

HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL SEARCH

FRANCIS PARKER SCHOOL

San Diego, California

francisparker.org

Start Date: July 2026



FRANCIS
PARKER
SCHOOL



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

The Francis Parker School mission is to create and inspire a diverse community of independent thinkers whose academic excellence, global perspective, and strength of character prepare them to make a meaningful difference in the world.

At a Glance



Established
1912



Lower School
enrollment
438



Financial aid awarded
\$7.56M



Zip codes represented
70+



Students of color
48%



Faculty in the
Lower School
47



Faculty with advanced degrees
65%



Student-faculty ratio
12:1

Enrollment: 1,330
Total faculty: 160
Faculty of color: 29%
Students receiving aid: 24%
Endowment: \$61.7M
Annual operating budget: \$63.4M

Honors and AP courses offered: 50+
Student clubs and organizations: 60+
Varsity teams: 20+
Campus size: 27 acres (Linda Vista: 22 acres; Mission Hills: 5 acres)



Overview

Francis Parker School in San Diego, one of the leading JK-12 schools in Southern California, is seeking a Head of Lower School. With a mission to create and inspire a diverse community of independent thinkers whose academic excellence, global perspective, and strength of character prepare them to make a meaningful difference in the world, Francis Parker School has been cultivating active learners since 1912. Located on two campuses (Lower School and Middle & Upper School), the School gets its name from one of the country's first progressive educators, Colonel Francis Parker, whose approach to education appealed to the School's founders, Clara Sturges Johnson and William Templeton Johnson.

Character education remains a hallmark of a Parker education, with the School's emphasis on character education guided by the acronym STRIVE: **S**eek always to do your best; **T**reat people and property with respect; **R**evere the truth; **I**nvest in your future; **V**alue School rules, your heritage, and personal responsibility; **E**nrich the world for all. School life tends to follow Parker's axioms, No Boring Days and No Limit to Better. One immediately senses the School's vibrant integration of academics, the arts, and athletics, led by an experienced faculty with an unwavering attention to student learning and to superior pedagogical practice. The work culture is positive and rigorous, with a growth mindset and a collegial, collaborative culture. Students appreciate that they have many pathways to follow and ways to engage and take ownership of the learning through their time at Parker. Parents are grateful not just for the solid academic program but also for everything that goes with it, including the School's value system.

The design of the well-appointed and well-resourced campuses still follows the principles of the founders, to create a harmonious relationship between the School's 1,330 students and their environment. The modern campuses, in a diverse neighborhood near the University of San Diego, have a distinctly southern California-open-air feel. All the classrooms open to the outdoors and take advantage of San Diego's consistently mild climate.

The Position

The Head of Lower School is responsible for the direct operational and strategic oversight of the Lower School, which serves approximately 430 PK-5 students on the 5-acre Mission Hills Campus. The Head of Lower School ensures that the Lower School program is developmentally appropriate for young learners, is aligned with educational best practice, and supports the mission of the school.



Parker has benefitted from a history of long-serving leaders at the Lower School. Bob Gillingham led the division for several decades, and Heather Gray, the current leader, has been a key member of the Lower School faculty and leadership for more than twenty years. Heather will take on a new role in the Lower School next year and will be available to pass on institutional history and support the next leader's transition.

Primary Responsibilities Include:

Leadership and Vision

Parker seeks an experienced Lower School Head to inspire and support the faculty and staff in embracing the School's commitment to academic excellence, global perspective, and strength of character. Confident, warm, and influential, this educator must be able to lead change, delegate effectively, and share a unifying vision of Lower School program and culture. As a key member of the Leadership Team, the Head of Lower School sits on administrative teams and Board committees as directed by the Head of School, and assists with strategic planning, accreditation and other school-wide administrative processes. The Head of Lower School keeps the Head of School informed about and current with all Lower School matters and serves as an active, engaged, and highly professional member of Parker's Leadership Team.

Vertical Alignment and One-School Identity

Parker's leadership team is committed to a clear and coherent program that aligns curriculum, culture, and the language of learning across the two campuses. Families appreciate clear communication across divisions, especially as their children prepare to transition from Lower School to Middle School. The Lower School Head will collaborate closely with the Middle & Upper School Head to ensure clearly articulated and aligned practices, especially around age-appropriate assessment, feedback, and communication of student progress.

Constituent Communication

Parker delivers academic excellence and whole-child development in a culture of belonging. As the school continually improves and refines its program, parents appreciate proactive communication around they why behind changes. The next Lower School Head will anticipate parent concerns and provide clear, proactive communication of the why behind decisions, and will reinforce Parker's commitment to both academic rigor and progressive, whole-child development.



Faculty Development and Supervision

The Head of Lower School recruits, hires, and mentors Lower School faculty and staff and manages teacher orientation, in-service training, professional development, and evaluation. In collaboration with the Assistant Head of Lower School, the Head of Lower School observes, supervises, and evaluates the faculty in the development and implementation of curriculum, ensuring excellence in teaching and learning. The Lower School Head will support teacher morale, manage difficult conversations skillfully, and celebrate the hard work and commitment of the Lower School team.

Qualifications

- Minimum six year of experience and success in the field of educational administration
- An undergraduate degree is required, and a graduate degree is preferred
- An appreciation of an independent school's culture as well as an understanding of the specific values of Francis Parker School
- Successful administrative and teaching experience at the lower (elementary) school level in an independent school setting
- Ability to multitask in a high intensity and fast-paced environment. Attention to detail.
- Excellent public speaking and writing skills
- Experience in thinking and planning strategically
- Ability to collaborate effectively with multiple constituencies
- Experience with budget management, meeting facilitation and resolution of conflict

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Francis Parker School.

[School Website](#)

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[School History](#)

[Virtual Campus Tour](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[School Profile](#)



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:

John Faubert

Consultant

john.faubert@carneysandoe.com

Karen Whitaker

Senior Consultant

Karen.whitaker@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is \$200,000 to \$215,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, educational background, and expertise.