and attracts students from across the state, the country, and around the world.

Austin Waldorf School also benefits from Waldorf pedagogy and its philosophical underpinnings. Waldorf education is finally becoming more widely known for graduating students who are academically prepared and who stand out for being compassionate, authentic young men and women who really know themselves and their place in the world.... a world that desperately needs the kinds of people that come out of Waldorf education. Someone observed, "Our school has a soul to it. It is more than just nuts and bolts." Austin Waldorf School is known for its strong academic curriculum, the instruction in two foreign languages, instrumental and vocal music classes, handwork, movement classes, interscholastic athletic teams for 6-12, a robust curriculum in visual arts, and a student support program. Many of the core Waldorf pedagogical elements, such as holistic and experiential learning are increasingly being recognized and embraced across educational pedagogies, making this an exciting time for Waldorf curriculum to take a more prominent role within the US learning landscape.

Happily, the road forward for Austin Waldorf School is about growth while assuring continued fidelity to the Waldorf program that creates these wonderful students. Assuring that the school has the human, financial and physical resources needed to support "doing Waldorf the best way possible," takes ongoing and skillful work. Currently under the leadership of a capable and appreciated Interim Head, the school seeks a new permanent Head of School to start July 1, 2024 to partner with a great faculty, a great board, a great administrative team, and great parents to move the school forward.

Strengths of the School

The school has far too many strengths to list them all. Of particular interest to prospective candidates are:

- The school community is united behind an absolute unwavering commitment to faithful implementation of Waldorf pedagogy and practices. In addition to strong academics for which the school is known, guiding students to self-discovery of their powerful, spiritual selves, underlies all that the school does.



- The campus, while at capacity, is a wonderful natural environment conducive to the programming that takes place at Austin Waldorf School.
- The school has dual accreditation by Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) confirming their commitment to being both a great Waldorf School and a great Independent School.
- After an inclusive and thoughtful governance review a year ago, the governance model for the school is established and understood. The respective roles of the Board, the Head of School, the Pedagogical Leader, the College of Teachers, and the General School Circle are understood and the model functions collaboratively. Continued improvement of the school's governance model is one of the Board's strategic Goals.
- The school is blessed with excellent Waldorf-trained faculty.
- There is a strong administrative team, many of whom are relatively new in their positions, but not necessarily new to the school.
- An engaged, supportive parent body who are committed to keeping the school an authentic Waldorf school.
- The school has recently completed a comprehensive Strategic Plan which provides both insights into the essence of Waldorf Education and values, as well as direction in five strategic priority areas. Much can be learned about the school by reading the plan which can be found [HERE](https://austinwaldorf.org/explore/strategic-plan) (https://austinwaldorf.org/explore/strategic-plan).

Opportunities and Challenges

- The above-mentioned Strategic Plan contains much of the current and future work of the School.
- The school's ambition is no less than to be what one leader called "a beacon for Waldorf Education in North America." After a necessary (and successful!) post-pandemic push for enrollment growth, the school now must shift to a mentality of shepherding future growth to make sure it is the right kind of growth. Specifically:
 - » The most important growth stimulant is to continue to do what it does extremely well. If the school remains student-centered, Waldorf-pedagogy-and-values driven, and continues to demand excellence in all things, that will be a magnet for growth.



“Doing what we do really well, with clarity and excellence will draw families. If we push growth for its own sake, and don’t have the program and staffing and facilities to do it right, it will not be good. So, for example, if we go to double-tracking, we must be able to do it all really well. It must be organized, well-communicated, fully-supported growth”

- Comment from one school administrative team member.

- » It is essential that any growth of the school be supported by continued emphasis on Waldorf pedagogy and values in every aspect of school life. The school must continue to refine and understand the kind of students who best benefit from the program of the school and assure that future enrollees and their families are mission-appropriate and understand the unique Waldorf approach.
- » As the student body grows, it is essential that the school has the physical spaces to enable it to optimally apply Waldorf pedagogy and programs. There is a campus master plan in development as well as an initial Phase I project that is beginning detailed design with anticipated construction start within the next 12 months. The new Head will have an important role in overseeing the design, funding, and construction of additional facilities.
- » A capital campaign is in the planning stages and will need to be accomplished to support facilities expansion and address deferred maintenance.
- » Growth, especially in the high school (see below) must be accompanied by growth in qualified staffing fully able to deliver Waldorf education without dilution. For example, in cases where the school goes from single to double sectioning, this must be accomplished with great skill and thought.
- » The disruption that all schools experienced during COVID, and three distinct and growing school divisions – kindergarten, elementary/middle, high school – necessitate more intentional efforts to unify one cohesive community, bound together by a common understanding of and commitment to the unique values and aspects of Waldorf education.
- » Given the significant portion of the student body (about 30% in the grades and as much as 40% in the high school) who benefit from learning support, the school must assure that it brings in the additional resources necessary to support the learning, social, and emotional needs of a growing and diverse student population.
- » Complete, accurate, and timely communication is always a challenge, and it is no different at Austin Waldorf School. There is a current need to improve communications across sections and circles that that will only increase as the school grows.
- Excellent, well-trained faculty are the essence of the school. It is ongoing work to attract, retain, and support faculty. At the same time, the school must support faculty who must adapt their approaches to the changing needs of changing students.



- There is a desire for greater diversity in both the adult and student populations of the school including socio-economic diversity.
- Given the number of students who are interested in and benefit from interscholastic sports, there is a widespread desire to enhance all aspects of the athletics program, from facilities to staffing, to training coaches in Waldorf values, and more.
- There is a need to put particular focus on the high school, specifically:
 - » Developing a clear philosophy and strategy that distinguishes the high school in the marketplace. It needs to be consistent with the overall essence of Austin Waldorf School but also articulate a compelling value proposition and niche for the high school specifically. There is a need to do a much better job of communicating broadly the strengths of the amazing high school.
 - » Growing the high school to an appropriate size to enable the critical mass necessary to meet student academic, social, athletic needs, and more.
 - » Prioritizing the expansion of high school facilities that are more than overtaxed at present.
 - » Assuring that Waldorf values and philosophies remain the underpinning of the high school program, thus distinguishing it from other high school options in the area.
 - » Working hard to connect the high school more closely and seamlessly into the whole of the school so it is an integral part of all that is Austin Waldorf School.
- There is a lot going on at Austin Waldorf School, all of it good. But it is necessary to assure that faculty and staff workloads are reasonable and sustainable and that programs are staffed sufficiently to “do whatever we do with excellence,” to which the school is committed.
- There has been significant progress made in professionalizing policies, procedures, and systems within the school, but much remains to be done in order to assure optimal administrative effectiveness and assure the ability to fully support a larger, more complex school.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Among attributes possessed by successful candidates are:

- Ideally a background in Waldorf education, pedagogy, and values.
- Substantial prior experience in the classroom.
- If not Waldorf-experienced, then an understanding that Waldorf IS different, a strong desire to be in a place that is different and to understand what that difference is. A genuine curiosity and desire to learn about, embrace and become a compelling advocate for the benefits of a Waldorf education. The right candidate will have an innate spirituality that aligns with the Waldorf spiritual underpinning and view of the human being.
- A highly relational leader including:



"The next Head must be someone who has spiritual belief. Someone who is excited about Waldorf education because they can see the education as a spiritual endeavor and process that awakens children to their spiritual selves."

- Comment from an AWS Board Member

- » An excellent listener.
- » A growth mindset that is open to new ideas and eager to explore possibilities.
- » A collaborative decision-maker seeking input whenever possible, but also able to be decisive when necessary and to explain the rationale behind those decisions.
- » A desire to plug into all aspects of Austin Waldorf school life including frequent classroom visits, festivals, parent activities, arts and athletic events, open houses, drop-off and pick-up and more. Someone who sees this involvement as necessary understanding to inform decision-making. A view that the faculty and staff are the experts not only in Waldorf education generally, but in the specific culture and norms of Austin Waldorf School.
- » An accessible leader who nevertheless sets boundaries for what is and is not appropriate behavior in the school community.
- A unifying personality who, through their own authentic caring and interacting with colleagues, unites people under one spirit and culture. A personal connection to the mission of supporting students on their "journey to self-hood."
- Able to assume final authority for all matters within the school but eager to collaborate fully with the Pedagogical Leader and the College of Teachers on matters of Waldorf pedagogy, values, and practice.
- Able to effectively delegate to others on the team while still holding them accountable. Setting high standards for all faculty and staff within the school.
- Experience with the full range of student ages, including high school.
- Familiarity with the differentiation and support necessary to serve both neurotypical and neurodiverse students.
- Financial literacy sufficient to work with the board to maximize the impact of fiscal resources.
- Demonstrated track record translating strategy into tactical plans and executing.
- An excellent communicator who can communicate the strategy of "where we are all going together" and gain buy-in and support for the vision.
- A track record of fundraising experience and success, ideally including a capital campaign.
- A systems thinker, able to assure that the school has an effective and efficient administration.
- An individual capable of bringing central organization and follow up to the work of staff and the work of the Board and its Committees.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Austin Waldorf School.

[School Website](#)

[College Matriculations](#)

[School History](#)

[About Austin, Texas](#)

[A Waldorf Education](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant 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.
- A statement of familiarity with and/or commitment to Waldorf Education as part of candidate's overall philosophy of education.
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Skip Kotkins

Senior Consultant

skip.kotkins@carneysandoe.com