

GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL

Head of School



Head of School
Georgetown Day School
Washington, D.C.

“Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community. GDS is dedicated to providing a supportive educational atmosphere in which teachers challenge the intellectual, creative, and physical abilities of our students and foster strength of character and concern for others. From the earliest grades, we encourage our students to wonder, to inquire, and to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.”

– Georgetown Day School Mission

THE SEARCH

Georgetown Day School – one of the nation’s most respected independent schools, recognized for its commitment to academic excellence and progressive education – seeks a mission-aligned, intellectually nimble, and community-focused leader to serve as its next Head of School beginning in the summer of 2026. Founded in 1945 as the first racially integrated school in Washington, D.C., GDS was established as a school where children from across the Washington area could learn together in diverse groups, be joyful in their learning, and aspire to have a meaningful impact locally, nationally, and globally. This founding vision remains at the heart of the School's identity and purpose today.

The next Head will inherit a thriving school shaped by a dedicated faculty and staff, engaged students and families, and a passionate alumni community. The School has a strong foundation and is well-positioned for the future, with a robust demand for admission and strong student retention, a recently completed AIMS accreditation (2024), a newly unified campus, and a strong financial position with a growing endowment. The current strategic plan, [Audacious Beginnings, Bold Futures](#), was completed in 2024 and outlines four guiding priorities for GDS’s next chapter: (i) purposeful, joyful, and integrated education; (ii) thriving educators; (iii) equitable access and long-term sustainability; and (iv) innovation and reinvention.

GDS offers a rigorous, inquiry-based program led by 230 full-time educators with an average tenure of 15 years. Students experience small classes, extensive co-curricular opportunities, and an ethos that values self-reflection, respectful dialogue, high academic standards, and ethical leadership. With over 1,000 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, GDS draws from all eight wards of D.C., as well as surrounding communities in Maryland and Virginia. The School’s newly unified campus in Northwest Washington, D.C. fosters a joyful and inclusive learning environment that pairs academic excellence and rigor with social impact, empowering students to ask hard questions, solve complex problems, and lead with purpose.

This is an extraordinary opportunity for a visionary leader who believes in the power of progressive education and the limitless potential of young people and their ability to become leaders in a diverse and evolving society. The next Head will model empathy, integrity, and joy; build trust across a diverse and dynamic community; celebrate excellence and the sometimes messy (yet always essential) pursuit of it;

and steward an institution that takes pride in its powerful legacy while embracing academic rigor, innovation, and forward progress. The Head will guide the School in strengthening cross-divisional collaboration; supporting and celebrating faculty and staff; ensuring high academic standards and achievement; advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives; and amplifying GDS's voice in a competitive local and national landscape. Most importantly, the Head will ensure that students remain the School's north star and that GDS cultivates a learning environment where academic excellence, personal growth, and community engagement are interwoven.

Georgetown Day School has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important recruitment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

In its next Head, GDS seeks an exceptional educational leader, a strategic and decisive manager, and a systems builder who will immerse themselves in the vibrancy of GDS and celebrate the School's rich history and record of accomplishment while generating excitement around future possibilities.

The next Head will succeed Russell Shaw, a long-serving and highly-respected leader, and will discover a lively school community with a strong institutional identity and clear sense of purpose. In partnership with an engaged and effective Board of Trustees and deeply committed colleagues, the next Head of School will bring their own transformative vision for navigating an increasingly complex educational landscape. The ideal candidate will invest time in understanding the community's diverse perspectives while drawing upon their experience and leadership philosophy to guide the School to new heights of impact and excellence. Continuing the GDS tradition of visionary leadership, this Head of School will motivate the community through clear vision and strategic execution, leaving the institution even stronger for future generations.

Central to this work will be the Head's leadership in enacting the School's strategic plan, translating priorities into actionable initiatives. Through collaborative engagement, ongoing listening, and clear communication, the Head will work towards achieving the community's shared and strategic goals in ways that enhance student achievement, faculty development, and the overall culture and educational experience at GDS.

The Head holds financial and administrative management responsibility for all aspects of GDS's operations, and partners with the 20-member Board of Trustees. Uniquely, GDS is a parent-owned school and, accordingly, the Board is elected by the parent body. This highly functioning group comprises parents, alumni, and other community members, and cares deeply for the School's mission and follows best practices outlined by NAIS. The School's leadership team is structured to include three division Principals, Assistant Head for Teaching and Learning, Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Advancement Officer, Director of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid, Director of Operations

and Innovation, and a Chief of Staff. The Head, in collaboration with the CFO, manages an annual budget of approximately \$70 million, along with a meaningful endowment and real estate portfolio.

For more information about Georgetown Day School, please refer to the appendix below or visit: www.gds.org.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEW HEAD

In planning for this moment of transition, the Board and the School community expect the next Head to be well prepared to address the following priorities:

Embrace and cultivate GDS's distinctive academic ethos of student-led learning and discovery at the highest level

The next Head of School will inherit a rich academic tradition that celebrates serious inquiry and scholastic achievement and nurtures a lifelong love of learning. GDS fosters a joyful, intellectually vibrant academic culture where students are encouraged to ask big questions, challenge assumptions, and pursue knowledge with purpose and passion. Across all divisions, students are immersed in a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and real-world application.

In collaboration with an exceptionally talented faculty and committed senior leadership team, the Head will work to sustain the highest standards of teaching and learning; expand opportunities for innovation, including initiating conversations about the impact of emerging technologies and AI on today's students;

and lean into the wonderfully challenging and rewarding work of graduating students who are well prepared to self-advocate, take risks, think critically, and lead.

Support a welcoming and inclusive school community that is anchored in GDS's mission and founding principles, and reflects its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

At Georgetown Day School, a commitment to diversity, social justice, and inclusivity is foundational to the School's community and curriculum. These values are central to the School's mission, which affirms "the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community" and seeks to "foster strength of character and concern for others." In fulfilling this commitment, the School seeks to honor the dignity and identity of every community member. GDS strives to create an environment where students, faculty, staff, families, and alumni are seen, respected, and empowered to bring their full, authentic selves. The School embraces a diverse range of perspectives and learning approaches, preparing its students to be meaningful and positive contributors in a complex and interconnected world.

This is not always an easy or comfortable proposition – but it is essential. The next Head will lead by example in delivering on this commitment, leaning into difficult conversations and ensuring that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are not only aspirational values but fully integrated features in the daily life, curriculum, and culture of the School. The Head will partner with the entire school community to foster diversity of identities and thought and create spaces for courageous dialogue, continuous learning, and meaningful connections. In doing so, the Head will help ensure that GDS remains a vibrant, inclusive community that prepares students to lead with empathy, open-mindedness, and purpose.

Recruit, retain, and develop a talented faculty, staff, and leadership team

The faculty and staff at GDS are the bedrock of the School's success. The next Head will appreciate the magic of the classroom experience and should continue to prioritize faculty development, well-being, and professional growth. Faculty seek leadership that genuinely listens and protects their agency in their work. At the same time, the School is now of a size where clarity, accountability, and coherent structures are increasingly important to the consistent delivery of a best-in-class educational experience. As GDS strives to deepen interdisciplinary learning, foster inclusive classrooms, and embrace innovation, faculty empowerment will remain a cornerstone of the School's culture.

Recruiting, managing, and retaining exceptional team members will be a key part of the Head's role. The Head will inherit a talented leadership team that includes several key members who have recently joined GDS, bringing diverse expertise and fresh perspectives alongside deep institutional knowledge. The Head will continue to coach and cultivate the leadership team to maximize collaboration and cohesion and tackle future challenges. This strong foundation will provide essential support and framework as the leadership team continues to evolve in the coming years.

Strengthen connection, collaboration, and alignment across the School's three divisions

While each division thrives in its own right, there is potential to create a more cohesive and integrated academic and cocurricular experience among the Lower, Middle, and High School divisions. The recent consolidation of the three campuses in the 2020-21 school year offers a unique opportunity to deepen these connections both symbolically and structurally. This new facility not only brings younger students closer to their older peers, but also opens the door for more fluid transitions, shared programming, and cross-divisional collaboration among faculty and staff. The Head of School will play a pivotal role in shaping a unified vision that breaks down silos, fosters curricular continuity, and ensures a consistent and aligned student experience across all grade levels. Doing so will ensure that GDS students are grounded in their divisional communities and see themselves as part of a broader, interconnected whole.

Serve as GDS's ambassador, internally and externally, by nurturing relationships with a wide array of constituents, inspiring joy in the community, and raising resources to increase affordability and deliver on GDS's strategic plan

The next Head will cultivate strong, authentic relationships with students, families, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and external partners. The Head will be the School's chief storyteller, and "show up" and be a consistent presence on campus, embodying enthusiasm, warmth, and genuine care for the entire GDS community. As part of these efforts, the Head will be a dynamic advocate for the School and will collaborate closely with the Chief Advancement Officer to enhance GDS's fundraising capacity and philanthropic reach, in order to drive affordability, accessibility, and financial aid opportunities. There is also an opportunity to strengthen connections in the School's immediate neighborhood, where creative pathways exist to expand the classroom into the city and maximize the integration and collaborative relationship with the School and the city.

Ensure operational excellence, strengthen administrative systems, and effectively manage the School's resources

GDS is a large and complex enterprise – 1,000+ students, 230 full-time faculty and staff, an approximately \$70+ million budget, on eight acres. The next Head will partner with the leadership team and Board to ensure that the School's finances, endowment, infrastructure, and systems have kept pace with its growth, allowing community members to focus on the critical work of teaching and learning.



QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- A deep appreciation and respect for Georgetown Day School’s history and founding mission and the ability to eloquently articulate its importance to diverse audiences;
- Unwavering commitment to academic excellence and the joy of learning;
- A joyful disposition, sense of humor, and the capacity to inspire students, faculty, staff, families, alumni, and other community members alike;
- A record of successful administrative leadership and management at a large scale and level of complexity, including strong financial management experience and an understanding of the issues facing independent schools today;
- Clear passion for working with students and families;
- Confident decision-making skills with an inclusive, transparent, collaborative, and decisive leadership style and experience making difficult decisions;
- Excellent communication and diplomacy skills;
- Demonstrated understanding and execution of best practices in supporting the unique needs of students with learning differences;
- A nuanced and sophisticated understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in education and a commensurate track record of advancing DEIB efforts in tangible ways;
- Enthusiasm for and success in fundraising, the attitude and aptitude for advancement work, and the proven capacity to build strong personal connections and sustain meaningful relationships;
- Demonstrated intellectual curiosity and civic engagement; and
- High integrity, emotional intelligence, and humility.

COMPENSATION

The annual salary and benefits will be consistent with the market for similar roles in the area. The anticipated annual salary range for this position is \$400,000 to \$750,000. Georgetown Day School provides this salary as a good-faith estimate of the annual salary range for the position of Head of School based on comparable roles and market conditions in the region. GDS offers generous healthcare and other benefits to all employees and values its rich intellectual and inclusive culture.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent in confidence via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/georgetown-day-school/head-of-school>.

Georgetown Day School does not discriminate in its educational, admissions, and personnel programs and policies or activities on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion or religious creed, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, disability or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law.



APPENDIX

History

Georgetown Day School was founded in 1945, as the first integrated school in Washington, D.C., by seven families who wanted to create a school committed not only to academic excellence and educational innovation, but also to a value system emphasizing appreciation and respect for others. Believing that diversity was the very ground out of which all deep and rich learning occurs, its founders envisioned a school in which children would learn joyfully, be meaningfully challenged, and have their education prepare them to engage as changemakers locally, nationally, and even globally. They established GDS as a school where children [master key skills](#), driving a love of learning and the capacity to make a positive impact on the world. Today, the School's philosophy, programs, and position in the national educational landscape strongly reflect its roots. Having grown from 12 children in 1945 to over 1,000 students in pre-K–12 today, GDS is recognized as one of Washington, D.C.'s and the nation's most dynamic educational institutions and a leader in progressive education.

About GDS

At GDS, everyone addresses each other by their first names, indicating that all community members have equal access to one another, regardless of age, title, or station. For the 2024-25 school year, the School served 1,071 students – 508 High School, 302 Middle School, and 261 Lower School students. Forty-seven percent of the School's students identify as people of color. For the 2024-25 school year, GDS allocated \$9.5 million in financial aid to 24% of students with an average award of \$36,000. GDS employs 230 full-time faculty members who are deeply committed to the School, with an average tenure at GDS of 15 years. GDS is located in the Tenleytown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The city campus includes a Lower/Middle School building (completed in 2020), a High School building, and flexible athletic and playground areas.

As GDS approached its 80th anniversary in 2025, the School community engaged in a comprehensive and inclusive process to reflect on its journey and history and envision what's next. [Audacious Beginnings, Bold Futures](#), ratified in summer 2024, provides a compass for the School's future anchored by four waypoints: (i) purposeful, joyful, and integrated education; (ii) thriving educators; (iii) equitable access and long-term sustainability; and (iv) innovation and reinvention.

Academics

A GDS education engages students with real-world problems, places them at the center of their learning, teaches them to collaborate across differences, empowers them to connect with resources, challenges them to think critically and creatively, and prepares them to be active global citizens. GDS graduates leave the School with a love of learning, an abhorrence of bigotry and intolerance, a broad and well-rounded

fund of knowledge, the ability to engage in the great conversations of life, and the willingness and capacity to bring needed change to a troubled world. The comprehensive, progressive curriculum is known for experiential and hands-on learning, college-prep level math and STEM courses, and innovative programming. With an average student-to-teacher ratio of 7:1, GDS teachers focus on providing an individualized education for each child, from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. GDS supports students in exploring programs of study that foster a deep appreciation for the arts, humanities, and sciences as equally valuable disciplines, offering diverse perspectives on the world.

The Lower/Middle School curriculum at GDS fosters curiosity, collaboration, and the development of foundational skills in core subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and the arts. From an early age, students engage in equity and identity work, reflecting GDS's commitment to social justice and inclusivity. This integration is evident in events like the "Telling Their Story" project, which allows sixth graders to present curated family narratives through artifacts, deepening their understanding of personal and cultural identities. Other initiatives, such as the Social Justice Teach-In Days and grade-specific community engagement programs, further reinforce the School's dedication to developing empathetic, informed, and active members of society.

In the High School, GDS students explore an expansive selection of more than 150 courses across disciplines. Offerings include advanced courses in mathematics, science, and the humanities, as well as a range of electives in the visual and performing arts. Additionally, students have the opportunity for independent study and participate in immersive programs in ethics, global perspectives, and civic engagement. The High School is college preparatory, sending 100% of its graduates to colleges and universities worldwide. GDS alumni attend a wide range of colleges and universities, from Ivy League institutions to liberal arts colleges, HBCUs, and international programs, and remain engaged in lives of purpose, service, and leadership.



Signature academic programs include:

- **Social Justice Curriculum:** Woven throughout all grade levels, this curriculum centers on anti-racist and anti-bias education, civic leadership, ethical inquiry, and historical and contemporary social issues.
- **Capstone and Internship Programs:** Project-based learning experiences for seniors that connect classroom learning to real-world settings throughout the Washington, D.C. community.
- **Global and Experiential Learning:** Through local fieldwork, international travel, and language immersion, students develop global awareness and cultural competency.
- **Consent Summit:** A student-led national gathering focused on sexual assault, consent, survivor support, and creating cultural change, involving students, educators, and families.
- **Student Identity & Voice:** Events like the annual High School Identity Art Show provide students with platforms to share powerful personal narratives through visual expression.
- **MLK Social Justice Teach-in Days:** Each February, students organize and participate in workshops and discussions to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and deepen their commitment to justice.
- **Venture Lab:** Through [the Patty Abramson Social Venture Lab](#), students explore social entrepreneurship and develop initiatives that address pressing societal challenges.
- **Policy & Advocacy Institute:** A summer intensive where students investigate social justice topics such as veteran homelessness and housing policy through direct advocacy and research.
- **STEAM Conference:** A collaborative event that brings together students and educators from across the region to explore science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, with a focus on empowering underrepresented groups in STEAM fields.
- **Senior Quest:** A yearlong independent research project culminating in a public presentation and defense, allowing students to investigate topics of personal and academic significance.
- **Minimester:** A multi-day experiential learning opportunity where students explore specialized topics beyond the traditional curriculum, engaging in hands-on and immersive activities.
- **Health & Wellness:** The annual Health Fair combines fitness competitions with presentations of 10th-grade research on wellness and physical education.

Community & Student Life

The GDS student experience is grounded in belonging, mutual respect, and joyful discovery. Across divisions, faculty advisors and grade-level deans support student wellness, character development, and leadership. GDS emphasizes student voice and agency, which is evident in town meetings, student councils, and curriculum design.

More than 60 student-led clubs span a wide range of interests from environmental activism and mock trial to robotics, art publications, and cultural affinity groups. Students also participate in annual equity conferences, spirit days, arts showcases, and service-learning events that reflect the School's values.

In High School, peer leadership programs, student affinity spaces, and mental health initiatives ensure that students feel seen, supported, and empowered throughout their journey.

[Community Engagement and Experiential Learning \(CEEL\)](#) are integral to the GDS mission. Through thoughtfully structured programming, students engage with Washington, D.C. and the broader community, developing a sense of civic responsibility, empathy, and social awareness. Opportunities such as grade-level service projects, civic dialogues, and partnerships with local organizations encourage students to explore real-world issues and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Whether through direct service, advocacy, or reflection, students learn that active citizenship is essential to personal growth and collective well-being.

Arts

In the [arts](#), GDS is known for its celebrated theater program, award-winning jazz band, and vibrant visual arts curriculum. Students exhibit artwork, perform in concerts, and stage full-length theatrical productions throughout the year. The Arts & Performance Center is a hub of creativity, housing a black box theater, digital media labs, and studios that foster self-expression and collaboration.



Athletics

GDS offers a robust athletic and physical education program that strikes a balance between competitive excellence and broad participation. Younger students learn varied skills through a comprehensive physical education program, and older students can compete in over 50 athletic teams across 19 sports, with championship teams in basketball, soccer, tennis, and ultimate frisbee. The School's athletic facilities include a turf field, competition gym, fitness center, and training rooms on its unified campus, and additional facilities around the city are utilized for certain sports.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion are foundational to the GDS mission. Opened in 1999, the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) leads initiatives that engage all members of the community in identity development, anti-bias work, and cultural competency. From early grades, students learn how to navigate differences, advocate for justice, and take responsible action in the world. Key initiatives include affinity groups, cross-identity dialogues, the annual Equity and Justice Institute, parent and guardian DEI education, ongoing professional development for faculty and staff, and curricular DEI frameworks.

Student Support

GDS is committed to nurturing the holistic development of its students through a comprehensive student support program that addresses academic, emotional, and physical well-being. Recognizing the intrinsic

link between health and learning, GDS offers integrated services across three key areas: counseling services, learning services, and health services.

[Counseling Services](#) offer individualized and group support, collaborating with families, teachers, and administrators to promote students' emotional growth and resilience. This collaborative approach ensures that students receive consistent guidance throughout their educational journey.

[Learning Services](#) are tailored to meet the unique needs of students with identified learning differences. By offering support both within and outside the classroom, GDS empowers these students to achieve academic success and confidence.

[Health Services](#) comprises a dedicated team, including nurses in both the Lower/Middle and High School buildings, as well as a certified athletic trainer. This team collaborates closely with learning specialists, counselors, and coaches to ensure students' physical health supports their academic and extracurricular activities.

All images by Jason Putsché Photography.