



Position Statement
Director of Advancement
The Northwest School

Seattle, Washington
Start Date: August 1, 2025



**The
Northwest
School**





The Opportunity

For more than four decades, The Northwest School (NWS) has been an innovator in progressive education—where academic rigor, creative expression, environmental sustainability, global perspectives, and a commitment to social justice converge. As the only independent coeducational day and boarding school for grades 6–12 in Seattle, NWS inspires students to think deeply, live ethically, and act with integrity on both a local and global scale. With its commitment to inclusivity, the arts, and an interdisciplinary education, inclusive of humanities, math and science, the school fosters the development of young people who find joy in learning and are ready to inspire and lead lives of meaning and profound impact.

Guided by a [strategic framework](#) deeply rooted in the school's mission, Northwest is seeking a goal-oriented, seasoned, creative, and collaborative advancement professional who will serve as a strategic thought partner to the Head of School, Board of Trustees and key colleagues to drive both philanthropic investment and to support powerful storytelling to ensure the school's future. The ideal candidate will be an inclusive leader with

demonstrated ability to inspire transformational giving, develop and nurture high performing teams, and apply an innovative approach to further connection and commitment. Experience in creating short- and long-term fundraising plans, developing productive and genuine relationships, collaborating across departments, and effectively navigating and leading in complex environments is essential.

A highly strategic and dynamic leader with outstanding interpersonal and communication skills who is aligned with the [values and philosophy](#) of NWS will be critical to success. The Director of Advancement will be instrumental in shaping the school's future, ensuring that resonant messaging and philanthropic investments align with the enduring values that differentiate a NWS educational experience. Individuals who are passionate about supporting the development of young leaders through building a vibrant culture of philanthropy, whose strong sense of integrity, community, and social justice inspire them to action towards making a meaningful difference are encouraged to apply.

Finances, Fundraising and Opportunities for Growth

NWS was founded with the philosophy that a great education should be available to all and that there is tremendous benefit for a community that is socio-economically diverse. Nearly \$4 million is awarded annually for financial aid. Even more impressively, generosity makes The Northwest Experience Fund possible—a fund that enables all students who receive financial aid to fully participate in the life of the school by paying for 100% of costs above and beyond tuition, independent of the level of tuition assistance awarded. In addition to operating support and the Experience Fund, the school's endowment of \$14 million helps to support students who could not afford Northwest otherwise.

Northwest has an operating budget of \$20.3 million. The school has a modest amount of debt in the amount of \$11.1 million and \$6.2 million in capital reserves. Philanthropic investments will empower the Head of School, the Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership Team, and faculty to envision bold, transformative opportunities for the school's students—unlocking limitless potential and ensuring that their only boundaries are those of their imagination.

With a committed group of current families, passionate alumni, and longstanding values that are profoundly relevant, opportunities for growth at The Northwest School are significant. The Board of Trustees and the Head of School understand the critical role that philanthropy plays as an accelerant to possibility and are prepared to both participate actively as donors and advocates as well as to provide resources necessary to build a high performing operation. Building on the strong culture of philanthropy where every member of the community feels seen will remain vital to success. In partnership with the Board, Head of School, and Senior Leadership Team, crafting an array of strategic priorities that provide potential donors with an opportunity to make an important difference and solve problems they care about will open doors for securing major gifts to ensure Northwest's future. Creative and thoughtful stewardship of alumni will result in a thriving and connected community of graduates who embody the mission and values of NWS. For a talented professional, this is an opportunity to build a first-in-class advancement operation where a collaborative and humble approach will allow for swift progress.





Key Responsibilities for the Director of Advancement

The Director of Advancement (DOA) will create and lead a bold, integrated advancement strategy aligned with the school's long-term vision—driving results across fundraising, alumni engagement, and community storytelling to inspire Northwest School to new heights. In addition, the candidate will:

Leadership & Governance

- **Serve as a strategic architect and builder**—designing and implementing a high-performance advancement program that turns fundraising into a defining strength of the school.
- **Act as a key partner** to the Head of School and Board in articulating and advancing NWS's mission and institutional priorities.
- **Reimagine and strengthen advancement infrastructure** to support ambitious fundraising, compelling storytelling, and seamless cross-functional collaboration.
- **Develop measurable strategies** with clear outcomes, timelines, and performance metrics to grow philanthropic investment over a 3–5 year horizon.
- **Lead and develop a high-performing team**, cultivating a culture of excellence, alignment, and shared purpose.

Fundraising and Engagement

- **Lead** the school's philanthropic evolution—building a results-driven fundraising culture rooted in trust, clarity, and bold aspirations.
- **Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward** major donors, board members, and key parent, alumni and community stakeholders, with a deep understanding of mission-alignment and impact storytelling.
- **Set and deliver on multi-year growth targets** aligned to strategic priorities, and **track progress rigorously**.
- **Identify and activate key community connectors** to expand reach, influence, and donor pipeline.
- **Design and implement capital campaign readiness**, preparing the institution for future large-scale fundraising initiatives.
- **Build a strong alumni and parent engagement strategy** that treats constituents as long-term partners in the school's mission—not just as donors.
- **Collaborate across functions**—including enrollment, academics, and communications—to ensure alignment, amplify success stories, and foster shared belief in the school's direction.



What Success Looks Like in This Role

The Director of Advancement will be most effective if they bring the following strengths and orientation to their leadership:

- Deep commitment to the school's mission and values, with an ability to inspire others around them.
- Active listening and a learner's mindset—curious, open, and adaptive in the face of complexity.
- Talent for building and growing teams—identifying, developing, and empowering high-performing advancement professionals.
- Professionalism and discretion, with a deep respect for confidentiality and trust.
- Calm under pressure and grounded in integrity, especially in navigating sensitive situations.
- Cultural fluency and inclusion-mindedness—committed to fostering belonging for all members of the school community.
- Exceptional communicator, both written and verbal, able to translate complexity into clarity across diverse audiences.
- Strategic execution mindset—able to translate bold ideas into actionable priorities and outcomes.
- Collaborative by default—energized by cross-functional teamwork and open to multiple perspectives.
- Data-informed decision-making, using insight to adjust strategies and improve performance.
- Confident presenter and storyteller, able to engage donors and stakeholders with purpose and authenticity.
- Strong operational capability—able to manage budgets, projects, and people with discipline and transparency.
- Warm, ethical, and purpose-driven, with a humble yet ambitious approach to leadership.

Leadership Attributes and Personal Qualities of the Director of Advancement

We seek a bold and emotionally intelligent leader who will not just manage—but reimagine and elevate—the advancement function. The ideal candidate is:

- A **strategic thinker** and **systems builder**—able to design scalable infrastructure while advancing long-term institutional priorities.
- A **natural storyteller** with presence and clarity who inspires belief, action, and investment.
- A **values-driven leader** who can galvanize teams, navigate complexity, and lead change with clarity, conviction, and care when the moment calls for it.
- A **relational catalyst** who builds authentic trust across students, alumni, families, and donors.
- A **data-informed operator** who uses insight and discipline to turn strategy into execution and measurable impact.
- A **collaborative peer** to the Head of School and Board, able to manage across constituencies with confidence and humility.
- **Grounded, curious, and ambitious**—with a deep belief in the school's mission and the



Mission, Values and Educational Philosophy

The Northwest School's mission—to graduate students who are creative and critical thinkers, advocates for social and environmental justice, and compassionate global citizens—is deeply embedded in every aspect of school life. Students are challenged to think across disciplines, take intellectual risks, and engage in courageous and respectful dialogue.

With an ethos grounded in respect for self, others, and the environment, NWS's commitment to social justice and sustainability is more than curricular—it is a lived practice. The school champions an intentionally diverse and inclusive community, a robust arts and humanities program, and a dynamic boarding program that invites international perspectives to enrich the educational experience for all.

The Northwest Way: A Holistic Approach to Education
Since its founding in 1980, NWS has embraced a distinctive educational philosophy known as The Northwest Way. This approach integrates rigorous academics with a steadfast commitment to social justice, environmental sustainability, global perspectives, and community belonging. It aims to cultivate students who are not only intellectually prepared but also deeply engaged as compassionate, responsible global citizens.

Core Values

The Northwest Way is anchored in five interrelated values that shape the school's culture and curriculum:

- **Social Justice:** Fostering dialogue and action to ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources, enabling all individuals to achieve their full potential.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Welcoming individuals and families from a wide array of identities, and committing to fair treatment, full access, and a sense of belonging for everyone.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Recognizing the intrinsic link between environmental sustainability and social justice, and taking collective action to contribute to a more sustainable planet and future.



- **Global Perspective:** Providing students with opportunities to develop into global citizens through engagement, immersion, and study, fostering an appreciation of diverse cultures.
- **Community & Belonging:** Encouraging connection and collaboration to cultivate a sense of belonging and shared responsibility within the school community.

To actualize these values, the school offers three specialized Learning Communities that extend education beyond the traditional classroom: a social justice learning community; an environmental sustainability learning community; and a global learning community. The Northwest Way is more than an educational framework; it's a commitment to developing well-rounded individuals who are prepared to lead with empathy, integrity, and a sense of purpose in a complex global landscape. To learn more, please visit [The Northwest Way](#).



History

In 1978, three longtime, visionary educators—Paul Raymond, Ellen Taussig, and Mark Terry—came together to establish The Northwest School of the Arts, Humanities, and Environment. From its very beginning, the school's visible commitment to its values was evident in choosing a location that was accessible by public transportation to support access from families of all socioeconomic groups and to lessen the institution's carbon footprint. In October of 1979, the Co-Founders reached an agreement to purchase the site of the former Summit School in Capitol Hill, which remains as the primary building on campus today. On September 4, 1980, 230 students arrived at what is now known as "The House," depicted in the school's logo today and serves as Northwest's mascot. Building community, an important commitment of the Founders, was present from day one as students and faculty gathered to have lunch together - a practice that continues to this day. The curriculum was also very intentionally designed, and the core values of social justice, environmental sustainability, global perspectives, and a lens toward inclusion are present throughout as students develop a systemic understanding of how these values integrate across disciplines.

By 1996, the school was recognized nationally with the U.S. Blue Ribbon Award for Excellence, presented by President Bill Clinton on the White House lawn. Northwest continued to break new ground graduating notable alumni, spearheading innovative partnerships with schools across the world, and adding to the campus in order to meet the needs of a growing student body. Today, Northwest stands tall as a school accredited by the Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS) and as a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

The Program

The Northwest School's academic program offers a rigorous, interdisciplinary liberal arts education that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and global citizenship. At the heart of the school's academic philosophy is the belief that a liberal arts education equips students with diverse analytical frameworks to navigate complex questions and challenges. This approach encourages students to think like historians, scientists, sociologists, and artists, fostering versatility and adaptability in their intellectual pursuits.

While our academic program is college preparatory at its core, it also enables students to discover their passions and their voice through intentional integration with our arts and athletics programs. By nurturing in students their ability to take risks, stretch beyond their comfort zone, and navigate challenges with a growth mindset, graduates of The Northwest School are well prepared to succeed in college and beyond.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
At The Northwest School, a commitment to equity and inclusion is foundational. The school builds belonging by ensuring that every student, educator, and family experiences affirmation and respect across all identities and backgrounds. Through the curriculum, policies, and community life, injustice is actively challenged, diversity is celebrated, and cultural competence is cultivated to ensure students thrive in—and help shape—a more equitable world.



Fast Facts

Head of School and Board of Trustees

- Founded: 1980
- Location: Capitol Hill Neighborhood adjacent to downtown Seattle, Washington
- Type: Independent, coeducational day and boarding school
- Grades: 6–12 (Middle School: 6–8, Upper School: 9–12)
- Enrollment: 380 students including 43 boarding students (10% international students)
- Student-Faculty Ratio: 7:1
- Average Class Size: 15 students
- Campus: Urban campus with academic, dormitory, athletic, and arts facilities
- Diversity: 44% students identify as students of color
- Financial Aid: Nearly \$4 million awarded annually; 29% of students receive aid

Ray Wilson is Head of School at The Northwest School, a role he assumed in 2021 after nearly three decades of experience in independent schools. A lifelong educator, Ray brings a deep commitment to the region's diverse communities and dynamic educational landscape. He earned his undergraduate degree in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Cruz and a M.Ed. in Organizational Leadership from Holy Names University. His professional journey has included teaching and leadership positions at The Bush School in Seattle, Norfolk Academy in Norfolk, Virginia and St. Andrew's School in Savannah, Georgia, to name a few. At Northwest, Ray leads with a passion for progressive education, social justice, and cultivating a school culture grounded in curiosity, compassion, and community. Beyond the campus, Ray is actively engaged as a leader and speaker in the Northwest Association of Independent Schools' professional development programs. He has also spearheaded diversity workshops on curriculum development, student support, and building inclusive school culture.

The Northwest School is governed by a Board of Trustees composed of 23 individuals with diverse professional backgrounds, including education, finance, law, technologists, business leaders, and community service. The Board collaborates with the school's administration to develop policies and make essential decisions guiding the institution's mission and strategic direction. The DOA will work closely with the Head of School and the Board in advancing NWS's mission.

Living in Seattle

The largest city in the Pacific Northwest, Seattle is home to major employers like Amazon, Microsoft, and the University of Washington, and its diverse neighborhoods reflect a welcoming, forward-thinking spirit.

At the heart of the city lies Capitol Hill, one of Seattle's most dynamic and eclectic neighborhoods—and the home of The Northwest School. Capitol Hill is a vibrant, walkable community known for its creative energy, historic architecture, and inclusive culture. It offers a rich tapestry of independent bookstores, art galleries, live music venues, and locally owned cafés. The neighborhood is a center for progressive activism and civic engagement.

Capitol Hill also boasts easy access to downtown Seattle and major transit lines, along with abundant green spaces such as Volunteer Park and Cal Anderson Park. Whether enjoying a quiet afternoon at a local coffee shop, catching a show at a neighborhood theater, or hiking the nearby trails, residents of Capitol Hill experience the best of urban living with a strong sense of community and connection.

For educators, students, and families alike, living in Seattle—and especially in Capitol Hill—offers a rich, fulfilling lifestyle deeply aligned with the values of creativity, diversity, and social engagement.

Work Environment & Complexity

Duties and tasks in this position are varied and complex. The position works on systems development and projects, many of which require a high degree of collaboration. This position directs projects in which challenges are resolved with complex and precedent-setting solutions. The DOA will operate in a professional school environment where functions are performed in a typical office environment with no known hazards.

Physical Demands

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this position, such as the ability to see, hear, speak and understand English and use a computer. This position is active and requires standing and walking, including stairs.

Travel

Occasional overnight travel will be expected in this position. A valid driver's license is required.

For Candidates

- Bachelor's degree required. Master's degree preferred, but not required.
- Minimum of 5-7 years of progressive advancement experience and a strong understanding of the factors that create transformative philanthropic outcomes.
- In addition to a competitive salary, The Northwest School also offers a strong benefits package.
- This job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the employee. Other duties, responsibilities and activities may change or be assigned at any time with or without notice.
- The Northwest School is committed to building a faculty and student body that reflects the diversity of the broader society. We strongly encourage candidates from underrepresented groups to apply.
- All candidates must demonstrate a commitment to the school's mission, values, and philosophy, especially related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, environmental sustainability, and global perspective.
- Prior to submitting your resume and cover letter for this position, please read for accuracy. RG175 verifies academic credentials of candidates and conducts a thorough review of candidates' social media presence. NWS will conduct thorough background checks prior to finalizing an offer.

Salary Range: \$185,000 - \$205,000, commensurate with experience.

To Apply

If the possibilities in this opportunity excite you, please apply online at the RG175 website: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

The application includes:

- Letter of interest
- Resume or CV

For any questions or additional information about the position, please contact Emilie Henry at emilie.henry@rg175.com