



HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2016

DAVIDSON DAY SCHOOL

Davidson, NC

HISTORY & MISSION

Davidson Day School, serving 522 students in PK2-12th grade, has witnessed dramatic growth in its fifteen-year history. Originally designed as an elementary school to develop “leaders and innovators in the 21st century,” the school began in 1999, enrolling 54 students in grades K-6. It was located in rented space in Davidson, North Carolina, a town of 9,000 residents, twenty-five miles north of Charlotte and the home of Davidson College, one of the premier small colleges in the country. In 2001 the school changed its name to Davidson Day School and became a PK-12 independent school that would provide “students with a unique, individualized education focused on helping each student achieve personal excellence.” In 2005 Davidson Day School opened with its first high school class and soon after began construction of a new campus just off Interstate 77 in the town of Davidson. In the fall of 2007 the school opened its new campus to 270 students, and in 2009 graduated its first class of ten students. Since 2008, the school has almost doubled in enrollment with the opening of its new campus, a reflection of the strength of the school and the burgeoning population in the area. Today Davidson Day School consists of three divisions (Lower School, Middle School and Upper School).

The mission of DDS is to “cultivate academic excellence through collaboration, creativity, and character development.” The founding vision of the school to help students achieve personal excellence continues to define its essential character. Students and parents are effusive in their praise of teachers who care deeply about the success of their students, who challenge them and are dedicated to helping them become their best selves. This culture of collaboration, creativity and character development is on display in every program. Teachers, administrators and students believe in the mission and live it on a daily basis.



THE CAMPUS

Davidson Day School is located on a fifteen-acre campus at the gateway to the town of Davidson. The school consists of classrooms, a 225-seat theater, a commons/cafeteria, science labs, library, offices, playgrounds, a full-sized gym, a weight-room, and a playing field. In order to provide for an extensive and robust athletic program, DDS rents nearby field space and athletic facilities. Located in the Lake Norman community, the school is able to draw students from numerous nearby towns north of Charlotte. The red brick facility is attractive, well maintained, and easy to navigate. A learning center located across the street provides additional support and programs for students. The close sense of community is enhanced by a building design that facilitates interaction among faculty, students and administrators throughout all divisions.



FACULTY and STUDENTS

Independent schools are known for their caring teachers, but the uniform and enthusiastic praise for the dedication of Davidson Day School teachers surpasses the high bar set by most independent school faculties. Parents laud teachers who “educate students to be successful” and make themselves available for extra help before school, after school and during lunch and free periods. Parents are amazed at how well the teachers know their children and their willingness to “adapt to each student’s learning style.” The small classes encourage a feeling of family in which “teachers know what makes each student tick.” Communication between teachers and parents is frequent and constructive, and because teachers have clearly demonstrated their deep concern for the students, parents listen to them. One parent called the teacher-parent relationship “a true partnership.”

Students are equally impressed by their dedicated and caring teachers. One Upper School student said that at Davidson Day School, “The best part of Davidson Day School is the relationship between teachers and students.” Middle School students praised their teachers for making learning challenging and fun, and one eighth grader commented that his participation in a school play “was the greatest experience in my life!” Across all divisions, it is clear that there is a strong faculty culture that communicates through actions and words that teachers want students to be successful. Many teachers lead extra-curricular activities and clubs as



well as coach, providing further opportunity to strengthen relationships with students. At Davidson Day School students are known, understood, and valued as unique individuals with an array of talents.

Davidson Day School students are friendly, respectful and fully committed to their school. The student culture promotes academic excellence but without a hyper-competitive atmosphere. The culture of collaboration is not only a defining quality of the teacher-student relationship; it also defines the relationships among students. Upper School students are proud of the school’s Honor Code and feel strongly that students abide by it. The Middle School Honor Code not only highlights integrity but also impressively and appropriately, emphasizes the importance of students treating each other with respect and compassion. It is recited every day at the Middle School assembly and clearly helps to create the positive atmosphere of this division. The cliques so common in many schools are not visible at Davidson Day School.

In general, the Davidson Day School student body demonstrates a range of academic abilities falling in the “average to above-average” ability zone. Admission to the school is based first and foremost on academic ability of prospective students who can also benefit from the exceptional program offerings. SAT scores are above the state and national average, and the school is justifiably proud of the fact that the Class of 2014 was offered more than \$3.4 million in merit scholarships for academics, arts and athletics. The College Counselor provides expert advice with the intention of helping students find the right fit. The school is proud of students in the Class of 2015 earning acceptances to Duke, Brown, and Vanderbilt. Student diversity at Davidson Day School is a commitment of the mission of the school. Socio-economic, ethnic and local geographic diversity is impressive. From its inception, DDS has worked toward openness and inclusivity and continues to do so.



“There’s a heart here that I just love.”
- DDS administrator

“Davidson Day School teachers listen, and they love the kids.”
- Parent Council Officer



PROGRAM

The academic, arts, athletic and extra-curricular programs are extensive for such a young school. The academic program offers opportunities to students to challenge themselves as well as explore new fields. In the Upper School Honors and Advanced Placement courses are offered in every major discipline. Of particular note is the extensive AP curriculum in the math and science departments, including Calculus AB and BC, Statistics, Chemistry, Physics and Biology. Other disciplines also offer multiple Advanced Placement options, a striking and laudable feature of the curriculum considering that there are only thirty-one students in the Class of 2015. Equally impressive are the electives offered to juniors and seniors, including Anatomy, Zoology, Organic Chemistry, Discrete Math, Mythology, and Anthropology. Upper School art electives enrich the program and provide opportunities to explore drama, photography, drawing and ceramics as well as instrumental music. A trip to Belize to participate in uncovering archaeological ruins is unique and a hallmark of the DDS program. Typical of most independent schools, students in ninth and tenth grade have fewer choices in the five major disciplines, but can begin or extend their exploration of the arts, as they desire.



"The teachers want us to succeed."

- Upper School student

The academic program is augmented by a successful advisory system. Upper School students are assigned an advisor in ninth grade with whom they will remain throughout their high school careers. Advisors oversee the academic progress of their respective advisees, provide counsel on course selection, and give students advice on the inevitable challenges of navigating a high school program. Students meet with their advisors twice a week. Regularly scheduled assemblies give teachers, administrators, and students in the Upper School opportunities to share important information, recognize student achievement, and strengthen community.

The Middle School consists of grades five through eight, and the traditional core subjects of language arts, math social studies, science, and foreign language anchor the program. Students in this division also explore technology and the arts. Beginning in the Middle School, students can participate in interscholastic athletics, and many do so. Pedagogy in the Middle



“Everyone is trying to make you better.”

- Upper School student



School is creative and geared to providing entry points for individual students to access the material in ways that best fit them. Middle School assemblies are held every day and help foster a spirit of unity and shared purpose. The Middle School honor code emphasizing respect and compassion for others and being a positive role model is recited at each assembly. Middle School students, like those in the Upper School, are poised, articulate, and unafraid to respectfully voice their opinions.

The Lower School comprising grades K-4 reflects the sense of collaboration and partnership that defines Davidson Day School. Students not only learn the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics; they begin the process of developing a love of learning and a curiosity as teachers devise lesson plans that engage the students and encourage them to take intellectual risks.

The Early Childhood program falls under the direction of the Lower School Head. The program uses a phonics-based language curriculum, and teachers build on the innate curiosity of this age group in order to establish a foundation for further learning. Teachers employ a hands-on approach to engage students.

The athletic program at Davidson Day School, especially at the varsity level in certain sports, has been nothing short of spectacular for such a young school. The school has won state championships in football, boys' track and field, and girls' soccer. It has been state runner-up in cross-country, both girls and boys, and basketball, both girls and boys. Davidson Day School student-athletes have earned full athletic scholarships to highly regarded Division I universities. The success of the athletic program has enhanced student pride in the school. DDS is proud of the scholar-athletes who contribute to the school with academic and athletic excellence.

The arts program is extensive and impressive with musical productions, instrumental music as well as visual arts. The theater is exceptionally well equipped and allows for outstanding drama presentations as well as concerts. The school is on a balanced path in keeping with the mission of a rigorous education enriched by arts and athletics.

ADMINISTRATION and GOVERNANCE

Davidson Day School is administered by the Head of School who is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the school and who reports to the Board of Trustees. In addition to the Head, there are three division heads and Directors of Development, Marketing & Communications, Admissions, Facilities, Athletics, and Finance. The senior administrative team is an experienced, dedicated group of professionals who care deeply about the school and its mission. They are innovative and creative in their approaches to school leadership and sensitive to the importance of the school image. Many of them, along with junior administrators and faculty, have their own children enrolled in the school.

The present Head of School, serving on an interim basis, began his tenure at Davidson Day School in 2014 and is a skilled veteran who provides stability, direction and consistency. His leadership, wisdom and decisiveness have been well received by all constituents.

The Board of Trustees consists of fourteen members, most of whom are current parents. The by-laws allow for a maximum of twenty members. Committees support the Board, and trustees are active and involved. Members may serve two consecutive three-year terms. The Board is self-perpetuating and led by a Chairman who works closely with the Head of School. Trustees clearly demonstrate through their words and actions that they care deeply about the school. As the Chairman stated, “The Board has worked hard at helping the school get better every year.” Like the parents, trustees sing the praises of the faculty and feel fortunate to have such a wonderful group of teachers working with the students.



OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

Davidson Day offers a new leader the opportunity to move a young school forward, develop the current resources and plan for the future. All of the constituencies are ready for the kind of strong, decisive, relational, and visionary leadership that will take the school to new heights. The commitment of the outstanding faculty and the enthusiasm of the students and their parents will provide a strong foundation. The enrollment has been strong in recent years, an obvious plus and positive barometer for the school in the community.

Like many schools of its age, Davidson Day School has had its growing pains. Changes in the leadership of the school, some financial challenges several years ago, and a debt of \$7 million have led the school to consider its essential identity. In addition, the inevitable pressures produced by enrollment growth, the limitations of the present facility to provide all the needs of the Upper School, limited athletic facilities, and a relatively small campus are challenges that are being currently addressed by the Head and Board of Trustees. At this stage in the life of Davidson Day School, it is clear that development of a

strategic vision is a high priority. The Board is committed to updating and defining this vision.

The next Head of School will be guided by the strategic planning that the school is undertaking and will lead the implementation steps.

There is an exciting opportunity for a school leader who can see the future for DDS and who relishes the possibilities to make a real difference.

The growing enrollment of the school has proven to be an asset. Much has been done since the first days, and more will be done in the years to come to achieve the goals of excellence that the Board has set forth.

Specifically, the new Head of School will work with the Board of Trustees and the community to create and share the vision of what Davidson Day School is and will be. He or she will be the face of the school and must be willing to be involved in the Lake Norman region and Davidson community to raise the visibility and reputation of DDS. The clear strength of the school is its faculty who, by all accounts, live the mission of the school as it has been delineated, especially as it concerns personal, individualized excellence. As is often the case with a school of this age, mission needs to be paired with priorities, including understanding of data around test scores as well as branding and marketing for DDS.

It is clear that the trustees want to find a strong leader who will provide direction for many years to



come. It will be imperative for the next Head of School to place a premium on

communication with all constituencies and to intentionally develop relationships that will inevitably lead to productive outcomes. The Head of School will need to be articulate and skillful in writing and speaking.

Faculty, parents, and students are eager for an energetic, enthusiastic, and involved Head of School who is accessible and visible.

In order for DDS to achieve its future goals, it will need to raise capital funds. The next Head of School and the Board of Trustees will work together in the implementation of the strategic plan that will not only chart the course of the school over the next five years, but also provide the structure for effective fundraising. The establishment of a clear direction based on universally accepted identity that details what Davidson Day School wants to be, will be essential to strengthening the school's brand and its fundraising capacity.

Every school faces challenges, but many don't have the potential to create something special. Davidson Day School has the enormous opportunity to make a lasting difference in the lives of young people for years to come. The critical foundation blocks are present, an engaged and skilled Board of Trustees, a supportive parent body, a caring and dedicated faculty, and a receptive student body. All that is missing is a leader.



PROFESSIONAL and PERSONAL QUALITIES

Davidson Day School seeks the following qualities and proven abilities in its next Head of School:

- Commitment to the future of the school by an educator who loves working with young people
- Accessibility to all members of the community, willingness to be the face of the school
- Willingness to work closely with the Board of Trustees in the implementation of the strategic vision
- Knowledge of curriculum and educational trends that are appropriate for Davidson Day School
- Leadership skills including the ability to communicate effectively with different constituencies, the ability to make a decision and stick by it, a desire to listen and learn as well as act and implement
- Desire to build relationships with different constituencies, be visible and earn their confidence
- Self-confidence and courage
- Understanding of and experience with fundraising
- Ability to think strategically, to relate the school's mission and programs to the realities of the marketplace
- Ability to drive change, to help create the school's future
- Inspirational example for all staff and students through words and actions as well as setting high standards of accountability
- Comfort in working with and relating to all kinds of people
- Embrace of the values of Davidson Day School: collaboration, character, and creativity
- Ability to articulate the vision for the school and use that vision to focus the efforts of all constituencies



APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should send an electronic cover letter, resume, and statement of philosophy in a **single file** and a **separate single file** with reference contact information to:

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