



THE JOHN COOPER SCHOOL
The Woodlands, Texas

HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL
Start Date: July 1, 2022
johncooper.org



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

The John Cooper School Cooper

Mission

The John Cooper School is an independent, non-sectarian, co-educational, college preparatory day school. The School's mission is to provide a challenging education in a caring environment to a diverse group of select students, enabling them to become critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, responsible citizens and leaders, and lifetime learners.

The mission is a deeply meaningful statement in the daily life of the School that has been consistent throughout its history.

OVERVIEW

When you enter The John Cooper School campus, there is a distinct feeling of genuine welcome, high energy, and warmth of strong relationships. It is a highly regarded, accredited, coeducational school for students in kindergarten through grade 12. People associated with the School believe Cooper is a thriving community of learners and teachers and an institution that is making a difference. As an academic community dedicated to student-centered experience, Cooper combines a robust college preparatory curriculum with opportunities for personal growth, individual enrichment, and community engagement. The School has had a remarkable history of positive development, evolving into a preeminent school with faculty deeply experienced in independent school education. Thus, the School is at an interesting crossroad, not a young school that needs to be built, and not a mature school with deep resources and refined reputation. Finances are in excellent order, enrollment trends are stable and predictable, and the campus has been exceptionally planned, designed, developed, and maintained with state-of-the-art facilities that inspire innovation and community.

At a Glance

- Founded: 1988
- Total enrollment: 1,293
- Upper School enrollment: 490
- Students of color: 48%
- Counties/cities represented: Montgomery County and Harris County
- Total faculty: 126
- Upper School faculty: 54
- Faculty with advanced degrees: 70%
- Student/teacher ratio: 11:1
- Annual financial aid awarded: 168 students receive \$2,119,925 in need-based financial aid
- Operating budget: \$35,700,000
- Endowment: \$19,700,000
- Accreditation: Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)



Head-elect Dr. Stephen M. Popp

Located on a beautiful 43-acre campus 40 miles north of Houston, the School was founded in 1988 by corporate and private benefactors and dedicated parents. The first-year enrollment was 175 students in PK through grade 7. Each subsequent year the next grade level was added. Currently enrollment is 1,293 students: 476 in Lower school (PK-5), 316 in Middle School (6-8) and 493 in Upper School (9-12). The campus is comprised of the Mitchell Lower School, the Middle/Upper School, the Rock Math and Science Center, Austin Gym, Dunlap Gym, the Sims Student Center, and the Glenn Performing Arts Center. Outdoor facilities include the Pate Track, Pugh Field (football and soccer), Pisula Softball Field, Chenault Tennis Courts, and the Field Family Diamond at Finnie Park.

As long-serving Head of School Michael F. Maher retires in July 2022 and Dr. Stephen M. Popp begins his tenure as Head of School, Cooper is poised in a strong position for forward trajectory, reaching for more national presence, recognition, and leadership, as well as marketing to new families for whom Cooper is, perhaps, a too well-kept secret. By every metric, it is enviably positioned for a future of continued excellence and for the vision and care of new Head of School leadership.

This is an exceptional opportunity to advance an outstanding school with deep ties to its community and an unwavering commitment to its mission. Mr. Maher and Dr. Popp will work together on the hiring process for the position.



THE UPPER SCHOOL

The Upper School combines a robust college preparatory curriculum with opportunities for personal growth, individual enrichment, and community engagement. Twenty-one Advanced Placement courses are offered, and the curriculum is expanded further through the School's membership in the Global Online Academy. The paramount goals are to graduate students who are prepared for the challenge of college study and who have a love for learning that will sustain throughout college and into adult life.

The Upper School advisory program provides a framework for each student to receive individual support and guidance from a caring faculty member. Students are advised in choosing their curriculum, organizing and balancing their responsibilities, developing decision-making skills, and preparing for all aspects of the application processes associated with college admission. College counseling begins in earnest in eleventh grade, when each junior begins individualized collegiate planning with a college counselor and the process continues through the senior year.

Activities and student organizations underscore the values of the Upper School by emphasizing respect, personal responsibility, and service to others. Students in Upper School adhere to an Honor Code and are expected to act with integrity both in and out of the classroom. The academic and non-academic offerings of the Upper School help develop students' personal values, foster an intellectual curiosity and broadened perspective, and accentuate the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and community.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

As stated in the School's Diversity Statement, "The John Cooper School seeks to empower students as individuals who foster understanding and cooperation and who discourage prejudice and stereotypes. While striving to create a place of learning where all members—students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni—experience safety, respect, and acceptance, the School actively pursues an inclusive climate that affirms individual self-worth and promotes cooperation in an environment where all individuals are valued for their contributions."

Cooper acknowledges that respect for diversity, which includes the differences among peoples' identities, experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, is essential for a quality education and enriches the world around. Diversity is an integral part of the whole Cooper experience as seen through formal curricula, meaningful dialogue, educational events, equitable and inclusive admissions and employment policies, and ongoing attention to and enrichment of diversity issues. The Committee for Equity and Inclusion for faculty and staff and student groups such as the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Alliance for Middle School and the Student Diversity Committee, Spectrum, and Women and Equity in Upper School ensure the Cooper community continuously strives to create a welcoming and safe environment.

With open minds, Cooper will continue to develop programs and policies that enhance diversity as a vital and important element of our shared humanity. The deliberate actions of trustees, faculty, administration, and staff will help sustain Cooper as a school that values every individual for his or her unique perspective and contribution.

College Matriculation

In the classes of 2017-2021, 533 students attended or are attending 176 colleges: 39% in Texas, 55% out of state, and 6% international. The following is a representative selection:

American University
Arizona State University
Baylor University
Boston College
Brown University
Carnegie Mellon University
Colorado School of Mines
Columbia University
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
Emerson College
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Harvard University
Johns Hopkins University
Loyola Marymount University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
McGill University (CA)
New York University
Northeastern University
Pennsylvania State University
Purdue University
Rice University
Southern Methodist University
Stanford University
Texas A&M University, College Station
Texas Christian University
The University of Texas, Austin
Tulane University
Universiteit van Amsterdam (NL)
University of California, Berkeley
University of Chicago
University of Houston
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Notre Dame
University of Oxford (UK)
University of St. Andrews (UK)
University of Southern California
University of Toronto (CA)
Vanderbilt University
Wake Forest University
Wesleyan University
Yale University



UPPER SCHOOL ARTS

Upper School visual arts classes give students exposure to more advanced artistic techniques and materials. Emphasis is placed on observational and technical skills, problem solving, personal style, and conceptual thinking. Self-motivated and self-directed projects are encouraged. Students are required to think beyond the first answer, to delve deeper, to see in a new way, and to find their personal voices.

Upper School performing arts classes provide students with a foundation in the principles of theater, dance, choir, and band, as well as the practical application of acquired skills in performance. The history and theories of most famous practitioners in each discipline are also introduced.



UPPER SCHOOL ATHLETICS

Cooper is a member of the Southwest Preparatory Conference (SPC), which consists of 17 of the finest college-preparatory, independent schools in Texas and Oklahoma. The SPC was established in 1952 “for students’ enjoyment, physical fitness, and instruction in skills and character; for the intrinsic worth of individual sports and team games, which are ably taught, faithfully played, and fairly matched; and for the mutual benefits derived from keen competition and true sportsmanship within a sensible educational framework.”

The John Cooper School fields interscholastic varsity teams in the following sports: Boys: baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, and track and field. Girls: basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball.

Cooper’s athletic facilities include the Austin Gymnasium used by the Lower School and the 30,000-square-foot, two-court Dunlap Gymnasium used for physical education, volleyball, and basketball. Outdoor facilities include Pugh Field, a lighted synthetic turf football and soccer field surrounded by the six-lane Pate Track; the Field Family Diamond at Finnie Park, a lighted baseball field with indoor batting cage; the lighted Pisula Softball Field; and the four-court, lighted Chenault Tennis Complex.



THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS

The Woodlands is a master planned community in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land metropolitan area, primarily located in Montgomery County with portions extending into Harris County. In 2021, the population of The Woodlands was 119,000. Though it began as an exurban development and bedroom community, it has also attracted corporations and has several corporate campuses, most notably Exxon-Mobil, Howard Hughes Corporation, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, Chevron Phillips Chemical, Huntsman Corporation, Woodforest National Bank, Baker Hughes, McKesson Specialty Health, Halliburton, and three major hospitals. The community won a Special Award for Excellence in 1994 from the Urban Land Institute and in 2021 was rated the #1 “Best City to Live in America” by Niche.

Aptly named The Woodlands for its development in and around 28,000 tree-filled acres and situated 28 miles north of downtown Houston, the area was founded in 1974. From a quiet afternoon of kayaking to a night of live music, a hike through the woods to strolling The Waterway promenade, or a round of golf to a roundtable discussion—these are just a few of the ways you can spend a day in The Woodlands. A destination whose offerings and culture rival the nation’s most buzzed about larger cities, The Woodlands is a place designed for great experiences—from beautiful nature to top-tier amenities, globally-ranked venues to hidden gems. The Woodlands is well known for its public safety, extensive parks and recreation, golf, corporate headquarters, schools, places of worship, shopping, dining, hospitality, healthcare, and much more. Today, there are 148 parks and 220 miles of hike and bike trails.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Cooper community members are welcoming, caring, and practical. During this year they are preparing themselves for a new Head of School who brings new perspectives, fresh ideas, and plentiful energy to the school they love. They are glad that they already know and trust Dr. Popp, who has served as Head of Upper School since 2015 and Assistant Head of School since 2019, and are ready to wish their new Head conspicuous success and lend support.

The following are seen as opportunities for the next Head of Upper School:

- Building upon a strong sense of community with a student-centered focus, and in which students and faculty are respected, supported, and challenged.
- Promoting ongoing growth and encouraging the achievement of professional goals among faculty, through formal plans and through ongoing conversations about best practices and trends in curriculum, pedagogy, and educational technology.
- Hiring, supporting, supervising, and evaluating the division's faculty, in consultation with the Head of School and department chairs.
- With the support of the Academic Dean and department chairs, refining and developing curricula and programs to ensure that students receive a first-rate education, that a wide range of student needs is served, and that Cooper's holistic approach to educating students is preserved and enhanced.



- Collaborating with the Heads of Lower and Middle School to promote vertical alignment of curricula, and to ensure that Cooper’s educational philosophy is consistent throughout all three divisions.
- Maintaining positive relationships and ongoing communication with parents regarding current division activities, matters pertaining to specific students, and general information about the education and development of adolescents.
- Embrace The Woodlands, all of its charms and challenges, and the School’s long-standing relationship, service, and outreach to surrounding neighborhood.

The following are seen as challenges for the next Head of Upper School:

- As the newly appointed Head of School Dr. Popp establishes himself as the new “face of Cooper,” the new Head of Upper School will need to be courageous and confident in forging their own new path and to navigate a significant transfer of Upper School leadership elegantly. Additionally, they will join Dr. Popp to drive the mission forward toward greater excellence, finding their own special ways to bond with the various constituents of the School, while honoring the School’s history and traditions.
- Present as an adroitly skilled leader who is adaptive and innovative, facile with new ideas, thinks creatively, and possesses acumen to see where there might be weaknesses, vision for some fine-tuning toward higher levels of excellence, and the stature to lead and inspire people to new ground.
- Develop new and strong collaborative relationships across the Cooper community.
- Over time, the School has become especially siloed—by division, by departments, and by buildings. Active work needs to be done to ensure a seamless student experience across all of the grades.
- Be predictive of ways in which cultural influences have and will evolve and will desire to collaboratively engage the voice of faculty, staff, students, and parents in growing a more inclusive and equitable school community.
- Navigate a time of disequilibrium in the recovery from pandemic mitigations and general social/political unrest and concern for overall wellness and plan strategically and manage change in a post COVID-19 world where a new normal will emerge.



DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to lead Cooper will exhibit, in varying degrees, the following characteristics, qualities, skills, and experiences:

Leadership

- A warm, friendly, and engaged person who is a positive presence in the life of the School and who sets a tone of joy, excitement, and hard work within the division.
- One who is aware of and able to articulate “the big picture” while also moving easily between a strategic outlook and the day-to-day operations of the Upper School.
- A leader whose intelligence, energy, fairness, and focus on student success engender the confidence and support of the faculty and staff, students, and parents.
- A manager who stays abreast of important divisional matters but who also delegates appropriately to experienced and responsible faculty and staff.
- Actively engaging in the daily life of the School, including both academic and extracurricular activities.

Skills and Knowledge

- Skilled in balancing a rigorous academic curriculum with a strong appreciation for all facets of a school’s programs—including arts, athletics, service, and student clubs—and the cultivation of intellectual curiosity, leadership and decision-making skills, and character.
- Teaching experience at the high school level and at least five years of experience as an administrator in a role such as division head, assistant division head, dean, or department chair.
- Knowledge of emerging pedagogical trends, current thinking about best practices in teaching and learning, and the use of technology to enhance educational objectives.
- A nuanced understanding of people and organizations that allows one to initiate and manage gradual change while still preserving the School’s core values and important aspects of its culture.
- The ability to create and lead professional development plans that honor faculty autonomy while ensuring consistency and growth.
- An understanding of the ways in which all divisions and departments interact and collaborate on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of students and to achieve institutional goals.



Personal Attributes

- A forward-thinking, flexible, and creative educator who is comfortable with prudent risk and enjoys trying new ideas, while also honoring existing programs and culture.
- A person who is dedicated to a well-rounded education that balances academic achievement with social intelligence and emotional health.
- A “people person” who has an easy rapport with both students and adults and who embraces the interpersonal, relationship-building aspects of a senior leadership position.
- A person with strong courage of conviction, unquestioned honesty, integrity, and the ability to make difficult decisions.
- An open-minded person who values diversity of all kinds and demonstrates a commitment to the cultivation of a truly inclusive community.
- An energetic and hardworking person who relishes being part of a fast-paced, active community.



TO APPLY

We appreciate your careful and thoughtful review of The John Cooper School Head of Upper School position description. We hope you will be interested in finding out more about this special place and becoming an applicant for this position.

To apply, candidates should submit the following materials electronically (preferably as separate PDFs, titled with applicant name and date) to Rhonda Durham, Senior Consultant at Carney, Sandoe & Associates:

- A cover letter explaining the specific reasons for your interest in and general qualifications for becoming the Head of Upper School at The John Cooper School;
- A current résumé;
- A personal statement regarding your view of educational leadership and as it relates to the role of Head of Upper School;
- A list of five references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will be contacted later in the process and only with candidate permission). The search will be confidential until finalist candidates are selected and announced.

Rhonda Durham

Senior Consultant

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