

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

QUEST ACADEMY

Palatine, Illinois

questacademy.org

Start Date: July 2026



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

Quest Academy provides gifted children with a challenging curriculum and a nurturing environment.

Our program emphasizes sound character along with scholarship and creativity in both the academics and the arts.

The Quest community values the individuality of each child and encourages each to strive for personal excellence.

At a Glance



Established
1982



Total enrollment
258



Financial aid awarded
\$725,000



Student-faculty ratio
7:1



Total faculty
39



Faculty with advanced degrees
46%



Campus size
5.3 acres

Faculty of color: 15%

Students receiving aid: 33%

Annual operating budget: \$6.9M

Endowment: \$502,000 Endowment Fund;
\$1.3M Growth Fund



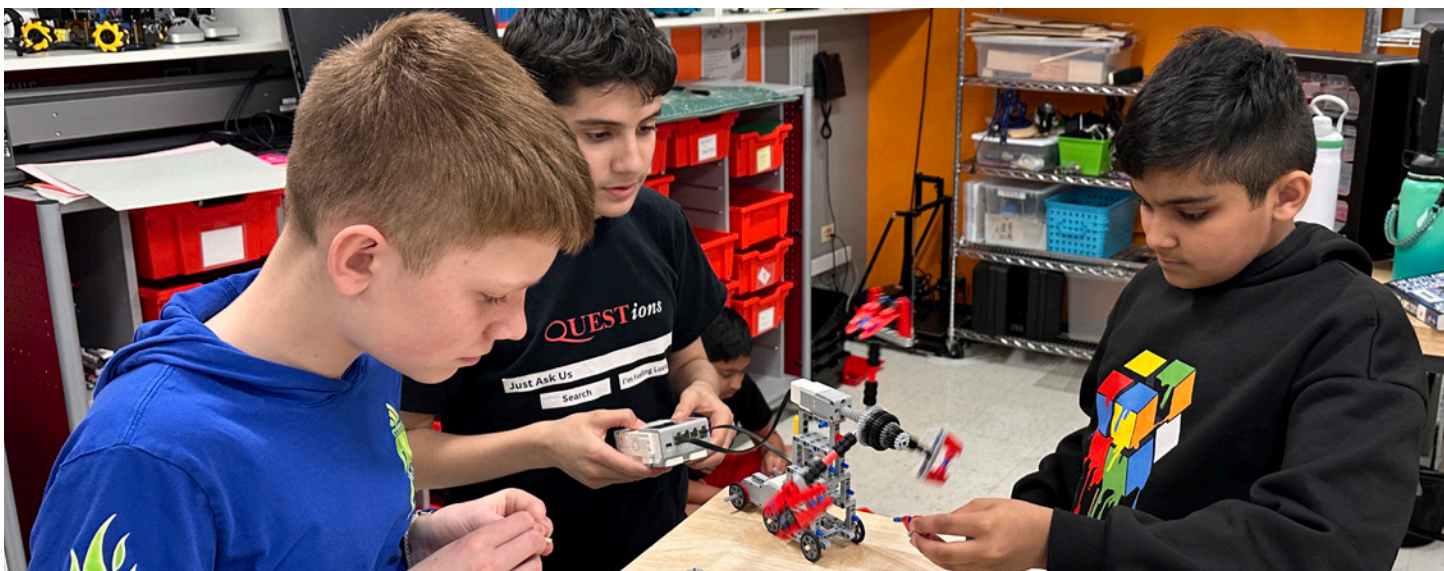
Overview

To know the community members at Quest Academy, an N-8 school of 260 gifted learners in Palatine, IL, a northwestern residential suburb of Chicago, is to know the “Questies,” individuals who feel that they have “found their people” in this warm, inviting, and resilient school and community.

Quest is intentionally designed for gifted and twice exceptional learners of all ages. Students report that “people just get you here because we’ve all really experienced the same things.” It is a school “you want to go to every day” where the teachers “make you learn harder and faster.” Teachers, they note, arrive early and stay late and adapt to meet students where they are.

The adult community is similarly enthusiastic. Faculty and staff report that they truly feel at home at Quest. One faculty member described the sense that they were all “out there in the world until we found each other here.” Many have been at the school for decades, and their close connections, collaborative spirit, and expertise are all sources of pride and satisfaction. Parents, too, give credit for the school’s success to the teachers, speaking with glowing praise about their expertise, dedication, and talent. They report that teachers understand that gifted kids don’t come in a square box, but come with different strengths and personalities. The faculty, one parent noted, “are adult versions of our children and deeply understand them.”

The faculty members are experts in gifted education and use inquiry-based methods, project-based learning, and differentiated instruction to meet students where they are and help them grow beyond traditional grade-level expectations. Its curriculum emphasizes interactive lessons, integrated learning befitting a modern gifted educational program, a sincere and joyful commitment to the arts, and extra-curricular programs in which most students participate. Students engage in theatrical performances and participate in the computer science and artificial intelligence curriculum starting in kindergarten. They pursue local and national competitions such as National History Day and the Illinois Invention Convention, where they have earned top honors. Additionally, Quest has won more Class A Illinois State Championship Scholastic Bowl titles than any other school. Students are surrounded by like-minded peers and nurtured as whole people through Quest’s character education program and its signature “Knights Program,” which allows students to move through a rigorous process from Page to Squire to Knight and requires them to demonstrate service and leadership. Only some achieve Knight status and become leaders of the school’s four houses, which provide connection from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade and reflect the values cherished by the school: compassion, courage, generosity, gratitude, honesty, respect, responsibility, and self-discipline.



In short, Quest has always been and is today a small school with a big mission. Founded in 1982 as the Creative Children’s Academy, the school’s history is one of resilience, innovation, and growth. After outgrowing its original facility, Quest moved into its current home—a renovated public library—in 1994. Since then, the school has expanded its campus and programming, including adding a performing arts wing, a gymnasium, and a West Campus with green space for outdoor learning and athletics. Throughout its evolution, Quest has remained steadfast in its mission to provide a supportive and challenging environment for gifted learners, earning full accreditation from the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

The new head of school will come into the role with the chance to work with an esteemed and highly connected and positive faculty, an exceptionally curious, articulate, and intellectually driven community of student learners, an appreciative and high-expectations parent community, and a supportive Board of Trustees. While serving as the educational, operational and strategic leader of the institution, the head of school will learn about this warm and caring school and work with its community to advance a vision for its future as ambitious as its heart is big.

Opportunities and Challenges

The ideal candidate will see the strengths of this tight-knit, knowledgeable, and purpose-driven community and will embrace the school’s opportunities and challenges with enthusiasm and energy, including:

Marshalling Quest’s Leadership in Gifted Education: Among the most compelling opportunities is the chance to elevate Quest’s voice as a national leader in gifted and twice-exceptional education. Alongside a passionate and knowledgeable faculty who love the school and a strong academic leadership team, the next Head will have the chance to establish greater clarity about Quest’s unique approach to a modern gifted education and share Quest’s work on a larger platform locally and nationally. The current Head of School is a well-regarded expert in gifted education and has begun a well-received multi-year curriculum mapping endeavor. She has also nurtured a culture of accountability and growth, and the faculty is excited to find a leader who will continue to lead this work. Maintaining and growing its leadership in gifted and twice-exceptional education will require faculty support, effective systems for accountability, and ongoing professional development.



Building Enrollment & Communications: Quest serves a specialized market, and its families are fiercely loyal. The new head will build on that strength by mobilizing the school community, overseeing an ambitious marketing program, and spreading the word across Quest's proximate communities. The new head of school will be a critical partner and leader in the enrollment and marketing function with a new and effective team as Quest makes its unique value proposition more visible in the region.

Leading Capital Expansion and Fundraising: The physical campus serves the school's needs in many ways and has enabled the school to grow over time in flexible ways. Yet, it continues to need attention and a strong leadership vision from the Board and the new Head of School. Planning has begun for the next stages of the campus's development, which will require the articulation of a strategic vision and significant dedication to development and fundraising from the new Head of School. This coordinated effort will result in a very exciting next chapter for the school.

Advancing Systems and Organizational Leadership: The current Head has worked to develop systems and structures geared to create greater clarity and consistency in the school's practices involving students and employees. The next Head of School will need to continue this work. Additionally, the new Head will have the opportunity to evaluate and ensure that the current lean administrative structure continues to serve the needs of the school's academic and operational functions.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

The Head of School will bring an impressive record as an educator and school leader who has previously served in senior administrative roles of considerable responsibility. Competitive candidates will have classroom experience and deep familiarity with strategic planning, change management, program development, management of complex processes, and the day-to-day operations of a multi-division school.



The most competitive candidates will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

Professional Qualifications

- Nuanced understanding of the academic and programmatic dimensions of a complex, multi-division independent school
- Experience as an academic leader and deep knowledge of current best practices and innovation in curriculum and pedagogy, preferably across multiple school divisions
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate orally and in writing with inspiration and clarity to both internal and external audiences
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy, the tactical skills to deftly manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy, and the organizational fluency to manage multiple streams of information and respond to situations as they emerge
- Experience with recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and leading talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty and senior leadership
- Personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and the requisite skillfulness to support student and faculty growth in this area and to facilitate critical conversations in the design of ever-more inclusive curriculum and programs
- A history of thoughtful innovation informed by research and data and moderated by a skillful and sensitive approach to change

Leadership Style and Personal Qualities

- Commitment to hard work and creative problem solving, while demonstrating humility and the willingness to learn from and with one's colleagues
- A spirit of curiosity that fuels the pursuit of evolving best practices and current research on curriculum and pedagogy; a commitment to continuous learning
- The courage, confidence, and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback, engaging in challenging conversations with grace
- Eagerness to engage actively with students, faculty, parents, and alumni and willingness to prioritize visibility amidst the demands of a busy professional schedule
- The ability to navigate complexity, in part through effective prioritization, delegation, and management of systems
- Exceptional organizational skills and attention to detail

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Quest Academy.

[School Website](#)

[Benefits of Gift Education](#)

[School History](#)

[About Palatine, Illinois](#)



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 cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Chris Boyle

Consultant

chris.boyle@carneysandoe.com

Allison Gaines Pell

Consultant

allison.gainespell@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is \$250,000-\$300,000 with a competitive bonus structure. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, education background, and expertise.