



GILLEN BREWER SCHOOL
New York, New York

HEAD OF SCHOOL
Start Date: July 1, 2023
gillenbrewer.com



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

GILLEN BREWER SCHOOL

Mission

The Gillen Brewer School's mission is to educate and support its students to become confident, independent, and engaged learners. Gillen Brewer is defined by a commitment to its students, and inspired by their determination.

Gillen Brewer offers a year-round program for its 71 students. Our students, aged 2.8 through 10, are educated by an amazing team of teachers, therapists, and psychologists. Our School-Home partnership, a cornerstone of the program from its beginnings, differentiates us from peer schools. The School's academic program is very well regarded and established in the special education community.

While the school has been in existence for decades, it is a relatively new independent school. Formerly funded by the City of New York Department of Education, Gillen Brewer leadership decided it could better serve its students as an independent non-profit school. The transition to a privately funded, independent school began during the 2017/2018 school year and was completed in the 2020/2021 school year. The School is a member of NYSAIS and will go through its next re-accreditation process in 2023/2024.

OVERVIEW

Gillen Brewer seeks a permanent Head to continue its 30-year mission of uncovering the specialness in every child it educates, while ushering it into the next phase of the school's development.



SCHOOL HISTORY

The Gillen Brewer School was founded in 1992 by Laura Bilicic and Laurie Dubos as a school for children with learning challenges. As special education teachers, they saw the overwhelming need for a school in New York City where families with children who have special needs would be welcomed, educated and supported. The founders believed that a knowledgeable and informed family was invaluable to their child's overall education. To underscore the importance of family, the school was named after the founders' grandmothers, Mattie Gillen and Virginia Brewer. The school opened in 1992 with one student and added classes until it reached 48 students from Pre-K through second grade. In August 2005, the school moved to its current location at 410 East 92nd Street to accommodate an ever increasing program and was able to nearly double in size to 86 students.

THE SCHOOL

GBS provides an excellently trained staff, a low student-to-teacher-ratio, a team-centered approach, and a well-honed Family Program that is the cornerstone of the organization's mission and contributes to the sense of community.

Each student is provided with a rich and supportive 12-month program of rigorous academics, art, music, science, technology and physical fitness. Speech-language and occupational therapies together with counseling services are integral to the program.

GBS is accredited by the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYS AIS) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools. In 2021, it was named a School of Excellence by the National Association of Special Education Teachers.



ACADEMICS

GBS' academic curriculum is rooted in the belief that children learn best in an environment where they feel safe and accepted and where learning is fun. Units of study are chosen based on students' interests and developmental levels while following modified New York State standards.

The language arts curriculum incorporates both a balanced literacy program and a multi-sensory, phonetically based approach to reading and writing. A multi-sensory approach to math encourages students to learn math through "hands-on" projects. Manipulatives and visuals aid children in learning concepts and help them to understand how to use these concepts in their lives. The GBS science curriculum is inquiry-based. All projects involve hands-on interactions and emphasize student exploration.

Technology also plays an important role in the education program. Teachers and children have access to SMART Boards, Google Chromebooks, iPads, and more to supplement instruction. Children are provided developmentally appropriate instruction in the use of the computer and the internet. Computer games are used to reinforce skills taught in math and reading, while other programs are used to teach keyboarding skills and enhance writing and research.



ARTS AND ATHLETICS

Arts play a valuable role at Gillen Brewer. Music and art give children another way to express themselves and participate in a different setting.

GBS' association with the Asphalt Green sports program gives students an opportunity to take part in swimming, gymnastics, soccer, basketball, martial arts, yoga, and floor hockey.

SCHOOL LIFE

Student culture is enthusiastically supported at a school-wide level. All students have the same school-wide expectations of being ready, responsible, safe and kind. The school uses the term “community of learners” to define and reflect the culture of the school. In every aspect of the program, from staff development to parent training, the Gillen Brewer community is in a state of reflection and learning, putting what we have learned into practice. Through reflection and action, the school can individualize the program to meet the needs of each child and family. Therapists work collaboratively with teachers, families, and each other to provide the students with strategies and skills to be more successful in academic and social arenas.



STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

There are many unique and strong aspects to our program.

- Diversity of programs within the school. Three distinct programs: 10:1:2 which has ten students, a lead teacher and two assistant teachers; 8:1:2 which has 8 students, a lead teacher and two assistant teachers, and 6:1:2 with six students, one lead teacher and two assistants.
- In addition to the classroom teachers, there are four occupational therapists, four speech therapists and four psychologists. Unique to the Gillen-Brewer model, these highly skilled specialists integrate strategies into the classroom to ensure skills are practiced throughout the day.
- Highly integrated approach among all staff in relation to each individual student's needs and goals.
- The faculty is described as "incredible" and are given the trust and flexibility to do what they think is in the best interests of each student
- Students' teams are in frequent communication with the families to ensure seamless coordination between school and home.
- The school has a committed board who has helped ensure that the school is in a very strong financial standing with no debt and a strong endowment.
- The staff works closely together, has professional development support, and report that they feel valued and appreciated both as professionals and as individuals.



OPPORTUNITIES

Key priorities for Gillen Brewer's next Head of School include:

- Developing Gillen Brewer's next 5-year strategic plan including consideration the expansion of its physical plant and programs
- Increasing student enrollment to pre-pandemic levels
- Designing a strong marketing and communications program to increase the school's brand recognition as it seeks to attract more families and potential employees
- Enhancing its administrative functions (including finance, development and communications) so that they are emblematic of the best independent schools
- Continuing the school's focus on DEI
- The administrative staff is located 5 minutes away from the main campus. Focusing on bringing everyone together in one building is a key priority

DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- A caring, compassionate and passionate leader who demonstrates a commitment to the education of all students
- Expertise in the institutional areas of policies, procedures, organizational structure, marketing, budgets and fundraising
- Is an educational leader who feels an affinity for working with children, their teachers and their parents



- Ability to function as the chief articulator of Gillen Brewer's mission, its values and its differentiating factors to ultimately broaden Gillen Brewer's brand recognition
- Visionary leader and experienced manager. Develops and inspires staff; sets strategic direction
- Experience working in a best-practices partnership with an independent school board of Trustees
- Prior experience and training in Special Education is a plus, but not required
- Able to drive and implement strategic considerations including factors involving expansion (including real-estate, financing and building operations)
- Understands the demands of classroom teachers and staff
- An approachable, accessible, warm individual who is a great listener and can relate well to the many segments of the Gillen Brewer community
- An inclusive, collaborative decision maker who seeks input, when possible, but can make decisions independently when needed
- Effective delegator, trusts the knowledge of faculty and staff to make decisions
- Willingness to learn and understand the NYC school system at large

CONCLUSION

This is an exciting opportunity for a strategic leader to build on our 30-year history of educational excellence and set the strategy for the next phase of the school's evolution. We are on strong financial footing and are poised as a newly independent school to consider expansion opportunities. Gillen Brewer changes lives – we want someone who is passionate about making an impact and will ultimately enhance our brand in the community, as a school and employer of choice for families and staff.



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 interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- Educational philosophy statement including your approach to differentiation and neurodiverse student populations;
- A list of five professional references, including name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will be contacted only with the candidate's permission) to:

Skip Kotkins

Search Consultant

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