POSITION STATEMENT

Crane Country Day School

Santa Barbara, California



LEADERSHIP SEARCH

Head of School

Start Date: July 1, 2028

CRANE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

RG 175 Change as Opportunity

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Crane Country Day School seeks a head who will engage with the close-knit community, sustain its joyful and experiential approach to learning, and build on the educational and organizational practices that will carry the School into its second century.

Overview

Crane Country Day School will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2028 and the School can claim its accomplishments with pride and enthusiasm. Driven by mission and core values, the School has maintained its founding principles and academic rigor alongside a commitment to creative expression and experiential learning, preparing students to graduate as engaged 21st century citizens. This ethos is enhanced by the School's idyllic campus: 12 acres of green space nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez mountain range in Montecito, a seaside community 80 miles northwest of Los Angeles. A spirit of adventure and enthusiasm characterizes Crane. One parent summed it up well: "Crane has a timeless quality that seems to ensure its students and community all share and embody foundational values and creative learning and growth that are exceptional in this day and age."

The strengths of the School are evident: record enrollment at 270 students, strong financial metrics with no debt, a growing endowment, an enviable partnership between an experienced Board of Trustees and the Head of School, and a picturesque campus that has been thoughtfully renovated and expanded.

Families embrace the sense of community, and parent volunteers are clearly engaged with multiple school events, from the legendary annual Crane Country Fair to serving Friday Lunches. Students love their school—and their teachers–and relish traditions like milk-and-cookies with the Head of School along with daily all-school assemblies and the Annual Art Show. Public speaking skills are a priority throughout K through Grade 8. Crane graduates consistently go on to top local public and independent high schools as well as nationally recognized boarding schools. Under Joel Weiss's 27 years of leadership tenure, the School has flourished and stands well-prepared for what lies ahead.



"We are a 'relationship-forward' school, and we hope our new head will treasure that aspect of our history and culture."
—Faculty Member



Like all thriving institutions, Crane faces opportunities for continued growth and thoughtful evolution. Crane is committed to making its exceptional educational experience accessible to families across a broad range of financial circumstances. As tuition costs rise, the School continues to prioritize tuition assistance and affordability, supported by a growing endowment approaching $20 million that will help sustain this commitment for years to come. As an institution steeped in experiential education, Crane recognizes the importance of continuing to articulate and embed creative, experiential pedagogy and programming throughout the curriculum, with impactful professional development playing a critical role in supporting this work.

Embracing emerging challenges in educational innovation is also essential. The next accreditation process is underway, and following up on the action plan will be a key responsibility in the next few years. Continuing the impressive track record in fundraising, set by the longstanding Head of School Joel Weiss, will also be necessary, as will continued attention to facilities and maintaining the spectacular and unique Crane campus.

Crane is an exceptional school well-positioned to meet the rising challenges in the field of education. The Board of Trustees at Crane welcomes your interest in the position.

History

Founded in the Roaring Twenties, at a time when women had only recently won the right to vote, the nation's wealth was growing at a breakneck speed, and interest in new models of education was at a fever pitch, the quartet of entrepreneurial and idealistic founders of Crane were eager to pursue the "country day" model, with rigorous learning, outdoor education, and creativity. Founders Bill Crane (a Cal-Tech English professor) and his dynamic wife Kitty drove around Montecito in a model A Ford, looking for a building site amid the orchards and small farms. The first Head of School, Arnold Lejeune, was influenced by Dewey, Piaget and the Summerhill School and professed his commitment to "extraordinary respect for children and child-centered learning." In the decades that followed the School became co-ed, rode out the Depression, and made its way through the Second World War to the booming 1950s, and into the tumultuous 60's and 70s. The 80s and 90s saw a steady rise in enrollment and a series of building projects that have created the beautiful campus and outstanding facilities that students enjoy today. Crane weathered both the 2018 mudslides in Montecito and the Covid years with remarkable resilience, serving as a haven for its community, developing strong processes for emergency response, and transforming adversity into opportunity through sizable gains in its endowment.



In 2021, Crane approved its most recent strategic plan and, alongside it, a strategic plan specifically designed to advance its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Nearly 100 years after its founding, Crane Country Day School strives to honor its traditions and the ethos of its founders while also embracing its capacity for evolution and innovation.



Mission and Values

Crane Country Day School is dedicated to providing an experiential education characterized by a thoughtful balance of academic challenge and creative expression. We thrive as a community that builds character and confidence, while celebrating the joy in learning.

Crane's mission is supported by clearly articulated values that are deeply embedded in the School's culture and lived each day: Doing Deepens Discovery, Find Joy in the Pursuit, Value Your Voice, Cultivate Kindness, and Put We Before Me. These values are frequently referenced by parents, students, and staff alike, reflecting their meaningful role in shaping the School's shared culture and community.

Crane Country Day School is committed to sustaining a diverse and inclusive community in which each member is respected and valued. We believe that a diversity of voices and backgrounds enriches the educational experience by encouraging variety of thought, social awareness, and a creative exchange of ideas. An important goal of a Crane education is to provide our students with a global perspective to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. All members of the Crane community share a collective responsibility to teach acceptance and embrace differences in order to learn and flourish in an inclusive community.

Program

Since its founding, Crane Country Day School has distinguished itself through a commitment to experiential education that engages students intellectually, creatively, and personally. From kindergarten through eighth grade, Crane emphasizes hands-on learning, close teacher-student relationships, and an experience designed to help children grow as confident learners, creative thinkers, and engaged community members. The result is a program that cultivates independent thinkers and problem solvers who are equally prepared for the demands of challenging secondary school programs, college, and purposeful engagement with the wider world.

In the Lower School, grades K-5, academic foundations in reading, writing, math, and social studies are complemented by science, engineering, Spanish, art, drama, music, gardening, computer and library skills, and physical education. Through the Peaceful Partners curriculum, Crane also highlights the importance of social-emotional learning and an appreciation of diverse perspectives as essential components of students' growth. A Crane education supports the head and the heart. Opportunities such as assembly spotlights, grade-level performances and presentations help students develop poise and voice from an early age, reinforcing a culture in which students are encouraged to express themselves with confidence while being cheered on by their friends, family, and teachers.



Upper School students in grades 6-8 are presented with a rigorous academic program that balances core subjects with performing arts, studio art, design and engineering, technology, seminar, electives, advisory, and athletics. Crane Upper Schoolers are supported to value their own voices and use them to make the world a more just, inclusive, and equitable place. A robust electives program gives students meaningful choice, while the advisory structure creates space for goal-setting, wellness, service learning, and connection across grade levels. Public speaking is a visible and important thread throughout the Crane experience that culminates in eighth graders preparing and delivering a speech in school-wide assembly.

In Piaget's educational philosophy "play is viewed as the young child's work and keeping the classroom action interesting both feeds and sustains the fecund magic of fantasy in the young child." —Crane History, Dan McCastin and Debbie Williams



Experiential learning is woven throughout the Crane program. Field trips, hands-on exploration, interdisciplinary work, outdoor experiences, service learning, and project-based opportunities contribute to a well-rounded educational experience that seeks to develop knowledge and skills as well as curiosity, courage, collaboration, self-expression and a passion for learning. Among Crane's many signature experiences are:

Daily Assembly: A central school tradition since Crane's founding, Daily Assembly brings the community together for announcements, presentations, and performances. Eighth grade Student Council members help lead Assemblies, while students of all ages share their learning and talents, from first grade skyscraper studies and second grade gymnastics routines to seventh grade presentations on microforests.

Design & Engineering: All students engage with Crane's state-of-the art, 2,000-square-foot Design & Engineering Center, where they use everything from traditional hand tools to laser cutters and 3D printers to explore the engineering design process. Opportunities for collaboration across grade levels further enrich the experience. For example, seventh graders design avatars for their first-grade clients, incorporating each younger student's personality and design criteria into their creations.

Overnight Trips: Each Upper School class takes overnight trips that are tied to curriculum and designed to build independence, confidence, and class cohesion. As a culminating experience, each eighth grade student travels to Alabama and Georgia to study the Civil Rights movement and develop a deeper understanding of the history of race relations in America.

Learning Support Services: With four full-time Learning Specialists and a full-time Psychologist, Crane empowers students with mild to moderate learning differences—including those with high academic potential—to thrive. We provide individualized, small-group, and push-in support across both the Lower and Upper Schools. For students transitioning to the more rigorous Upper School curriculum, our opt-in Learning Lab offers dedicated one-on-one guidance.

School Garden: The School's garden is an outdoor classroom where students learn about locally sourced produce, soil health, and the vital role of biodiversity in our ecosystem. Next to the garden live Crane's Nigerian Dwarf goats, Buddy and Bandit, who serve as beloved emotional support animals for students and teachers alike. Third graders take responsibility for caring for the goats, providing an opportunity to develop empathy, responsibility, and a deeper connection to the natural world.

Upper School Electives: Mixed-grade electives are built around student choice, hands-on exploration, outside experts, and field trips. Recent popular offerings include skateboarding and surfing, fishing, anime and manga, book adventures, and sports medley.

Spring Study Week: The Lower School engages in an in-depth interdisciplinary study of a theme, culture, or historical period during the week before Spring Break, working in mixed age groups and culminating in a half day presentation. Past themes include Ancient China, National Parks, The Equator, and Food, Glorious, Food.

Public Speaking: Student voice and confidence are developed through frequent formal and informal opportunities to speak in classes and at assemblies, culminating in each eighth grader delivering a speech to the full community on a topic of personal interest, passion, or research. Recent topics have included the history of flight, the importance of sleep, and the experience of being a twin, reflecting the individuality and intellectual curiosity of Crane students.

Performing Arts: Traditions include the annual Upper School Musical, Lower School class performances, Friday Spotlight assemblies, and music performances across the grades.

Visit the Crane website to learn more about the program: https://www.craneschool.org



The Community

The people of Crane are the School's defining strength. While most families are from Santa Barbara, many travel from as far away as Goleta to the north and Ventura and Ojai to the south; 31% are students of color, and the School supports a neurodiverse student population with learning specialists. About 24% of students receive tuition assistance, totaling $1.8M of the overall $12.3M budget. Crane's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging extends beyond the composition of its community and is reflected in its educational practices, relationships, and institutional priorities. Guided by a Board-adopted DEI Strategic Plan and a DEIB Scope and Sequence, the School has invested in professional learning, including SEED training, language services, and affinity spaces for families. These efforts reflect a shared responsibility to foster an environment where students, families, and staffulty feel valued, respected, and connected.



The School's commitment to kindness is clear to any visitor. On campus, students are polite, helpful, and eager to describe their affection for their teachers and the programs they enjoy. They are welcomed into a world in which appreciation is expressed and healthy interdependence fostered. There is a productive "hum" to life on campus and delighted engagement apparent in the classroom, labs, studios and playing fields. Students support one another across grade levels, growing resilience, confidence, and an understanding of themselves as members of a community rather than isolated learners. As one parent wrote: "The Crane community is second to none."

Crane uses the term "Staffulty" to acknowledge the combined importance of the staff and the faculty in building an authentic, high-functioning community in which every adult contributes to the student experience. The 63 members of Crane's staffulty are compassionate and dedicated, creating a setting where students feel loved, supported, and safe enough to take appropriate risks and thrive. Many staff members are alums of the School or current parents, so there is a community-wide appreciation of raising children with friends and colleagues in the Crane community.

Parents are active participants in school life, and the partnership between teachers and families is understood as essential to the School's cohesive culture. Parents are generous with both time and resources and are essential to the continuation of beloved traditions at the

School. All parents and guardians are members of Families for Crane, the School's parent organization, which partners with the administration to strengthen the School experience and support many of Crane's traditions and events, including Friday Lunches, Thanksgiving Feast, Crane Country Fair, and more.

Finances and Fundraising

Crane Country Day School approaches its centennial from a position of financial strength. Crane's record enrollment stands in contrast to national enrollment and demographic trends, reflecting the School's continued strength and appeal. With a current operating budget of $12.3 million, Crane projects a surplus of $300,000 for this fiscal year. Over the past three years, the School's endowment investments have grown from $8.4 million in June 2023 to approximately $19.5 million as of October 2026. Fueling this remarkable growth was the capital campaign for the $10 million Staffulty Support Fund, an endowment created for the sole purpose of providing generous annual bonuses to all employees.

Fundraising at Crane continues to be a significant area of strength. Total annual giving has grown 25% over three years to $1.5 million, plus an average of $3 million raised additionally each year in major gifts. The Impact Our Future Campaign, the largest in Crane's history, has surpassed its $20 million goal, having funded a new theater and classrooms, and an innovative endowment for Staffulty support. This success reflects a donor-centered culture rooted in Crane's tradition of volunteerism and family partnership, and philanthropy and community engagement complement each other effectively at Crane.



"To walk Crane's campus today is to witness something extraordinary—experiential learning that sparks curiosity and joy in our students."
—Joel Weiss, Head of School

Campus and Facilities

Integral to the heart of the Crane educational experience is the campus. Parents and students alike fall in love with Crane the moment they arrive. The school sits in the quiet Hedgerow residential neighborhood of Montecito, California. In addition to 12 acres of open space and playing fields, the physical plant consists of 15 structures with a total square footage of 33,000 square feet, organized around three defining areas–the Oak Tree, the Olive Tree, and the Mulberry Tree quads. An impressive redwood tree also creates a special space for school traditions. It is no surprise that Crane invests aggressively in its stunning campus to accommodate its growth and to provide unique learning spaces for students. Crane boasts a significant record of refurbishments and renovations in recent years. In February 2027, work on two classroom additions will be completed which will provide an additional 1,500 square feet of classroom space. There are gardens and a large athletic field, providing students with ample grounds for recreation and athletic competitions.



Opportunities and Challenges

The next Head of School at Crane Country Day School will build on the School's strengths and work with all constituencies to take on the opportunities and challenges ahead:

Community building: Sustain and deepen an already extraordinary community ethos that celebrates deep learning, caring relationships, and Crane's values. Bring excellent communication skills and engaging relational skills to a community that appreciates warmth and connection. Be present and visible.

Identity and Vision: Know and embrace the identity and history of this remarkable School. Understand and articulate what differentiates Crane. At the same time, establish a vision for the future and build capacity to navigate new challenges and innovations in education, including emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, while preserving Crane's commitment to experiential learning, creativity, critical thinking, and meaningful human connection. Sustain excellence.

Recruitment, cultivation, and mentorship: Bring a track record of success in attracting, hiring, and developing outstanding staffulty and senior leaders. Demonstrate commitment to supporting a staffulty devoted to collaboration and professionalism. Inspire a willingness to embrace a future-focused mindset and career-long growth. Continue to develop and mentor an effective senior leadership team. Recognize potential and encourage greatness.

Educational Leadership: Bring deep understanding and a track record of success in implementing a rigorous, creative, experiential K-8 curriculum. Document the scope and sequence as well as effective assessment strategies to describe this unique program. Ensure coherence. Support the balance of autonomy and accountability for an experienced and dedicated faculty. Embed relevant professional development that is impactful and inspiring. Promote culturally responsive teaching and the integration of diverse perspectives throughout the curriculum, strengthening Crane's commitment to academic excellence through an inclusive educational experience. Articulate and advance a clear, schoolwide vision for supporting a broad range of learners, ensuring that Crane's commitment to academic challenge is matched by thoughtful, individualized support. Strengthen collaboration among classroom teachers, learning specialists, and families to meet a wide range of academic, social, and emotional needs, including those of our neurodivergent learners. Support the School's commitment to innovation and joyful learning. Drive robust, holistic education.

Organizational Leadership: Direct the development of impactful policies in the areas of human resources and compensation policies and practices. Ensure the establishment of teacher evaluation and professional growth processes. Oversee the definition of appropriate roles and responsibilities of employees as well as appropriate staffing levels to manage the sophisticated and complex aspirations of the program at Crane. Work with the Board to establish appropriate long-term financial planning to maintain the strength of the current fiscal position of the School and anticipate future priorities. Manage the business.

Fundraising: Demonstrate an effective skill set and enthusiasm for continuing the successful culture of philanthropy at Crane, particularly in pursuit of socioeconomic accessibility and increased tuition assistance for families; competitive compensation and benefits for staffulty; and stewardship and further development of campus facilities and programs. Secure sustainable funding.

Leading Crane's Next Chapter: Build on the extraordinary legacy of a longstanding and highly respected Head of School while establishing an authentic leadership presence and guiding Crane into its next chapter. Balance continuity with thoughtful progress, bringing fresh perspectives and a clear sense of direction as the School approaches its second century. Honor the past, embrace the future.

"We weave rigorous academics with a warm, child-centered approach where hands-on experiential learning and the arts are fundamental pillars of a complete education." —Faculty member

Key Attributes

- A visible, warm community builder who honors the beloved traditions and identity of Crane Country Day School.
- A skilled team builder who will build a high-functioning and collaborative administrative team with a strategic focus and the ability to assess and refine school-wide initiatives.
- An eager fundraiser prepared to lead the School's philanthropic efforts in support of the mission and strategic priorities.
- A confident and forthright communication style, coupled with the judgment and resolve to navigate challenging conversations and decisions. A "teachers' teacher" – a person with prior teaching experience, deep affection for the daily life of the classroom teacher, and a knowledge of the professional engagement that serves both individual educators and the overall advancement of the School.
- A culturally competent leader with a demonstrated track record of advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. A leader who possesses the fluency to navigate complex conversations around identity and community belonging.
- A flexible, resilient and resourceful leader who will rise to challenges of the future of education with equanimity and determination. A leader who delights in children and childhood, and keeps students at the center of all decision-making.
- A school leader who understands the vital relationships between the various constituencies of the School: trustees, parents, teachers, staff members, alums, students and local residents.
- A creative and strategic visionary, able to effectively assess complex challenges and develop novel/forward-thinking solutions.



Compensation and Benefits

Crane Country Day will offer a range of cash compensation from $425-475K, and a generous package of benefits including pension, health care, professional development funds, and housing proximate to the daily life of the School.



Application

Crane Country Day 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 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 **February 10, 2027**, for a start date of **July 1, 2028**.

Candidates are encouraged to submit their materials in a timely manner (and well before the actual application deadline) at:

www.rg175.com/candidate/register

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

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Crane Country Day School has an institutional commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusivity. In that spirit, and in accordance with the law, Crane does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, national origin, or any other characteristic.