THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF BRIDGEPORT

BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

START DATE: JULY 1, 2019

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The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport provides a Christ-centered, academically rigorous learning environment where cultural diversity is welcomed, Catholic values are taught, and all faiths celebrated. Students are nurtured, encouraged, and challenged in preparation for a successful life of leadership and service. Serving 900 students from diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, four Catholic Academy campuses all share one common mission: to provide a superior education in a faith-filled learning environment that nurtures the whole child—mind, body, and spirit.

The School seeks an Executive Director, effective July 2019.

Governance

The Diocese of Bridgeport includes more than 460,000 registered Catholics in Fairfield County, Connecticut, representing 45% of the total population. In addition to its 82 parishes, the Diocese sponsors 25 regional elementary schools and five diocesan high schools. Recently the Diocese is in the process of changing its governance model of its schools. For over 14 years, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport was served by an active and highly professional Advisory Board. The past three years, at the request of the Bishop, a new governance model of a membership corporation includes 13 directors, called the Board of Directors, who are totally responsible for the mission of the Academy, including hiring of principals, the executive director, all finances of the school, development, facilities and the educational program. The Bishop, Vicar General, and Superintendent of School form the Board of Members assuring the Catholicity of the school and the meeting of standards set by the Office of the Superintendent for all schools.
THE SCHOOL

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport is a welcoming community comprising four campuses: St. Ann (PreK-8), St. Andrew (PreK-8), St. Raphael (PreK-3), and St. Augustine (Grade 4-8).

Serving approximately 900 preschool through middle school students throughout the city of Bridgeport, the Catholic Academy is very diverse in its community. There is religious diversity with 60% Roman Catholic and 40% non-Catholic students. All students participate in an active liturgical life, monthly mass, and daily religious instruction. All faiths are welcomed. Eighty percent of students are students of color (36% African-American, 35% Hispanic/Latino, 21% Caucasian, 5% Asian, and 3% multi-racial), and they speak many languages including Chinese, Creole, French, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese, among others.

Since the late 1880s the Schools have educated generations of students eager to learn and live responsible, disciplined, and purposeful lives. Catholic Academy of Bridgeport students are nurtured, encouraged, and challenged by its faculty body of 103—60% of whom hold advanced degrees—in preparation for a successful life of leadership and service. With 100% of graduating eighth graders attending fine Catholic high schools as well as some Charter, Vocational, or Magnet schools, and 99% going on to college, the Schools are proud of this tradition of excellence.

Since the majority of families served are below the poverty line, Catholic Academy of Bridgeport school offers very generous tuition assistance programs for student families with demonstrated financial need. The tuition is only $5,000 although it costs over $7,000 to educate each child; charter and public schools receive over $12,000 per child and are free. The Academy does not receive any government support except for some limited Title Funds for academic purposes. This long tradition
of offering student aid strengthens the entire community. Although every family pays something, varying amounts of financial aid and scholarship funds can help bridge the gaps; $2.138 million in aid was awarded this year to 85% of students. The source of this is individual donors and a limited number of foundations.

The Catholic Academy is accredited by the state of Connecticut and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). A recent 10-year accreditation process was completed this fall, 2018, with no failed standards. The school-wide curriculum aligns with both the Diocese of Bridgeport and nationally recognized academic standards.

St. Ann Academy
Located in the heart of the city’s Black Rock section, St. Ann’s serves 230 children from the entire Greater Bridgeport area. A family-like PreK–8 community provides an enriching, well-rounded education. Music, drama, and visual arts play a vital role in the school culture, and all students are taught to develop an appreciation for the arts. After-School Program offerings at St. Ann’s include Art Club, Chess, Chorus, Drama, Guitar, Make a Difference Club, and School Newspaper. After-school sports include tennis, track, and lacrosse.

St. Andrew Academy
Located in the North End, St. Andrew is home to 260 students from all over the City of Bridgeport. The school celebrates its diversity in every grade and encourages students to share their families’ heritage throughout the year. The faculty, staff, and administration strive to create a family atmosphere at the school where children are celebrated, encouraged, and expected to be good citizens. After-School Programs at St. Andrew’s include band, choir, piano, karate, Girl Scouts, Cooking Club, Newspaper Club, Crochet Club, Fashion Club, and Get Fit Club.
St. Raphael Academy
St. Raphael is located in the Hollow, or center of the city and serves 210 preschool-3rd graders. Here you’ll find a supportive community of learners that encourages all children to become the best they can be. Teachers form strong partnerships with parents and work to cultivate a desire in each child to discover his or her own talents and gifts. The school also fosters an appreciation for the variety of cultures and nationalities within its diverse community. St. Raphael offers a variety of After-School Program activities including choir, Chess Club, yearbook, Craft Club, and Little Friends of the Sacred Heart, a religiously affiliated community service group. Most students who graduate 3rd grade enroll in St. Augustine Academy, which is only two miles away, also in the Hollow.

St. Augustine Academy
Diversity, discipline, and discovery are the core principles that guide the upper elementary and middle school community of 209 students. A strong academic curriculum is designed to develop 21st-century skills and literacies, with increased responsibilities and workload in the upper grades. Blended learning and use of chrome books enhance student learning and differentiation of instruction. St Augustine shares the same campus as the Diocese of Bridgeport Cathedral and Kolbe Cathedral High School. The After-School Program is affiliated with the Cardinal Shehan Center, which provides transportation to and from the school. Offerings include arts and crafts, Home Economics Club, Basketball Team, Bowling Team, Swimming, as well as homework assistance and a variety of recreational activities.
The curriculum of the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport supports the continuous improvement of student achievement and is designed not only to meet but exceed state and national standards. It enables students reach their full potential not only now, but also in higher education and in their adult lives.

The past five years has shown an increase in attention to improvement of math skills. MathWorks, a nationally respected program, shares leading math educators who visit campuses 5/6 times a year for two days of coaching faculty and implementing new strategies to mathematics. An English Language Arts curriculum is being created through assistance from Columbia Teachers College. Chrome Books are available to all students, with professional training of faculty through Blended learning specialists. A connection with the Southport School (formerly Eagle Hill School) trains teachers in testing for and identifying students with learning challenges, Executive Functioning, training in Orton Gillingham, etc. The Tauck Family Foundation is funding the development of Social and Emotional Learning on all four campuses including the Yale RULER program to identify and deal with emotional learning. The Board generously funds improvement of learning on all levels and development efforts seek foundation and individual donors to assist in improving our academic program.

The Board recently published a Strategic Plan, which covers areas of improvement in curriculum, faculty compensation, and technology, as well as raising of funds for facilities, scholarships, endowment, etc.
Bridgeport is a historic seaport city in Connecticut. The largest yet poorest city in the state, it sits at the mouth of the Pequonnock River on Long Island Sound. With an estimated population of just over 151,000, Bridgeport is located 60 miles from Manhattan and 40 miles from the Bronx. The two hospitals, Bridgeport Hospital and St. Vincent’s Medical Center, are the major employers. Most industry has left the city thus job opportunities are limited. Of the 33,000 children living in the city, one in three lives in poverty. The estimated living wage for a family of three is $35 an hour. Although house costs are lower than many in Fairfield County, house taxes are the highest due to lack of taxable industry. Such a financial profile makes recruitment of students difficult. The public school system has many challenges with dropouts, gangs, and the majority of children not reading on grade level. Charter and magnet schools provide an alternative to the public schools and competition to the Academy since they have no charge for tuition. However, parents who choose the Catholic Academy do so because they are safe, children are cared for with genuine affection, there is a commitment to religious values, the academics are superior, and discipline and respect are honored.

The City of Bridgeport is making efforts to improve the arts, provide cultural events at the Klein Auditorium, and sporting events at the Webster Bank Arena, as well as a number of museums, ranging from the science-oriented at the Discovery Museum and Planetarium, to fine arts at the Housatonic Museum of Art, historical at the Barnum Museum celebrating the showman himself, theater at the Downtown Cabaret Theater, as well as the state’s only zoo, Connecticut Beardsley Zoo.

The city’s location on Long Island Sound provides beaches, boating opportunities, and programs for children to learn about marine biology and ecological issues.
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This is a unique opportunity for a dynamic Catholic educational leader to build on the legacy of a highly respected founding Executive Director and truly change the trajectory of children’s lives in profound ways that few schools can achieve.

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport seeks to be known, respected, and sought after for a superior education for Pre-K to 8 elementary students in metropolitan Bridgeport, Connecticut. The Catholic Academy delivers a superior value proposition by providing a better education than comparable public alternatives at a lower overall cost.

The Executive Director will have the opportunity/challenge to:

- Grow the Academy’s enrollment within a challenging socio-economic demographic;
- Develop a streamlined, integrated, and centralized admissions process;
- Enhance the academic offerings and maintain the commitment to academic rigor and the religious development of the students;
- Engage effective communication and collaboration among administrators, faculty, students, parents, spiritual leaders, and the community;
- Grow and diversify financial support;
- Raise/increase funding for scholarships, academic programs, teacher salaries, facility improvements, and professional development;
- Continue to develop a “One School” culture binding together the four campuses;
- Celebrate the diverse religions represented in the Academy’s community;
- Build and sustain a blended learning environment that is meaningful, purposeful, and challenging for all students, while supporting a culture of diversity.
DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the corporation, reporting to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will be responsible for building, supervising, and leading a team of high performing professionals dedicated to the mission and aspirations of The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport. In addition, candidates should be mindful of the following duties and expectations of the Executive Director:

• Effective enrollment management to sustain and grow the Academy’s enrollment within the competitive and demographically challenging environment of metropolitan Bridgeport;
• Enhancing the academic performance of the Academy’s students;
• Ensuring effective hiring and staffing of the principals and other administrators as needed in serving on all four campuses;
• Leading, supervising, supporting, and working in close collaboration with the four principals of the Academy;
• Working with a highly qualified Business Manager, provide strong, highly responsible financial management of school operations to ensure financial sustainability of The Catholic Academy;
• In close partnership with the Board of Directors, provide dynamic leadership for all advancement/development efforts to secure the financial resources to sustain and enhance the mission of The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport.
**Desired Qualities and Qualifications**

The most compelling candidates will have an entrepreneurial, creative, and inclusive leadership style with an educational background and proven experience in leading and advocating for new initiatives ideally in underserved communities. In addition, the Search Committee seeks candidates with the following qualities and characteristics:

- A committed Catholic with high ethical standards and the capacity and desire to lead in a collaborative and transparent manner;
- Affinity with, and passion for, the compelling mission of The Catholic Academy and for Catholic education;
- Ability to establish and maintain a strong and effective working relationship with the Board of Directors, the Diocese of Bridgeport and the Office of the Bishop;
- Demonstrated ability to organize, direct, and coordinate operations;
- Talent for hiring and building administrative staff with the ability to direct and support a professional staff with varied responsibilities and expertise;
- Capacity to manage multiple tasks and take the initiative to develop innovative solutions to problems with limited supervision, time, and resources;
- Demonstrated success leading significant efforts to successfully close achievement gaps;
- Knowledge of fundraising of both annual support and major capital gifts, and proven experience identifying, cultivating, and soliciting high-level giving prospects;
- Strong ability to plan strategically and then execute these plans with attention to detail;
- Exceptional written and verbal communication and listening skills and a charismatic presentation style that engages, inspires, and motivates others;
- Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to build productive relationships with partners within and external to the organization;
- Possess the utmost personal and professional integrity;
- An advanced degree with an emphasis in education, business, finance, organizational management, or public administration is strongly desired;
- Significant education-based work experience in schools or non-profit operations, management, and supervision or an equivalent combination of experience and education;
- Ability to speak Spanish an asset.

While experience designing and implementing new and innovative educational models would be helpful, the most important quality sought by the Board of Directors is a person with a passion for the mission of transforming the lives of children through the unique gifts of a Catholic education provided by The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport.

**To Apply**

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé or curriculum vitae;
- A one-page statement of educational philosophy and practice;
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission) to:

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