



SHADY SIDE ACADEMY Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

MIDDLE SCHOOL HEAD
Start Date: July 2023
shadysideacademy.org



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES



SHADY SIDE

ACADEMY

Mission

Shady Side Academy's mission is to challenge students to think expansively, act ethically, and lead responsibly.

Philosophy

Shady Side Academy is a vibrant learning community that values intellectual curiosity, personal integrity, and diverse perspectives. Through a rigorous and balanced curriculum of academics, arts and athletics, our students are challenged to explore their passions and excel beyond expectations. Supported by active alumni and parents, our unique culture of faculty-student mentorship inspires students to become lifelong learners and engaged, thoughtful citizens of their communities.

Guiding Principles

Honesty, Kindness, Responsibility, Respect and Safety.

OVERVIEW

For nearly 140 years, Shady Side Academy (SSA) has served the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania community as a nationally respected, co-educational independent school providing a holistic educational experience grounded in the foundational principles of honesty, kindness, responsibility, respect, and safety. Through individual attention, hands-on learning, and a rigorous curriculum, SSA promotes joy in learning and prepares students for a lifetime of success.

Shady Side's Pre-K through grade 12 program draws creative thinkers, leaders, and learners from 108 domestic ZIP codes, 13 states, and eight countries to be part of an engaging and forward-thinking community with an optional boarding experience in high school. SSA believes an "equitable education is an ethical education" and welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, cultivating a community of cultural understanding and respect. By the time they graduate, students possess critical life skills and are fully equipped to emerge as leaders in a rapidly changing, global society.

At a Glance

Founded: 1883

Total students: 1,140

Students in Middle School: 203

Students of color: 34%

Total faculty: 179

Faculty with advanced degrees: 71%

Student/teacher ratio: 8:1

Financial aid budget: \$5M

Students receiving aid: 25%

Endowment: \$85M



Shady Side Academy seeks its next Middle School Head effective July 2023. The next leader will be an integral part of the SSA community and should be a collaborative, inspiring individual who is committed to the values that define Shady Side's diverse and innovative community. Reporting directly to the President, this senior administrative position is responsible for providing outstanding leadership for the students, faculty, staff, and families connected to the Middle School and building upon the strengths of the current program.

SCHOOL HISTORY

Shady Side Academy was founded in a one-room schoolhouse in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh in 1883. Since its founding, Shady Side Academy has seen many changes, including the addition of a Junior School in 1909, the move of the Senior School from the city to a "country" locale (Fox Chapel) in 1922, a merger with The Arnold School in 1940, the opening of the first standalone Middle School in Western Pennsylvania in 1958, coeducation in 1973, and a 2017 merger with Fox Chapel Country Day School, which gave the Academy a second elementary school campus. The Academy celebrated its quasicentennial (125th) anniversary in 2008-2009.

THE SCHOOL

Today, Shady Side Academy enrolls more than 1,000 students across four beautiful campuses, where students explore, engage, and excel in academics, arts, and athletics within a diverse and inclusive learning community. Led by talented and exceptional faculty, Shady Side's academic programs and wide array of extracurricular activities provide the highest quality college preparation, while fostering compassionate, socially responsible young adults.



The Academy is committed to the highest standards of scholarship and personal responsibility. Through a rigorous academic program, signature programs, experiential learning, and extracurricular activities, Shady Side encourages students to *think expansively, act ethically, and lead responsibly*. Graduates leave Shady Side ready to succeed at top colleges and in distinguished careers. Nearly 100 percent of SSA graduates go on to further their education at a four-year college or university.

At the core of the student experience is the student-teacher relationship. A student-faculty ratio of 8:1 ensures small class sizes and allows for quality interactions and individualized attention. In the Middle School, support services are provided to students to promote their development as individuals and learners. Each Middle Schooler has an advisor they see at least three times a day, including a daily conference period where students can meet with teachers one-on-one or get a head start on homework. The Middle School also provides a learning specialist, a licensed clinical psychologist, and a school nurse to help students navigate the rich and challenging environment at Shady Side Academy.

Students at SSA benefit from faculty members who are leaders in their respective fields. More than 71 percent of SSA teachers hold advanced degrees, and many participate in ongoing professional development activities annually. They believe in a traditional approach to learning while developing creative curricula and determining how to best meet the needs of individual students.

Instilling the lifelong value of service has long been a hallmark of a Shady Side Academy education. Students in all grade levels engage in service projects throughout the year that reach beyond the campuses to the greater Pittsburgh region and around the world. Middle School students participate annually in Global Action Day, a comprehensive day of service learning for the entire school that includes educational sessions with local nonprofits and hands-on service projects. In addition, students can join the Community Service Committee to plan and lead various service projects in the community.

The Academy boasts an extensive and active global alumni network of over 7,000 individuals in a wide array of professions – including a Nobel Prize-winning doctor, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, a Tony Award-winning actor, a U.S. Cabinet secretary, a NASA astronaut and an Emmy-winning producer.

Shady Side Academy is accredited by the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools (PAIS) and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.



SHADY SIDE ACADEMY'S UNIQUE VALUE & POSITION

Shady Side Academy's mission is "to challenge students to **think expansively, act ethically, and lead responsibly.**"

Inspired by this mission, Shady Side's driving purpose remains the development of responsible, transformative leaders for the City of Pittsburgh and beyond.

While envisioning the Academy's next chapter and considering a changing world, **SSA has the opportunity to reimagine how to deliver on this mission, creating an unique and valuable education for families and bright, curious students who:**

WANT SMALL CLASSES AND BIG OPPORTUNITIES

SSA is small enough to know, support and care for individual learners, but also large enough to offer a program where all students can find their place to lead and succeed, often on the biggest stage and under the brightest lights.

With the combination of intimate and highly relational teaching, coaching and advising models, and an overall enrollment nearly twice that of the largest local peer independent school, SSA pairs the closeness typically found in independent schools with the programmatic breadth and the fulsome community scale and spirit of a large public school district.

SEEK REAL-WORLD LEARNING AND TO BECOME THE LEADERS OF A CONNECTED, DIGITAL FUTURE

SSA develops leaders at the intersection of technology and the liberal arts. And with all that is happening in Pittsburgh and region, SSA has the unique ability to provide its students with the real-world learning experiences that will prepare them to become ethical, humane leaders in an increasingly digital world.

Artificial intelligence, smart robots, augmented reality, and other advances suggest the future of the global economy is digital and rapidly changing. Shady Side stands out in its capacity to produce the leaders who will humanize this digital future, lending it an ethical dimension and ensuring it all serves to strengthen communities.

DESIRE A BALANCED, INFORMED WORLDVIEW

SSA pairs Western Pennsylvania's most geographically diverse student body (107 ZIP codes, 13 states, 8 countries) with a broad and balanced curriculum, challenging students who see the world in remarkably different ways to engage in a dialogue that is essential to expansive thought and responsible leadership.

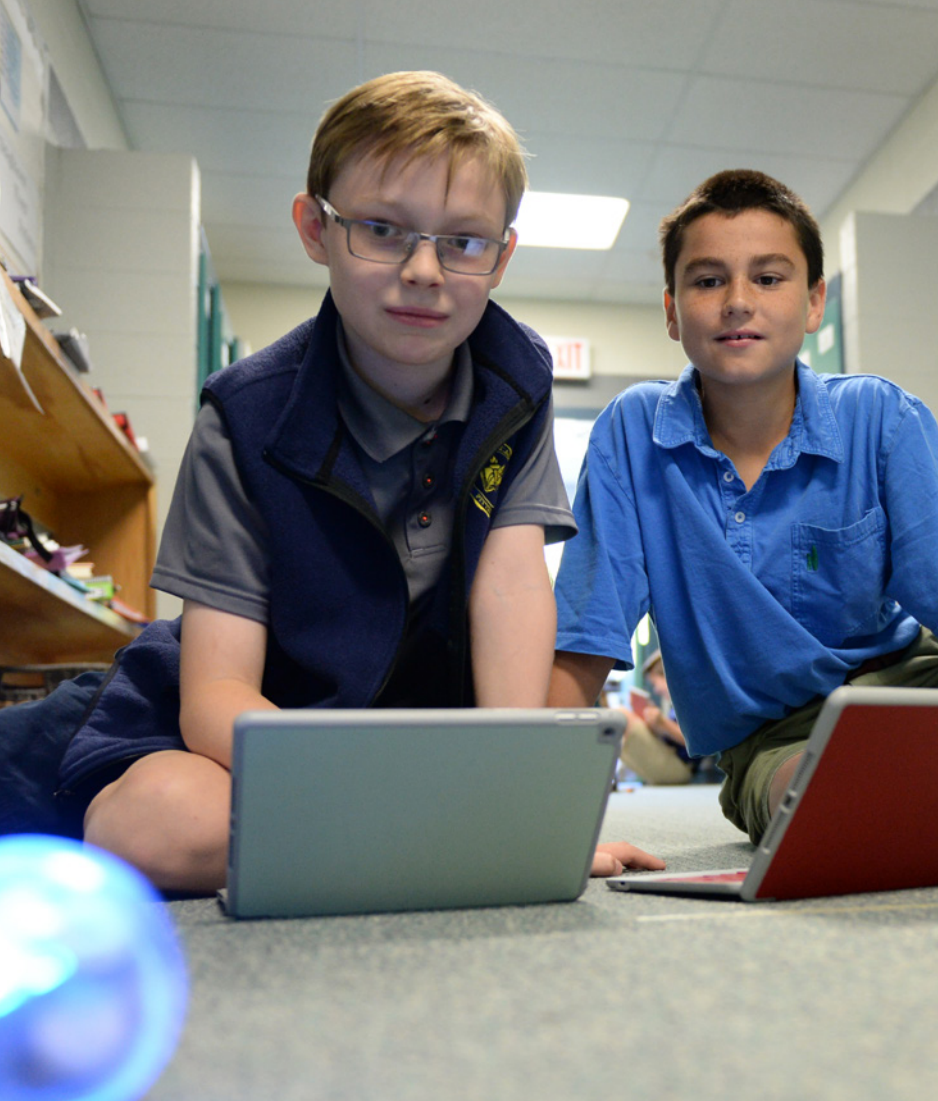
Given the manifold perspectives that make up the SSA community and program, Shady Side has an unparalleled opportunity in the region to help students confront differences and grapple with views and opinions they do not hold themselves. SSA positions students uniquely to practice civil discourse and develop the humane, constructive relationships that will help our nation and world bridge divides.



ACADEMICS

At Shady Side Academy, there is a holistic approach to education with a commitment to students' academic, physical, and emotional development. Putting that approach into action is a caring faculty and staff, dedicated to fostering a true love of learning in students. The hands-on curriculum explores topics across all disciplines – from the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to the humanities and the arts – with the goal of developing well-rounded individuals ready to excel on whatever path they take in life.

The Middle School program is designed to ease each student through adolescence, at a time of rapid intellectual, social, and emotional growth. From SSA's dedicated sixth grade wing and specialized tutorial program to the reassuring anchor of the student advisory system, students have support systems in place to meet new academic and personal challenges. Students at this level gain a strong foundation in literature and writing, have the opportunity for accelerated studies in math, and design and carry out their own experiments. Teachers also introduce a focus on self-discipline and study skills that prepares eager students for the abundance of opportunities at the Senior School.



In the Middle School, a 1:1 iPad program provides every student with an iPad to use in and out of class, enabling them to capture ideas and evidence of their learning anytime, anyplace. All students take computer science each year where they learn programming and design skills. Middle School students also have the opportunity to join competitive Robotics, Rocketry, and Science Olympiad teams. In fact, the Middle School Science Olympiad team has won five state titles and advanced to the national tournament 13 times since 2003. Across all disciplines, teachers utilize technology to enhance instruction and engage students more deeply. Students learn to use technology and the power of cloud computing to collaborate and create. Written works, screencasts, movie trailers and interactive presentations complement class notes and digital portfolios, all stored online where they are accessible and sharable. The well-rounded Middle School curriculum also includes the arts, physical education and health, and world languages (Latin, Spanish, and Chinese).

COLLEGE MATRICULATION

The members of the Shady Side Academy Class of 2022 will attend 84 of the world's finest colleges and universities this fall including the following:

Amherst College
Bates College
Boston University
Bucknell University
Carnegie Mellon University
Colby College
Columbia University
Dartmouth College
Elon University
George Washington University
Hamilton College
Johns Hopkins University
Lehigh University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
New York University
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University
Princeton University
Purdue University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Southern Methodist University
Stanford University
Syracuse University
Texas Christian University
Tufts University
Tulane University
United States Merchant Marine
Academy
University of California – Los Angeles
University of Chicago
University of Illinois Urbana-
Champaign
University of Miami
University of Notre Dame
University of Southern California
Wake Forest University
Washington and Lee University

See the [full list](#).



THE ARTS

At a time when other schools are cutting arts programs, Shady Side Academy's commitment to the arts has never been stronger. Shady Side believes the arts can influence how students view the world and themselves. That's why the arts are an integral part of a Shady Side Academy education and are thoughtfully intertwined across all levels of learning through classes and activity options in music, theatre, and visual arts.

The Middle School curriculum emphasizes individual growth. All students participate in music all year long, choosing between chorus, band, orchestra, or general music class. Ensembles perform at two school-wide concerts each year, as well as a number of smaller school events. Students learn from music faculty members who are professional artists, musicians, and performers in their own right. These talented individuals share their passion and experience with students, encouraging them to develop their artistic interests and talents.

Theatre is offered to students at this level as an option during daily athletic/activity period in the fall and winter terms, giving any student the chance to be part of the Fall Play or Winter Musical. Nearly 25 percent of the student body participates in the cast and crew of these annual theatre productions.

In Middle School art classes, an array of media, technical and evaluative skills, concepts, and vocabulary are introduced. Students are encouraged to understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture, and to appreciate self-expression and non-verbal communication as an integral part of the human experience. Students learn 2D design, drawing, painting, collage, relief printing, 3D media, folk art, one point perspective, embossing, engraving and assemblage.

SSA's exceptional arts facilities provide dedicated, age-appropriate spaces on each campus for students to explore their creative side and advance their skills. The Middle School facility has its own state-of-the-art visual arts room, music rooms, and a performance stage. Many graduates go on to impressive careers in the arts. In fact, alumni include a Tony winner, two Grammy nominees, and a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee.



ATHLETICS

Understanding that physical activity improves focus and academic performance, athletics are a core component of the student experience at SSA, and many students are multi-sport athletes. Through participation, students learn important life skills such as teamwork, self-discipline, perseverance, and sportsmanship.

In the Middle School, the co-curricular program of athletics and activities provides each student with choices that include competitive team sports and non-competitive group sports. Each student chooses one co-curricular activity per term, including at least one athletic option per year.

Students are coached by faculty members and outside coaches, with the goal of providing students with fundamental skills and strategies, while continuing to challenge them in a positive manner. Lessons that can be learned in these afternoon activities include winning and losing with dignity and character. Opportunities for leadership are also available to all students at all levels and within every team. Middle School teams include cross country, field hockey, football, soccer, tennis, basketball, ice hockey, squash, swimming, baseball, softball, lacrosse, and track and field.



STUDENT LIFE

At the Middle School, there are many activities that cannot be located on a curriculum list. These activities not only support SSA's efforts in the classroom but also offer an important social dynamic, further enriching the daily experience for students. They also offer students the chance to develop and hone leadership and teamwork skills. Participation in these activities is optional and open to any Middle School student.

Middle Schoolers enjoy a number of student-driven committees and clubs including Admissions Ambassadors, School News Video Team, Students Working to Assist Technology (SWAT) Team, Robotics, and Philosophy Club and can even participate in Math Olympiad, Science Fairs, the Science Olympiad Team and the *Spiral Staircase* Literary Magazine.

Sustainability is woven into curriculum and extracurricular activities. The Middle School maintains eight raised garden beds and a native pollinator garden on its 35-acre campus in Fox Chapel. In 2014, the school won a \$2,000 School Garden Grant from the Whole Kids Foundation to fund enhancements to the garden, including gutters for the garden sheds to enable the use of rain barrels and cold frames to keep the garden growing in the winter. In the spring, students can choose Farm as their athletic/activity option and earn credit for working in the garden each afternoon. In the fall, a student Harvest Committee tends the garden.



SSA community runs deep even beyond at Shady Side Academy campus. Students utilize a robust network of alumni, parents, and friends to establish important connections with people and organizations in the local community and around the world. Locally, Middle School students have learned from experts in sustainable energy, geology, herpetology, genealogy, and writing. The local modern dance group Attack Theatre also has worked in residence with students, exploring movement and dance. Additionally, students have explored the community through field trips, including visits to Hindu temples, the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium and the Carnegie Museums, as well as exploring Pittsburgh's rivers with RiverQuest.

Expanding beyond the Pittsburgh metro, eighth graders travel to Washington D.C. each spring to explore the nation's capital and engage with government officials.

CAMPUS

Shady Side Academy's physical plant spans 189 acres across four distinct campuses, each specifically designed to meet the needs of children at a particular life stage. The transition from one campus to the next broadens our students' experience, offering more choices and independence at each level.

The Middle School sits on 35 acres nestled in the woodlands and rolling hills of suburban Fox Chapel. The main school building is a beautiful stone mansion with a newer addition that houses the Sixth Grade Wing and gymnasium. The campus grounds include sprawling grassy hills, a gazebo and tables for holding classes outdoors, as well as two athletic fields and educational gardens. Several SSA faculty members, including the Middle School head, also live on campus. The campus includes state-of-the-art learning spaces including newly renovated science labs, a practice field, a regulation-size athletics field, and educational gardens.



PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

A city built on innovation, Pittsburgh is a unique and vibrant community that offers all the amenities of larger cities with a small-town feel. Pittsburgh has long been a pioneer for technology, education, and medicine with many professionals flocking to the area. In fact, WalletHub named Greater Pittsburgh its sixth-best metro area for STEM professionals in 2021.

Pittsburgh is home to 90 neighborhoods, each offering a unique area to explore and hidden gems to uncover. Busting with first class entertainment options ranging from theatre, art galleries, museums, and concerts to major-league professional sports teams including Pittsburgh Pirates, Pittsburgh Penguins, and Pittsburgh Steelers, along with professional teams in soccer, roller derby, ultimate frisbee, there truly is something for everyone to enjoy.

Outdoor enthusiasts enjoy all four seasons with miles of riverfront trails and ample green space to bike, walk, or rollerblade. Waterways allow for kayaking, boating, and paddleboarding. The city boasts one of the world's first certified living buildings, the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, as a model of sustainability for architects, scientists, planners, and anyone interested in living greener.

Beyond the recreational activities, career opportunities, and high caliber education, Pittsburgh is frequently celebrated as one of the topmost affordable cities in the US.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Shady Side Academy Middle School serves students in grades 6, 7, and 8 with roughly 70 students enrolled per grade. Middle School students are seen, heard, known, and cared for by a faculty and staff who are experts in adolescence. The three pillars of the Middle School are culture, justice, and empathy.

Faculty across the spectrum of experience point to collegiality, respect for and trust in their expertise, a genuine love of middle school students, and an openness to new ideas balanced with a respect for legacy and institutional strength as some of the many strengths of the Middle School.

After many years of leadership under the steady hand of Amy Nixon, Shady Side Academy looks forward to welcoming a Middle School leader who will inspire continued dedication to overall improvement on behalf of Shady Side students with particular focus on the following areas:

Optimize opportunities for collaboration: The allocation of the valuable resource of time is on everyone's mind. Requests for time to serve student needs through advisory groups as well as work with colleagues across divisions on curricular alignment and pedagogy all rose to the surface in conversations between CS&A and SSA's Middle School faculty.

Align student support with the changing needs of the times and the changing make-up of the student body: With the expanding needs of students (everywhere, not just at SSA) who are experiencing greater complexity around impulsivity, anxiety, and identity, as well as an ever-increasing understanding of neurodiversity and the need for differentiation, the next Middle School Head will assess needs and advocate for resources and strategies to provide both student support and professional development so that teachers understand students' challenges, design effective pedagogical approaches, and collaborate to meet the needs of all students.



Manage upcoming relocation: Shady Side's current campus master plan includes the construction of a new Middle School on what is currently the Senior School property, resulting in a reimagined campus for grades 6-12. On a three-to-five-year timeline, the next Middle School Head will prepare the faculty and staff for the relocation and its attendant projects, like preparation for teaching in new spaces, and coordinating schedules and sharing resources with the Senior School. New facilities will support more experiential learning and other innovations in the Middle School program.

Orchestrate transitions: From the two lower schools to the Middle School to the Senior School, parents and students find these transitions stressful. The next Middle School Head will strengthen the transition experience at both ends and work with the other divisions on greater programmatic alignment. Additionally, as new teachers join the division, the Middle School Head will ensure strong onboarding practices and support.

Implement a Student-Centered Approach to Community Conduct and Discipline: The Middle School has begun a move toward restorative practices but still needs more training for the faculty and staff, as well as a better understanding of how to elevate and integrate this more student-centered approach to upholding community norms.

DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

In order to help Shady Side achieve these goals and more, the school seeks the following in its next Middle School Head:

- Proactive and effective communicator;
- Warm and engaging presence, relational leadership style;
- Teaching experience, and genuine appreciation of middle school students and teachers;
- Empathy, emotional intelligence;
- Open door policy/ability to listen;
- Cultural competency;
- Sound judgement and good instincts.



TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A statement of interest expressing why this particular position appeals to them;
- A current résumé;
- Additional materials may be requested.

to:

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