



WESTSIDE WALDORF SCHOOL
Pacific Palisades, California

INTERIM HEAD OF SCHOOL
Start Date: July 2022
westsidewaldorf.com



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES



WESTSIDE WALDORF S C H O O L

Mission

Working out of the principles of Waldorf Education, the Westside Waldorf School offers students an education that embraces the academic, the artistic, and the practical. Our mission is to engage the mind, ignite the imagination, and strengthen the will within each student. We strive to achieve these goals by bringing to our students a developmentally appropriate curriculum through artful teaching that promotes independent thinking, individual initiative, and social responsibility while cultivating a thirst for knowledge and lifelong learning. Waldorf education seeks to awaken the true potential of the human being's uniqueness and creativity in thought and expression and strives to be in partnership with families in raising confident, compassionate human beings.

OVERVIEW

Westside Waldorf School, located on two excellent campuses in Pacific Palisades (EC – 8) and Santa Monica (EC only) on the west side of Los Angeles, provides a wonderful education for the approximately 140 students enrolled in its programs. Students from Westside matriculate to the full range of the best private independent middle schools and high schools in the area.

A combination of events, most of which were beyond the control of the school, have left a leadership void for the past months. Over the last 21 months, a succession of short time leaders, while well intended, have unfortunately resulted in a level of instability that, even though the student program and teachers remain top notch, have led some parents to take a wait-and-see attitude about future enrollment. Some faculty turnover as a result of the pandemic and the necessity of right-sizing the staff, has added to the instability.

But . . . the school has great bones. The facilities are very well suited to Waldorf education, the faculty and staff are dedicated and very effective in their work, the track record of graduates remains admirable, and the Board consists of wise and dedicated individuals who are committed to the future success of their school.

The school seeks an interim Head of School to start as soon as possible and serve through the 2022–2023 school year in this leadership position (void), to help everyone move in the same direction, to rebuild trust by reaching out and engaging stakeholders and providing reliable leadership, and to support a community that has been stressed by the challenges of the pandemic and the instability mentioned above.



STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

The interim head will find many strengths at Westside Waldorf including:

- A well established and well implemented commitment to the principles of Waldorf education;
- A faculty that features a trained Waldorf lead teacher for each of the grades, as well as specialists who work across grades. Lead teachers each have an assistant in the early childhood program. The faculty are beloved for their deep connection with their students and their inspired teaching;
- Located in an upscale part of the LA Basin, there is an educated and supportive parent body who are able to provide the resources to make the school successful;
- Because the factors mentioned above have led current enrollment to be below the school's historical highest level, there is ample space not only to provide a great learning environment for current students, but to have room for growth as the school enrollment rebounds. The facilities are well adapted to the strengths of the Waldorf pedagogical approaches with a remarkable level of natural elements rarely found in the middle of major cities (the school adapted well during COVID by building outdoor classrooms and incorporating visits to nearby parks into the curriculum);
- Remarkably, the larger of the two campuses (in Pacific Palisades) is across the street from a state park and one block from the Pacific Ocean beach;
- Both the staff and the board have been able to “fill the gaps” left by some turnover so that the school continues to serve students well, even though this jumping in to help is not sustainable in the long run;
- Students love their school, are especially appreciative of the range of different activities and options offered by the school, and are particularly excited about the arts;
- The school is known for both a wonderful after-care program as well as a highly successful summer program.



THE SCHOOL

Westside Waldorf School is proud to be part of the largest and fastest growing independent school movement across the globe. Based on the insights and teachings of visionary Rudolf Steiner, the Waldorf/Steiner education is one of the most established and successful models of New Education, offering a developmentally appropriate, experiential, and academically rigorous approach to education. Today there are over 1,090 Waldorf/Steiner schools in 64 countries.

At Westside Waldorf School, exceptional faculty and staff strive to engage the mind, ignite the imagination, and strengthen the will within each student. The critical value of the Waldorf approach is not *what* is taught, but *when* and *how* it is taught. Learning is unhurried and intentional as the classical curriculum weaves art into every subject, using music, storytelling, drawing, and movement to bring academic subjects to life. This integrated method engages each child physically, intellectually, and emotionally in the learning process, introducing subject matter as it corresponds to each stage of readiness.

In a supportive, integrative learning environment, students enjoy daily core curriculum of science, math, and engineering along with experiences in art, music, and nature. Classrooms are carefully designed to engage students' senses helping them better understand and retain lesson material. Here, they are encouraged to apply creative thinking and scientific reasoning to solve problems, rather than rely on memorization, successfully boosting students' confidence in their learning abilities and allowing them to hone their innate talents and interests.



The Waldorf curriculum also includes an integral social dimension that teaches children the importance of peace, respect, empathy, and compassion. From the earliest grades students participate in community service, learn valuable conflict resolution skills, study world cultures and languages, and cultivate a strong sense of moral purpose. Westside Waldorf celebrates a diverse community of students, faculty and staff, and families, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, medical condition, marital status, military and veteran status, sexual orientation, or genetic information.

Westside Waldorf School is an independent, self-administered, collaboratively led institution, organized for charitable purposes under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law of California, and under Section 501(c)(3) of applicable federal laws. The school is a member of WECAN, the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, and AWSNA, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.



THE EVOLVING NATURE OF GOVERNANCE IN WALDORF SCHOOLS

Based on the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner, an Austrian working in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Waldorf education has become more and more appreciated as mainstream educators have come to adopt more of the experiential aspects of Steiner's philosophy. Likewise, while traditional Waldorf schools assigned all administrative functions to teachers, to be done on the side, many Waldorf schools are transitioning to the head of school leadership model typical of the best independent schools. A key element in all Waldorf schools is the College of Teachers. "The College" is responsible to ensure that the pedagogy and activities of the school reflect the true spirit and intent of Waldorf education. While sometimes a Head of School may come from a Waldorf background, those who are not Waldorf-trained but philosophically aligned with the principles, can be effective school leaders working in partnership with the College of Teachers. At Westside Waldorf School, as with most independent schools, the Head will be the sole employee reporting to the board, and all other school employees will report, directly or indirectly, to the Head (or Interim Head).



PACIFIC PALISADES AND SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

Pacific Palisades is a beautiful suburb in the Westside of Los Angeles located along the Pacific Ocean home to approximately 27,000 residents. Boutiques and art museums dot the neighborhood, while lush terrain makes visitors and residents feel tucked away from Los Angeles' busy downtown.

The area has strong community values. Each Fourth of July, the community's Chamber of Commerce sponsors day-long events which include 5K and 10K runs, a parade down Sunset Boulevard, and a fireworks display at Palisades High School.

Just over 2 miles east of Pacific Palisades lies the 8.3 square-mile beachfront city of Santa Monica with a population of 90,000. Given its favorable climate (averaging 310 days of sunshine a year) Santa Monica got its start as a resort community that grew quickly with the booming development in the Los Angeles area.

Today, Santa Monica ranks high on various livability indexes, which includes the quality of education, public and private. As with all communities in the greater Los Angeles area, real estate costs are above average. A short drive away, museum buffs have access to the world-class J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, and the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum. Sports fans can watch the Los Angeles Dodgers, Lakers, Clippers, and Kings in downtown L.A. Two NFL franchises have also recently relocated to Los Angeles. Those more inclined to the performing arts have plenty of options at Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the STAPLES Center, and the Hollywood Bowl.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Among the challenges and opportunities the Interim Head of School will be expected to address are:

- Clarifying who does what among the Board, the Head, the administrative staff and the College of Teachers;
- Bringing a sense of stability, unity of vision, clarity of roles and responsibilities, accountability and effective structure to the school protocols;
- Providing the framework for orderly and consistent school operations and decisions, and serving as the final authority where leadership voids have previously existed;
- By being deeply engaged with all school constituents, restoring a sense of trust that people are being heard, are respected and that the school remains student-centered;
- Identifying those factors that have contributed to enrollment decline, and working to reverse the trend;
- Connecting with the parent community, providing a vision of a stable path forward, and providing reassurances that the children will continue to be well served;
- Identifying and implementing ways to reduce faculty turnover in the post-COVID world;
- Helping the board migrate away from some of the hands-on work they have done out of necessity, and back to their appropriate oversight role;
- Supporting the College of Teachers in their desire to review and ensure curricular consistency across the program;
- Overseeing AWSNA and WECAN reporting cycles to maintain accreditation status;
- Instilling in the school community a culture of acceptance and respect for differences of opinion and implementing ways to draw strength from differences rather than be divided by them.



DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- An experienced school leader who can be both visionary leader and hands-on practical manager;
- While Waldorf training is not required, a progressive educator who is eager to embrace new ideas;
- Someone highly visible in the daily life of the school, connecting with and getting to know everyone, accessible and able to reassure people they have been heard. As comfortable helping a toddler out of the car at drop-off as with speaking to a potential donor about investing in an important school project;
- Someone with a spiritual and philosophical outlook that can appreciate the deep foundation underlying Waldorf pedagogy, as well as a can-do manager who makes things happen;
- An articulate, consistent communicator who provides clarity, accurate and timely information. Able to make a compelling case for the mission of the school;
- A systems thinker with high EQ who can ensure that policies and procedures are well articulated and consistently applied, but also that the school does not become overly rules-bound;
- Financial literacy sufficient to partner with the board on the budget;
- An excellent listener who proactively connects with faculty and staff to understand their needs, their frame of mind, and provides necessary support;
- A collaborative leader who seeks input but can also make and stick to tough decisions when necessary.



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:

- Current resume;
- Statement of experience with and approach to interim school leadership;
- Cover letter expressing interest in this particular position;
- List of 5 professional references (references will not be contacted without your prior permission).

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