

OVERBROOK
SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

www.obs.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Start Date: July 2027

Overbrook School for the Blind

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | obs.org

Carney Sandoe & ASSOCIATES

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to develop and deliver education that expands opportunities for individuals with visual impairments, including those with additional challenges, so they can experience active and fulfilling lives.

At a Glance

1832
established

181
students served

birth - 22
ages

153
total faculty (includes teachers, therapists, paraeducators, and nurses)

5-6
students to 1 teacher and 2 paraeducators



OVERVIEW

For more than two centuries, Overbrook School for the Blind (OSB) has empowered blind and visually impaired students, including those with additional disabilities and complex medical needs, to learn with confidence, build independence, and thrive in a community where they are known, supported, and safe. Today, OSB serves 181 students ages birth to 22 on its distinctive 30-acre Philadelphia campus, supported by 153 dedicated teachers, therapists, paraeducators, nurses, and instructional staff who share a deep sense of purpose and describe the school as a family.

Overbrook carries a rich history and a longstanding reputation. Founded in 1832 by Julius Friedlander as the Pennsylvania Institute for the Instruction of the Blind, the school operated in downtown Philadelphia until its move to the Overbrook site in 1890. Today, the School operates as one of four state-approved charter schools for blind and deaf students in Pennsylvania, and its community reflects Philadelphia's diversity and serves a wide range of student needs and experiences. Recent campus investments include a greenhouse completed in 2017 and a 2023 renovation of the main and security entry. The just opened Overbrook Bed and Breakfast gives students entrepreneurial experience in running a business, and the School is completing a major construction project to improve student drop-off and pick-up areas and other building features.

Overbrook's deep legacy, diverse community, and considerable financial, physical, and human resources provide a strong foundation for its next chapter. The next Executive Director will start on July 1, 2027. Todd Reeves, who has served the school for ten years, leaves a legacy of strong student advocacy within OSB and in the Pennsylvania State Capitol Harrisburg through successful lobbying. The Executive Director works with a 15-member Board of Trustees and oversees a complex school operation spanning education, health services, facilities, human resources, and admissions, while collaborating closely with the School Superintendent, who manages the school's instructional operations. The Executive Director role combines internal organizational leadership with external advocacy, including lobbying in Harrisburg to ensure Pennsylvania state funding and support and working with public agencies on behalf of the school. For the next Executive Director, the community seeks a visible, decisive, empathetic, and knowledgeable educational leader who can build trust, improve communication, advance the School's strategic priorities, modernize facilities, and restore a sense of community and purpose. Above all, that leader must keep students at the center of every decision, ensuring that students develop the skills, confidence, and independence they need to thrive beyond Overbrook.

$250M
endowment

$36.7M
annual operating budget

~30 acres
campus size

352,200 sq ft
building space

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Overbrook's next Executive Director will have the central opportunity to preserve the school's deeply valued culture of caring while strengthening the organization to foster innovation and leadership that serve students more effectively. Specifically, the work ahead includes:

Rebuilding Trust, Communication, and Community: The Executive Director must set the tone for transparent, consistent, two-way communication; remain accessible and visible across campus; listen closely to concerns; and provide timely, reliable follow-through. Strong, transparent, and consistent communication among stakeholder groups is essential.

Renewing Overbrook's Leadership in Specialized Education: The Executive Director will advance Overbrook's vision and reestablish the school as a nationally recognized leader in education for students who are blind or visually impaired, known for innovation, creativity, and excellence in specialized instruction. This leader must preserve Overbrook's core mission while responding to students' increasingly complex medical, developmental, and academic needs. A guiding priority will be ensuring that students with significant medical needs and those whose primary needs are academic receive appropriate attention and resources. To advance this vision, the Executive Director will lead priorities that include:

- Strengthening specialized academic, therapeutic, and transition programs;
- Developing staff through ongoing training in instructional practices and new tools;
- Providing oversight of the International Programs expanding education, access, and opportunity for people with visual impairments around the world and determining the program's future directions;
- Modernizing educational technology and the campus infrastructure to meet today's needs of enrolled students; and
- Expanding parent education and external partnerships to prepare students for further education, employment, independent living, and life after Overbrook.

Enriching Student Life, Voice, and Independence: The next Executive Director will establish meaningful, accessible avenues for student leadership and voice. They will expand age-appropriate opportunities for every student to develop independence, confidence, practical life skills, and self-advocacy. Initiatives such as student-run enterprises, peer leadership roles, and hands-on use of the school's grounds and resources will connect learning to real-world experience and help students feel engaged, valued, and invested in their school community.

Strengthening Staffing and Organizational Effectiveness: Stabilizing the workforce is essential to strengthening student services, protecting safety, and improving organizational effectiveness. The Executive Director will address staff turnover, retain talented and experienced employees, and improve recruitment, onboarding, mentoring, and professional development. Building a healthier organization will mean:

- Clarifying roles, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and expectations across departments;
- Providing stronger training and support for directors, supervisors, and middle managers; and
- Establishing consistent performance evaluation.

It will also be essential to ensure adequate staffing in special education, admissions, health services, and other high-demand areas, and to move from reactive problem-solving toward proactive planning and reliable systems that better support students, staff, and the organization as a whole.



Modernizing Facilities and Prioritizing Safety: Overbrook needs a long-term capital improvement plan that aligns its facilities with students' current and future needs. Priorities include:

- Improving student-centered accessibility throughout campus, including adequate space for wheelchairs, changing facilities, overhead lifts, and accessible buildings;
- Addressing aging mechanical systems and other infrastructure; and
- Renovating classrooms.

The Executive Director will be responsible for campus security, emergency preparedness, transportation, and student health and safety procedures. Facilities, safety and security, and resources must support both the educational mission and students' complex medical needs.

Strengthening Governance, Finances, and External Relationships: The next Executive Director will build a productive, clearly defined partnership with the board, one that provides appropriate oversight while allowing school leaders to manage daily operations. The role also calls for effective advocacy in Harrisburg and with public agencies, especially on funding and the school's public benefit. To ensure resources support the mission, the Executive Director will review budgeting, compensation models, resource allocation, and staffing needs. In addition, it requires strong relationships with parents, alumni, community partners, and employees. The Executive Director will also strengthen Overbrook's ability to tell its story and demonstrate the distinctive education and services it provides.

Articulating a Clear Vision and Executing on It for Overbrook's Future: Stakeholders are looking for a compelling multi-year vision translated into concrete priorities and measurable goals. The Executive Director will determine how the school should respond to the growing complexity of student needs by building on Overbrook’s expertise in blindness and visual impairment, ensuring that technology, curriculum, staffing, facilities, and finances support stronger independence outcomes for students. The Executive Director will build a culture of innovation that encourages appropriate risk-taking, using the school's history and traditions to inform the future without preventing necessary change.

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Above all, the next Executive Director must keep students at the center of every decision and bring the professional qualifications needed to help Overbrook reclaim its position as an innovative leader in education for children who are blind, visually impaired, and/or medically complex.



Professional Qualifications

Overbrook seeks a seasoned educational leader with deep knowledge of schools and experience within a complex organization, including:

- Leading a team of professionals who serve the complex medical needs of students with significant health, mobility, and developmental needs.
- A background in special education and an understanding of the needs of students with disabilities, blindness and visual impairment, preferred.
- Experience leading a complex educational organization, including staffing, facilities, human resources, budgeting, compliance, and daily operations.
- Knowledge of relevant laws and regulations, including special education requirements, Pennsylvania school regulations, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Financial and resource-management expertise, including an understanding of public funding, budgets, endowment resources, and the relationship between financial decisions and educational priorities.
- Experience with advocacy and external relations, including work with public agencies, policymakers, families, alumni, and community partners.

Professional Qualifications

The community is looking for a leader who is visible, decisive, empathetic, and wholly committed to students, including:

- A decisive, strategic leader who sets a clear vision, anticipates challenges, builds systems for long-term success, and follows through with timely action, providing stability and direction during periods of transition.
- A thoughtful risk-taker who encourages innovation and pursues new opportunities while carefully considering their potential impact on students and the school community.
- An inclusive listener and transparent communicator who seeks input from students, families, faculty, staff, and administrators, then clearly explains decisions, expectations, challenges, and the reasons behind change.
- A visible, empathetic, and hands-on leader who is present across campus, engages in classrooms and school activities, knows people by name, and demonstrates genuine care, kindness, and respect for students and employees.
- A trusted relationship-builder who fosters collaboration, inspires the community to connect with Overbrook's mission and possibilities, and maintains an unwavering commitment to student-centered decision-making and the potential of every student.



LEARN MORE

- School Website
- DEI and Sustainability
- Programs
- About Philadelphia, Pennsylvania





TO APPLY

We expect this search to progress quickly, so interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will 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:

DARRYL J. FORD, PH.D.
Vice President, Education Leadership Services
darryl.ford@carneysandoe.com

KIM PEEPLES
Senior Consultant
kim.peeples@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is $300,000-350,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, education background, and expertise.

Carney Sandoe & ASSOCIATES