

POSITION STATEMENT

Winchester Thurston School

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



LEADERSHIP SEARCH

Head of School

Start Date: July 1, 2027



Overview

Winchester Thurston School seeks a new head of school to start on July 1, 2027 or July 1, 2028.

Winchester Thurston is the only JPK-12 coeducational independent day school in the city of Pittsburgh, and the school makes great use of its location, consistently connecting students and faculty with other community institutions and resources through its "City as Our Campus" program. Winchester Thurston's home neighborhood of Shadyside is located approximately five miles east of the city center and in the heart of one of Pittsburgh's most lively educational, cultural, medical, and research centers. Shadyside is a highly walkable area known for its historic homes, hip boutiques, and lively restaurant scene. Its proximity to universities, museums, and large city parks offers a variety of cultural and recreational activities, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and Frick Park. Neighboring Oakland and Squirrel Hill are home to the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and Chatham University.

WT currently occupies three buildings in Shadyside, has just acquired a fourth, enrolls 685 students, has run a balanced budget for many years, and has an endowment of over \$30 million. The school began with the founding of the all-girls Thurston Preparatory School by Alice M. Thurston in 1887. Mary Graham Mitchell

founded Winchester School in Shadyside as a coeducational school focused on preparing students for higher education. In 1935, the two institutions combined to form the all-girls Winchester Thurston School, and in 1991, WT returned to its coeducational roots, admitting boys and girls from kindergarten through grade 12. The school has moved to different locations in Shadyside over the years, but has always maintained its credo of "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others."



In 1963, Winchester Thurston moved into its main building, Molloy Posner Hall, at 555 Morewood Avenue, and until 2007, all grades of the school were located there. Currently, Molloy Posner Hall is occupied by lower and middle school students, while upper school students use the building for arts classes and lunch in the newly renovated all-school dining hall. Molloy Posner also houses the gym and fitness center, the auditorium, and is adjacent to the school's turf field.

In 2007, the Upper School building was constructed just across the street, and houses classrooms, meeting rooms, a black box performance space, and science labs on three different levels.

Most recently, in 2021, just three blocks away, WT opened the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning. The Davis Center is located in a thoughtfully renovated historic building. The 15,000-square-foot facility serves as a physical expression of WT's strategic priorities to [Reimagine Learning and Rethink Time and Space](#). Designed to support project-based and community-based learning, the Center fosters collaboration across the humanities, engineering, arts, and sciences while expanding opportunities through the school's renowned [City as Our Campus](#) program.

Winchester Thurston's curriculum emphasizes educational innovation, rigorous academics, and real-world connections. Students engage in community-oriented learning while developing college-level skills. The

program focuses on complex problem-solving, critical analysis and communication, creative thinking, and independent research.

Winchester Thurston School is nationally recognized for its innovative approach to education and commitment to expanding how and where learning happens. WT's City as Our Campus program was honored with an Educational Leadership Grant from the Edward E. Ford Foundation, recognizing its innovative model for connecting students with meaningful learning experiences throughout Pittsburgh. Winchester Thurston is also a designated Malone Scholars School, selected by the Malone Family Foundation for its commitment to providing exceptional educational opportunities for talented students with demonstrated potential. Among the approximately 1,400 schools in the National Association of Independent Schools, WT is one of only five schools to receive both an Edward E. Ford Foundation Leadership Grant and designation as a Malone Scholars School.

The EE Ford Foundation has been so impressed with Winchester Thurston's curriculum that they have provided the school with two Educational Leadership grants totaling \$500,000 over the last 10 years, only the second school nationally to be awarded two of these grants. The most recent grant supports Access:Innovation, a three-week summer program that brings students together with community partners and experts to understand real-world challenges and use creativity, technology, and design thinking to develop solutions grounded in real needs.



The Program

Mission: Winchester Thurston School actively engages each student in a challenging and inspiring learning process that develops the mind, motivates the passion to achieve, and cultivates the character to serve.

The philosophy of teaching and learning is the mission in practice. Students are offered an equitable and inclusive learning experience that is grounded in the credo to "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others" and that is guided by commitments to:

Learn Passionately: We empower all individuals to drive their own learning through a relevant and immersive experience.

Foster Community: We embrace strong relationships as a critical component for powerful learning.

Embrace Diversity: We enable individuals to understand their own identity while honoring multiple perspectives.

Break Boundaries: We support deep learning that happens across disciplines and in non-traditional settings.

Create Change: We nurture learners to be active and engaged citizens who challenge inequities, address real problems, and make an impact in our school and our city.

Winchester Thurston leads the way in educational innovation, rigorous academics, scholarly standards, and a dynamic and engaging learning environment that prepares students for the challenges of a changing world. Students are excited about achievement as they become intellectually confident thinkers, able researchers, knowledgeable problem solvers, and individuals of strong character.

Admissions

Four members of the Admission Team are based in the Admission Office, but at Winchester Thurston, everyone plays a role in welcoming and engaging prospective families. Faculty open their classrooms during tours; students greet visitors and share what they are learning; staff and administrators take time to say hello in the hallways; and WT parents answer questions and share their perspectives on the school community. It is truly a collaborative effort, and one that makes everyone feel valued, included, and proud to be a part of the school.

WT has seen a slow, steady growth in its enrollment over the years, and is now close to full capacity at 685 students (approximately 240 in Lower School, 150 in Middle School, and 300 in Upper School). WT is committed to maintaining a socioeconomically diverse student body by providing a need-based financial aid program to assist students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to enroll. In addition to financial aid, WT offers over a dozen named scholarships and four Merit Scholarships annually.

The majority of prospective families first hear about WT through word of mouth (from friends, current families, alums, etc.). The top five reasons families give for enrolling at WT are quality of teaching, academic program, character education/respectful and caring environment, extracurricular programs, and overall school environment. Once enrolled, 94~95% of WT families remain at WT from year to year.

Advancement, Marketing, Communications

The Advancement Department plays a central role in strengthening Winchester Thurston School's long-term success by building and sustaining meaningful relationships with families, alums, grandparents, friends, Trustees, and other members of the WT Community. Through volunteer engagement, fundraising, and stewardship, Advancement helps foster a lifelong connection to the school while generating the resources necessary to advance WT's mission and strategic priorities. Front-line fundraisers work to generate support for three areas crucial to the school's success: annual giving, the endowment, and capital expenditures.



Advancement Department efforts overlap with, and are supported by, WT's Marketing and Communications Department, which works to build school pride, keep all families informed, and promote the benefits of a WT education throughout the wider community. This is done through a vibrant social media presence on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, an appealing and engaging website, and a number of direct communication efforts, including regular newsletters, periodic podcasts, an annual alum magazine, and features on the latest WT news and happenings.

Finances

Winchester Thurston School has an operating budget of \$22 million, deriving approximately 77% of its revenue from tuition. The School's annual fund, endowment draw, auxiliary programs, and fee income generate the remaining revenue to cover operating expenses. The endowment was valued at \$32.5 million as of June 30, 2026 and has increased from \$15 million a decade ago. The school relies on an Outsourced Chief Investment Officer (OCIO) to manage the endowment, with oversight from a Board Finance Subcommittee for Endowment. The Business Office is led by a Chief Finance and Operations Officer, who serves as staff liaison to the Board Finance, Audit & Risk Management, Endowment, and Buildings & Grounds Committees. At the end of the most recent fiscal year, the School had total net assets of \$49 million and carried \$13 million in long-term debt.



Winchester Thurston School's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30, and an external audit firm is engaged annually to prepare the school's audited financial statements ahead of the September Board meeting. In 2023, Winchester Thurston School established a separate Provision for Plant Replacement, Renewal, and Special Maintenance (PPRRSM) to fund deferred maintenance and upgrades to the physical plant. At the start of the current fiscal year, the PPRSM account balance was just over \$1 million. Consistent enrollment, sound financial management, and proper internal controls and procedures have helped place Winchester Thurston School in a strong fiscal position for an incoming Head of School.



What people love about Winchester Thurston School

From parents:

- The credo: "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others."
- It is a family school with a strong sense of community
- WT is warm and welcoming
- A desirable location

From faculty:

- Faculty work together and are proud of their school
- City as Our Campus program
- Strong and innovative academic programs
- Opportunities for students and faculty to grow
- Lots of tradition, but not burdened by it
- Continually focused on self-improvement, "how can we get better?"

From students:

- A small school where everyone is known and acknowledged
- Everyone is included and supported
- It is okay to take risks and make mistakes

Opportunities and Challenges

The new head of school at Winchester Thurston will have the leadership skills and experience to address the opportunities and challenges ahead. Among the most important are:

- Creating a new strategic plan that reflects the academic priorities and the programming needs of the school
- Developing a master plan for facilities, particularly arts and athletics, that takes into consideration the acquisition of new properties
- Maintaining a strong enrollment
- Moving the City as Our Campus program to a National model
- Growing the connectivity with the alum community and including them in the ongoing advancement plan
- Articulating the value proposition for WT
- Developing and embracing a formal plan of philanthropy
- Further defining interdisciplinary learning and moving the initiative forward

The Winchester Thurston community seeks a new Head of School who is:

- An exceptional community builder who listens deeply, cultivates connections, and strengthens bonds across all constituencies.
- A collaborator who wholeheartedly embraces the mission of the school and the Pittsburgh community.
- An educator who is a systems thinker who will bring skilled management and finance skills to the job.
- An inspired, compelling communicator, capable of speaking and writing about the WT experience with clarity and excitement.
- A leader willing to be enthusiastic and dedicated to fostering and continuing a community of philanthropy.
- A decision maker who delights in creativity and curiosity, yet can be clear and definitive.
- Politically adept with the emotional intelligence to manage competing tensions.
- Able to value the work and worth of all educators and manage differences with equanimity and wisdom.
- Humble and brings a calm, steady, warm demeanor.





Application Process

Winchester Thurston School has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support the search for its next head of school. Interested candidates should prepare a cover letter, an updated resume, and a writing sample(s) to submit as part of their application materials. Five references are also a required component of the application process.

The application deadline is November 1, 2026, for a start date of July 1, 2027 (or 2028). Candidates are encouraged to submit their materials in a timely manner (and well before the actual application deadline) at

www.rg175.com/login

For any questions about this exciting leadership position and to register your interest, please contact the RG175 consultants directly:

Hamilton Clark hamilton.clark@rg175.com

Marcia Prewitt Spiller marcia.spiller@rg175.com