LAKE NONA ACADEMY

Founding Head of School Search

Lake Nona
Orlando, Florida
Start Date: July 1, 2019
or sooner if available

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“To Create the Ideal Place That Inspires Human Potential Through Innovative Collaboration.” This is the mission of Lake Nona, a 17-square-mile residential and commercial development in Orlando, Florida. Home of three colleges and universities, the U.S. Tennis Association’s National campus, major health and life sciences companies, and marquee corporate leaders such as KPMG, Lake Nona is an ideal place to work and live. Indeed, it has been recognized countless times as a model of great communities of the future. At the core of Lake Nona is excellence in all things.

Such a place needs a great independent school. Lake Nona Academy is slated to open in the fall of 2020 and welcome K-12 students to a school designed from scratch to be “the best.” Funding and support come from Tavistock Group, the highly-regarded global, private investment organization behind Lake Nona, along with a deep commitment to creating an outstanding school. Plans are in place to begin construction in early 2019 with completion of a purpose-built new campus set for the spring of 2020. In addition to this support system, the school needs a visionary, experienced, passionate Founding Head of School to help set the mission, create the team, and launch the most well-respected school of the future.

The Head will not have to do it alone. Tavistock has a development team with a full range of staff support to get the school off the ground: finance, HR, marketing and communications, construction management, and more. The Tavistock leadership that has envisioned the school will look to the Founding Head to guide the creation of its mission, program, curriculum, staffing, and overall development. Tavistock’s objective is to hire the best leader they can find in order to create the best K-12 college preparatory school possible.

The ideal candidate is one who has well-established experience in leading exceptional independent schools and has always wanted the freedom to envision, invent and create a great school “his/her way.” The position will start as soon as possible, but no later than July 1, 2019.
THE LOCATION

Orlando, Florida is recognized as one of the great places to live, work, and play. So much more than its theme parks and globally known attractions, its climate, lifestyle, and international connectedness all are magnets for those seeking healthy, productive living environments. Commenting on Lake Nona specifically, FORTUNE Magazine said the forward-thinking environment is, “How to build a great American city.” Careful planning and growth driven by a common vision and thoughtful phasing is creating what many consider the model for cities of the future. Any great city needs the full range of amenities, and the kinds of families who are drawn to Lake Nona for work and lifestyle will want great education for their children.

With three onsite colleges and universities, several “A-rated” public schools, and one of the nation’s state-of-the-art Colleges of Medicine, Lake Nona gives students the ability to engage in real-time interactions with researchers, doctors, professors, and businesses within its ‘living lab’ community and around the world. All within three miles of each other, University of Florida, University of Central Florida, and Valencia College create a culture of collaboration guaranteed to provide excellent learning experience and university education. Additionally, although there are several schools, ranging from innovative child care and early education centers, and public elementary and middle schools, and a high school in Lake Nona. However, the closest private school is 20 miles from the community. The majority of private school options are located in downtown or northern Orlando.

LAKE NONA DEMOGRAPHICS

- 2,303,731 PEOPLE WITHIN A 30-MILE RADIUS
- MEDIAN AGE IS 36 YEARS
- 85% OF RESIDENTS HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE
THE STRUCTURE

Tavistock Group, the highly-regarded Lake Nona developer, has set aside a 50-acre parcel of land and will support the creation of the school. The key leaders of Lake Nona intend to establish the school as a non-profit but will look to the Founding Head and outside expertise to help develop a best-practices independent school governance structure. Before the school opens, the Founding Head will report directly to a Board of Directors. Decisions will be able to be made thoughtfully but quickly without cumbersome process. Once the school opens, a more traditional governance structure that the Founding Head will help develop will be in place.

THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Any school wants to benefit from the resources uniquely available to it. The culture of innovation, wellbeing, and collaboration at Lake Nona presents a unique opportunity to design an academically rigorous curriculum that takes advantage of the extensive resources in sciences and mathematics within the Lake Nona region. Seeking to provide the very best well-rounded education for students entering a global society, Lake Nona Academy’s founders envision foreign language and global awareness as essential parts of the student program. Athletics and the arts will be central values of the school as well. Believing that continuous inquiry and the confidence in one’s ability to create and develop original, well-conceived ideas are an essential part of a contemporary education, they also seek to develop a strong spirit of entrepreneurship and to encourage risk-taking, both within the curriculum as well as through partnering with area businesses and universities.

Lake Nona Academy will seek to educate 1,500 students in Pre-K through grade 12 on a 50-acre property.
There are a few challenges that the Founding Head will have to overcome. Tavistock is committed to the initial investment necessary to “do it right” and get the school built and open. They recognize that there will be operational deficits in the early years as the school gets up to full size.

Central to this position will be creating the school’s image and story and recruiting students and families. Tavistock has excellent marketing and communications teams; but the Founding Head will be expected to lead the process of defining the school and creating a strong sense of mission. Preliminary research suggests that there is already demand for the school within Lake Nona, as well as outside the immediate area.

The greatest opportunity is to start with a tabula rasa. Many school leaders have had ideas in the back of their minds about how they would do it right, if they ever got the chance. This is precisely that chance. The end result is clear: a great school that prepares students for the finest higher education opportunities and is consistent with the innovation and wellbeing culture of Lake Nona.

Among the specific tasks and opportunities facing the Founding Head will be:

• Creating the mission, vision, founding principles and culture of the school.
• Creating the timeline and benchmarks for getting to fall 2020 opening.
• Creating and, with the Tavistock marketing team, implementing the branding and marketing messages that distinguish the school and make the compelling case for families to send their children to Lake Nona Academy.
• Establishing the admissions function.
• Creating the leadership structure and hiring the key academic and administrative staff.
• Working with the architects and construction team as the facility is built.
• Working with the Tavistock finance team to create realistic proformas and budgets and a plan to transition the finance functions to the school over time.
• Connecting with the larger Lake Nona community to seek out partnerships and resources that the school can access in order to provide unique educational opportunities.
• Work with Tavistock to establish a best practices-based governance structure and Board of Trustees.
• Taking steps to achieve initial accreditation as soon as possible.
• Open the school and transition from planner to daily leader of the school.
DESIRED CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Founding Head of Lake Nona Academy will:

- Be a proven and successful educational leader.
- Have experience with growing and developing a strong, forward-looking school.
- Have demonstrated success in hiring, inspiring, and working with strong and talented teachers and administrators.
- Be committed to a comprehensive educational program that includes rigorous academics, strong extracurricular programs, and engagement in meaningful physical activity.
- Have an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit.
- Have demonstrated high energy, confidence, and strong interpersonal and communication skills.
- Be a community builder in an increasingly diverse environment with the desire and ability to connect with students of all ages and with all adult constituencies.
- Have experience with facilities development.

MORE INFORMATION

The spirit and ethos of Lake Nona is captured in this video.

Learn more about Tavistock Group, developer of Lake Nona and the founder of the school.
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
- 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:

**John Chandler**  
Senior Consultant  
john.chandler@carneysandoe.com

**Skip Kotkins**  
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