



ST. GEORGE'S
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Head of School Search

St. George's Independent School

Memphis, Tennessee

July 1, 2021



St. George's Independent School: Head of School Search

THE SCHOOL

St. George's Independent School is seeking a new head of school who can deliver on its unique configuration, ambitious mission, and unmatched potential, leveraging active learning and agile teaching in support of student success. Located on three campuses in Memphis and the surrounding suburbs, St. George's is committed to being, as one parent put it, "The best place for helping kids find and develop passions." It combines outstanding teaching, transformative diversity, and a commitment to traditional Episcopal values to develop in its students a strong sense of community, character, and excellence in all they do. This is an extraordinary opportunity to lead a truly unique school.

Founded in 1959 for students in preschool through 5th grade in suburban Germantown, St. George's began as a small primary school serving local students. Responding to a desire to serve older students and be more representative of the rich diversity of Memphis, the School eventually grew to three campuses. Opened in 2001, the Memphis Campus serves a largely African-American population in pre-K through 5th grade, mirroring the program in Germantown. The Middle and Upper School opened on 250 acres in suburban Collierville in 2002 and brings together students from the two lower school campuses and new students entering grades 6-12.

Originally founded in partnership with St. George's Episcopal Church, the School is a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES). As an NAES school, St. George's values "the integration of the ideals and concepts of equity, justice, and a just society throughout the life of the school; the embracing and honoring of diversity; and the inclusion of community service and service-learning as an integral part of the life of the school." St. George's welcomes

all faiths and Episcopal values remain central to the School's identity, which inform and affirm the focus on character development.

Despite its young age as a Middle and Upper School, St. George's has developed several signature programs that reflect its mission and set the School apart from its peers:

- *5th grade speeches* on both lower school campuses are an important rite of passage in which students deliver a speech in front of their peers, faculty, and administrators and share their thoughts on a topic of their choice.
- *Specialized Independent Study* is a multifaceted project that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students. Projects fall under citizenship, community and service-based learning, St. George's Great Outdoors, personal growth, design and production, and academic research. Students create a final artifact of their learning, along with writing that is appropriate for that strand, and present their projects to peers and the greater community in the spring.



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- *Institute for Citizenship* offers dynamic coursework and off-campus experiences to juniors and seniors who are selected to participate in this prestigious two-year program in community engagement.
- *St. George's go1/Bunkhouse* is a shared meeting space with City Leadership/Servego1 to support outstanding year-round service learning and leadership for students in Middle and Upper School.
- *St. George's Great Outdoor* program fosters an appreciation for the outdoors and connection with the environment through hands-on experiences, while at the same time developing in students a sense of leadership, teamwork, self-reliance, and confidence.

The School's unique history and growth means that, at 60 years old, it is both well established and fairly young, having graduated its first class of seniors in 2006 and its first class of students who started in PK at the Memphis Campus in 2016. In that time, St. George's has firmly established its place in the educational landscape of Memphis. In a crowded market, the School



exists as the only preK-12 coed Episcopal school in Greater Memphis and is known for providing outstanding academic preparation, a focus on community and character, and a distinctive approach to diversity and inclusion.

MISSION

St. George's Independent School is an Episcopal School dedicated to the pursuit of excellence preparing students for a life of learning and meaningful contribution in an inclusive learning community that nurtures outstanding academic achievement, relationships, leadership and character reinforced by Judeo-Christian values.

THREE CAMPUSES: ONE SCHOOL

St. George's Independent School's most defining characteristic is its unique 3-campus model. The suburban Germantown Campus, the School's original site, serves students from infants through 5th grade, and has for 60 years provided students an excellent foundation in both academics and character. The curriculum is designed to leverage children's innate curiosity and build academic skills that allow them to address ever more complex challenges. The Memphis Campus provides the rich St. George's experience to families who might not otherwise have logistical or financial access to an independent school setting. Southeast of downtown, the Memphis Campus offers the same curricular structures, instructional approaches, and extraordinary opportunities to excel that students have enjoyed for generations in Germantown. Because students come together in Middle School, opportunities abound throughout the elementary years to bring students and families together to develop authentic, lasting relationships and a shared sense of community within each class.

The Collierville Campus brings together students from the Germantown and Memphis campuses along with many new students who join the community in Middle and Upper School. Located east of the city, the 6th-12th grade campus offers 250 acres where students enjoy spectacular facilities and a beautiful setting in which to study, participate in an array of extracurricular activities, and explore the natural surroundings. While the mission and values live on all three campuses, it is at Collierville where the School's ambitious goal of "transformative diversity" is most apparent through the creation of "an atmosphere in which differences are embraced, not ignored, and hollow stereotypes are displaced by flesh-and-blood individuals, through a process of knowing and being known." The challenge of creating one school from three distinctly different campuses is ongoing but one to which all at St. George's are committed.

Students on all three campuses take full advantage of first-class teaching and learning spaces, including bright and cheery classrooms, science labs, and innovation spaces. Chapels on each campus provide



important space for community gatherings. Both the Memphis and Germantown campuses have gyms, outdoor playgrounds, and athletic fields. Collierville's exceptional athletic facilities include two gymnasiums, a 400-meter track, and five playing fields supporting football, soccer, lacrosse, baseball, and softball, as well as the Compton Aquatic Center and the Lightman Tennis Center.



THE ST. GEORGE'S COMMUNITY

With almost 1,000 students spread over three campuses, St. George's combines many of the best aspects of small and large schools. Students are known and appreciated for their individual gifts while exploring a wide array of opportunities in academics, the arts, and

athletics. As one administrator put it, "Our size is a great strength of the School because it feels very familiar and small for the students. That's a big part of its health." A student summed up how the School's configuration and size are important: "It's large enough to get that diversity of different types of people, but then it's also small enough to feel like a family and connect with people."

LIFE IN MEMPHIS

Located on the Eastern bank of the Mississippi River, Memphis has grown from a port town to a thriving center for commerce, education, media, the arts, and entertainment. With a population of 650,000 (almost 1.5 million in Greater Memphis), the city is perhaps best known in popular culture for its thriving music scene and world-famous barbecue. Forbes magazine recently ranked Memphis as one of the top 15 cities in the US with an "emerging downtown" area. There are prominent colleges and universities that add to the city's vibrant culture, including the University of Memphis, Rhodes College, and Christian Brothers University. Major cultural attractions include Beale Street, National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel, Rock 'n' Soul Museum, Graceland, Children's Museum, Botanical Gardens, and the city's riverfront. Locals enjoy the city's welcoming, family-centered feeling and relatively low cost of living.



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During its most recent accreditation, completed in April 2019, the School was commended for many outstanding aspects of its program and values:

- Actively and intentionally merging Episcopal principals into the curriculum and daily conversations within the community.
- Cultivating and modeling positive and growth mindsets for all students, culminating in a sense of trust and genial care from the faculty and staff.
- Embedding character education in all facets of the St. George's experience and providing myriad ways for students to engage significantly in student-driven initiatives.
- Creating an academic culture that values each child growing, improving, doing his or her best, and being deeply known by the faculty.



- Creating an inclusive environment in which students feel safe to be themselves and to explore new opportunities.
- The commitment of faculty and staff to developing strong relationships with students and families.
- Encouraging students to be good citizens of Memphis by creating opportunities to learn from its history and shape its future.



Exceptional teachers are primary among St. George's many assets. Their expertise and passion for supporting children and their dreams are at the heart of the School's success. They appreciate both the autonomy to innovate in the classroom and the culture of shared excellence. Faculty do not want to let their students, the parents, or each other down by doing anything less than their very best. "Because we are given so much freedom, our expectations for ourselves are extremely high," said one longtime faculty member. A St. George's

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education consists of engagement, experimentation, creativity, and critical thinking. As another teacher noted, "We are building the innovative thinker, the problem solver. We don't want students to walk away with knowledge. We want them to be able to use that knowledge." The results measured by scores, national merit scholars, college acceptances, and success certainly speak for themselves.



St. George's is intentional about developing in its students a strong sense of community and character. Understanding that who students are is as important as what they know, the School's most recent strategic plan emphasizes character education, Episcopal values, and citizenship as critical goals. In addition to guiding academic progress, the strong advisory system in Middle and Upper School provides the opportunity for students to engage with trusted adults in a safe space while discussing current topics and social issues, reflecting on guest speakers, performing community service projects, and building connections and community. Weekly chapels on all three campuses provide opportunities for speakers from inside the School and the extended community to reinforce values and inspire student reflection.



St. George's parents are passionate partners, marketers, supporters, and volunteers. All are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's experience and participate as fully as possible. Whether partnering with teachers or advisors to promote student success, cheering on athletic teams, attending student performances, or volunteering at school events, parents are ever-present on all three campuses and are critical to the School's sense of community.

STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- Active, curious, motivated, and happy students who thrive in all aspects of the School's program.
- Skilled, compassionate, and loyal teachers dedicated to nurturing the potential in each student in an environment that values hard work and integrity.
- Dedicated parents who understand, appreciate, and strongly support the School's mission and philosophy.
- Commitment to "transformative diversity" and the unique three-campus model.
- A vigorous and thoughtfully-developed curriculum that inspires and supports student success at and beyond St. George's.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next head of St. George's Independent School should be prepared to work in partnership with the Board, faculty, staff, and administration to:

- Articulate a coherent and compelling identity and value proposition in an increasingly challenging enrollment environment.
- Maintain a shared sense of purpose and culture across all three campuses.
- Lead fundraising efforts in support of the School's mission to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Inspire program excellence and a positive faculty culture that supports innovation, continuous improvement, and accountability.
- Implement an administrative structure that supports strong leadership across all three campuses with clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures.



THE CANDIDATE

The successful candidate will likely exhibit the following characteristics, qualities, and experiences:

- Transparent and collaborative servant leader who balances warmth and approachability with the ability to be decisive and have difficult conversations.
- Effective communicator across all constituents.
- Commitment to the unique three-campus model that is critical to delivering on the St. George's mission.
- Visionary who can inspire all in the St. George's community and others in Greater Memphis;
- Ability to balance the spirit of a start-up and the structure and history of an established school.
- High EQ and authentic connector with students, parents, faculty, and staff.
- Effective recruiter of talent and supporter of excellence among faculty, administration, and staff.
- Community builder who can rally others around St. George's mission, vision and values.
- Experienced and effective manager of people and processes.
- Humility, self-awareness, and openness to feedback.

Learn more about St. George's Independent School at: <https://www.sgis.org>

TO APPLY

St. George's Independent School has retained Tom Olverson tomolverson@gmail.com and Tony Featherston tfeatherston@RG175.com from Resource Group 175 to lead the search for its next head of school. To apply, please go to: <http://rg175.com/candidate/signup>.

The deadline for receipt of full application materials is **June 1, 2020**

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

St. George's Independent School does not discriminate on the basis of sex, religion, race, color, national and ethnic origin, or sexual orientation in the administration of its education policies, admission policies, financial aid, and other school-administered programs.

