



**Position Statement
Head of School Search**

Hackley School

Tarrytown, New York

Start Date: July 1, 2023



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MISSION STATEMENT

"Hackley challenges students to grow in character, scholarship, and accomplishment, to offer unreserved effort, and to learn from the varying perspectives and backgrounds in our community and the world."

THE SETTING

Hackley School, a K-12 co-ed day and 5-day-boarding school founded in 1899, has an important message carved on the lintel of the school's entrance: "Enter Here To Be And Find A Friend," words of exhortation that generations of Hackley students have taken to heart.



Situated on a hill in the Westchester village of Tarrytown, 30 minutes from New York City, Hackley is a school of deep academic and moral strength with a campus not matched by many in either the day school or boarding school realms. With Hackley a sense of place and purpose are linked to the motto of the school: "United, We Help One Another." At Hackley a comprehensive educational understanding matches behavior. Community stands paramount. As one parent said, "they know my son here." Another suggests that the round tables in the dining room are a metaphor for the school, encouraging togetherness, fostering community. No one is isolated.

A place of beauty and promise, Hackley stands on 285 acres with a unified campus of three divisions, lower, middle and upper, all connected by gardens, courtyards, paths and stairs. Even the margins

are places of learning: 5 playing fields, 6 tennis courts, an outdoor track, a Health and Wellness Center with squash courts, a pool and gym, 6.5 miles of walking and hiking trails, outdoor classrooms, a school garden, and the 150-acre Hackley Forest – an orchard with apple and pear trees and a student-tended apiary producing honey for the school. There are 62 faculty housing units located on campus and close by, and in 2024 the school will open the new Center for Creative Arts and Technology that will house Visual and Performing Arts as well as Computer Science and Innovation. Throughout the entire campus the clear focus is "teaching students to communicate clearly, to think deeply, to master difficult subjects and skills, and to work together." For a graphic representation of the campus, click [here](#), "Explore Campus" (in Hackley at a Glance).

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THE PROGRAM AND THE COMMUNITY

Academics

The robust academic program at Hackley is both wide and deep as it offers AP and post-AP classes in most departments. The core program is strengthened and expanded by “minor” classes (meaning they meet three times per cycle instead of five) that include such imaginative opportunities as Literature of Fishing, Wilderness and Identity; Storytelling through Oral History; Historical and Literary Analysis via Role-Play Games; Jazz Combos; Submersible ROV Engineering; and Astronomy and Meteorology, along with Independent Research opportunities in science, English, and History. As a member of Round Square, Hackley is part of a worldwide network of innovative schools in 50 countries across six continents that afford students and faculty numerous occasions to participate in international conferences, network and exchange trips. Matching the school’s commitment to scholarship and academic excellence is the overarching value that “Character is higher than intellect,” a value intrinsically embraced by Hackley teachers and students for more than a hundred years.

Athletics

A sports program in which 85% of all Upper School students participate in interscholastic athletics is nothing short of remarkable. With 65% playing more than one sport, it’s downright extraordinary. As a result, every year a dozen or so graduating seniors are honored with the “Three by Four Award,” meaning they have played three varsity sports in each of the four years of high school. As the Athletic Director points out, sport “is not really an extracurricular at Hackley; it’s engrained in the students.” Equally remarkable in a school with so strong an interscholastic program as Hackley’s, 15 of the 27 Varsity teams are coached by faculty members! Not surprisingly, league championships abound and the exceptional athletic facilities are an after-school magnet for students and faculty alike.

<https://www.hackleyschool.org/school-life/athletics>



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Arts

As with sports, the arts are an integral part of student life at Hackley. In every division, students learn essential skills in visual arts, drama, and music, along with performance opportunities through which they discover joy, confidence, and the satisfaction of accomplishment. The new Center for the Creative Arts and Technology, a 50,000 sf building dedicated to imagination and creativity, will afford unparalleled opportunities for students to learn, create, and showcase their work in an array of venues, including a 500-seat auditorium; 100-seat Black Box Theater; an Art Gallery; Makerspace; a Scene Shop; Digital Media and Photography Lab, music studios, and dressing rooms.

<https://www.hackleyschool.org/school-life/arts>

Community

When asked what's best about working at Hackley, a teacher replies, "The kids and the colleagues." A veteran faculty member adds, "I've not seen a school where so many people are invested in the school." And the outgoing Head of School adds that it's "the healthiest adult culture I've worked with: where the spirit of volunteerism is alive and well and the all-in attitude of the faculty reflect the long-standing commitment to 'unreserved effort.'" The result of such effort and commitment is that this day school feels like a boarding school, perhaps because of the 5-day boarding program, but more likely because nearly half the faculty live on campus. People know each other well at Hackley. Parents feel welcome, alumni return, teachers enjoy long tenures, and students are secure in their environment. The result is a powerful and widely acknowledged sense of connectedness to the extended Hackley community.

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GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Board

The Board of Trustees currently comprises 23 women and men who serve three-year terms without term limits. The Board is diverse, self-perpetuating, and has a robust and productive committee structure.

Budget and fundraising

Hackley operates on a balanced budget of roughly \$42 Million this year. The budget is augmented by a vigorous fundraising program that expects an Annual Fund of \$3.5 Million this year in addition to the ongoing capital campaign, Beyond Boundaries, that is 80% of the way to its \$100 Million goal.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- As with many independent schools, Hackley recently experienced divisions in its community stemming from both the pandemic and the national political divide
- In a school whose bedrock constant has been its sense of community, this has been unsettling to many
- Yet the community still embraces diversity as a value and inclusion as an ideal consistent with the school's long history being welcoming to students of all races, ethnicities, faiths, and backgrounds
- Thus, providing the next Head with an opportunity to heal, to bind, and to unite by
- Restoring the imperative that decisions must be mission, community, and student-centered, and by
- Promoting a leadership style that is strong in support of Hackley's values yet mindful of the need to be forward-thinking and receptive to ideas that will advance the mission and culture
- A cornerstone of which is the school's sense of community

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THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL WILL LIKELY:

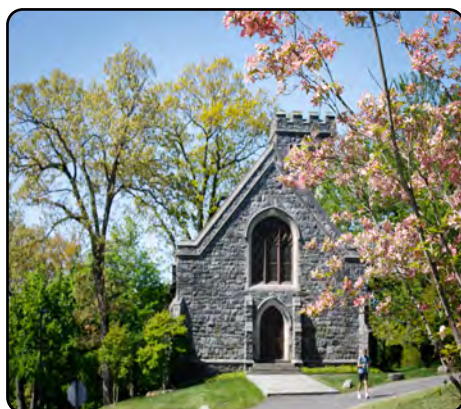
- Be an experienced independent school educator and administrator
- Have a sense of humor and be warm, approachable, and visible
- Understand the current college admissions scene
- Commit to partnering with the Board of Trustees
- Communicate effectively in speech and writing
- Have had success hiring, promoting, and retaining high-quality faculty
- Understand the value of diversity in fostering a community of inclusion
- Be a good listener
- Have strong interpersonal skills and a high E.Q.
- Make decisions that are student-centered
- Be transparent and inclusive in her/his decision-making
- Enjoy being the front-facing individual for Hackley in the broader community
- Promote the Hilltop as a learning hub, a leader in future-looking education
- Restore both a sense of trust and a sense of fun in the community
- Nurture and promote a culture of Health and Wellness



Interested candidates should apply through the candidate portal on the RG175 website: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>. We require a cover letter explaining the candidate's interest in Hackley, a C.V. or resume, and a writing sample of the candidate's choosing. **The deadline for applications is February 1, 2023.** Candidates are urged to apply early in order to be interviewed. Buzzer-beaters rarely get the job, it seems. Forewarned is forearmed! We look forward to hearing from you.

Tom Hudnut
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BOARD OF TRUSTEES STATEMENT

For a fuller understanding of what Hackley is and aims to be, read the following Statement from the Board of Trustees. It is required reading for anyone who would lead the school.

I. CULTURE

At Hackley, we believe, like Emerson, that “Character is higher than intellect.” In prioritizing *character* before *scholarship* and *accomplishment* in our mission statement, we stand for values that may seem counter to the achievement-oriented world in which we live. We honor the excellence and achievement that arise through “unreserved effort” and in partnership with others.

The Hackley journey is framed by this and three other ideals woven into Hackley’s culture and traditions: First, we “Enter Here to Be and Find a Friend.” Visitors often report that they sense a unique warmth and collegiality among the student body, an essential niceness, evident in the ways they look out for others and volunteer their help. Our students come to understand that in order to have a friend, you first need to be one, as you grow in concern for others at the expense of selfishness. The school’s motto, *Uncti iuvamus*, translates to “United We Help One Another,” which calls upon all to value our collective work as a community, and the importance of being part of something larger than ourselves. Finally, by tradition, we charge students to “Go Forth and Spread Beauty and Light” – each day, each year, and as they move boldly and confidently beyond the Hilltop. These ideals, frequently and seriously quoted by students, families, faculty, and alumni alike, are daily and vibrant reminders of what makes Hackley unique.

Hackley students consistently encourage and applaud each other in their chosen passions, whether academic, athletic, or artistic, as they challenge themselves to do their best. We value a spirit of healthy competition in which friendly rivalries spark the desire to excel individually and collectively, without envy. Hackley strives to inspire and recognize excellence, and actively resists a “star culture.”

We are raising our children near the world’s most diverse city and want to prepare them to understand and be leaders in a diverse country and world. Diversity and inclusion are a bedrock of Hackley culture. We value diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, of economic means and parental professions, and of political views and religious beliefs. We believe every student should feel the deep sense of belonging that comes from being known, seen, and respected for who they are. We work to bring diversity into the daily on-campus experience of our students through our admissions choices, our deployment of financial assistance, and our faculty recruiting. Our students learn from the diversity of the wider world through community engagement, school-sponsored trips to engage with different people and cultures, our participation in the global Round Square independent school network, and our membership in the Global Online Academy.

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II. COMMUNITY

We believe that a strong sense of community is indispensable to all our goals. We believe that size affects community, and that Hackley should remain at approximately its current size, which is our “just right” size: large enough to have room for diversity and to support a wide range of courses, teams, and activities, but small enough for students to know all their peers, and teachers all their students. We believe that our high school boarding program (despite its small size), and the substantial presence of faculty and faculty families living on campus amplify the sense of Hackley as a “lived-in” community rather than just an assemblage of classrooms and programs.

Although the most important proofs of community are intangible, we believe that Hackley’s extraordinarily high levels of participation in giving provide measurable confirmation that our multiple constituencies think of Hackley as a community to which they belong, not merely a provider of utilitarian education services. Over 80% of families give each year, against an NAIS average in the 60s; 15-20% of alumni have given in recent years, well above the NAIS average; and 100% of teachers with children who are Hackley students (the most informed constituency of all!) give each year. Trustees, the Parents’ Association Board, and the Alumni Board routinely give 100% as well.

III. IMPLEMENTING HACKLEY’S CULTURE IN ACADEMICS

Hackley is certainly a college preparatory school, but not a school single-mindedly driven by college admission results. We believe that cultivating thoughtful, analytical minds and excitement about learning are high goals in and of themselves. Students find their curiosity rewarded endlessly here, and this pushes them to apply that passion for knowledge without end, into the schools they attend after Hackley and their adult lives beyond. Hackley encourages the right college fit for the student rather than the right college name. We hire faculty members who are passionate about their field of study, and we provide them with the autonomy to individualize their curriculum while working collaboratively by department to create a cohesive program.

As part of Hackley’s strategic plan, Redefining Excellence: Learning Beyond Boundaries, Hackley created its [“Portrait of a Graduate,”](#) which overtly grounds the school’s mission and culture in an emphasis on relationships, diversity of perspectives, accomplishment defined by serving a greater public purpose, and enduring academic skills. Concurrently, Hackley published its first edition of K-12 competencies in eight critical areas to guide future curriculum design.

Hackley has a long tradition of emphasizing writing, a skill essential to all students and most all professional futures. Our graduates regularly report finding themselves better prepared as writers than

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their peers and this is the product of an intentional and sustained effort through every division of the school.

In its study of the humanities, Hackley aims to give our students substantial familiarity with both Western history and literature and the diversity of world history and cultures that provide wider context for understanding the world culture that surrounds them, whetting their appetites for further, wider studies in college.

Hackley's exceptional math and science programs provide a deep set of curricular offerings relative to our size. The impressive level of voluntary student commitment to high-level STEM studies is reflected in the very high enrollment across AP course offerings in math and sciences. In 2015, Hackley launched an Independent Science Research Program which, starting the summer after sophomore year, pairs students with professionals as mentors for the three-year program. With this solid curricular foundation firmly in place, there is room to continue to increase the available challenges and excitement for STEM-minded students through non-curricular activities. For example, there is now a competitive robotics team in both the Middle and Upper Schools.

Modern and classic languages are also a central part of Hackley's academic curriculum. We offer Spanish, French, and Mandarin and students in these courses gain not only an in-depth knowledge of the language(s) they have studied but also insights into the culture, history and literature to

which language gives a unique access. In addition, Classics, Latin and Greek help students to cultivate understanding of the ancient world and bring forth its fruits to the modern age.

We deliberately integrate technology into the learning process when it genuinely enhances learning and thinking as an essential tool. The opening of our state-of-the-art Center for Creative Arts and Technology in 2024 will enable us to explore the intersectionality of the digital arts, creative arts, and education more fully. In that vein, intersectionality is the foundation of Hackley's robust Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, offering such recent college-level courses as American Law, Architecture and Design, Introduction to Filmmaking, Machine Learning with Music and Art, and Service Leadership for Social Impact.

In recent years, Hackley has taken a campus that was "very good" and transformed it into a world-class campus, effectively using the resources our 285-acre property make possible with distinctive learning spaces, such as outdoor classrooms and a curated Hackley Forest, Orchard, and Apiary. Given the strength of our academic program, we are fueling world-class levels of intellectual excitement and quality, even exceeding those for which our students currently reach. We recognize the need to challenge our students with these new opportunities without diminishing the distinctive, collaborative culture we value by stirring up envious competition between students.



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IV. IMPLEMENTING HACKLEY'S CULTURE IN ATHLETICS

Hackley works hard to build successful teams. We have made major commitments to spectacular athletics facilities, and we have a strong record of success in many sports. We believe, however, that our athletics program serves goals of culture and character that are far more important and durable than winning the next game—or even the next season. We believe participation in athletics teaches “unreserved effort,” determination and persistence over the long term, teamwork, team building, and leadership—valuable life lessons for all students, including the large majority who will not play varsity sports in college.

We run our athletics program with these goals in mind. Mandatory after-school athletics for all 7th and 8th grade students introduces every student to the joy of the “team”—as well as to the discipline and even pain of struggling for improvement. The fact that each year more than 80% of our Upper School students play at least one season of competitive athletics—when there is no longer any requirement—tells us that our current approach works.

Our coaches and our team captains aim to build teams that emphasize mutual encouragement and support, and we find that they succeed in that goal. We will not accept a “win at all costs” culture built on “star” athletes, even if it could increase Hackley’s win/loss record. Many of our coaches are also Hackley teachers, and believe that our athletics program, like our academic program, is an agent of our culture and community.

V. IMPLEMENTING HACKLEY'S CULTURE IN WELLNESS

We strive to fortify habits of health and wellness while instilling these habits as urgently vital. Encouraged and supported by a major gift, Hackley has integrated a wider concept of “wellness” into its culture and program. This certainly includes exercise and thoughtful education about diet but goes beyond that to include finding ways to teach—and create space in our days for—calm reflection and sustained thought. No off-the-shelf solutions are available, and Hackley has a dedicated Health Education Chair who ensures Hackley’s “wellness initiative” is a continual process of invention to remain ahead of the curve.

With the Johnson Center for Health and Wellness serving as a hub bringing all divisions together, Hackley is dedicated to fundamental practices advancing the physical and mental health of its students. These practices are driven by faculty and administrators seeking to create an environment that fosters students’ wellbeing. Hackley’s commitment to wellness benefits students, employees, and partners in the community. Just some adult opportunities include access to the cardio room, FITT class with a trained professional, hiking in the woods, boxing, and knitting.

VI. IMPLEMENTING HACKLEY'S CULTURE IN THE ARTS

As with academics, we desire a culture that excites students about the arts, enabling them to pursue excellence in the arts that delight them, and a spirit

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of mutual encouragement and appreciation among students. We believe this spirit of encouragement and appreciation is in place; our visual arts department has a strong record of exciting students to try new media, and then equipping them to achieve technical mastery which we believe often rivals collegiate levels. We have had students go on to pursue degrees and careers in the visual arts, and we are delighted that Hackley can support this diversity of paths.

Our performing arts department has made great strides in recent years, with both the levels of performance and the levels of participation improving greatly. We hope that strengthened offerings in drama as well as richer chamber music offerings will draw what have previously been the “outside” musical efforts of many students within Hackley’s walls, and we hope that, in turn, richer offerings along with continual improvements in on-campus instruction will bring the serious study of music into the lives of many students who otherwise would never learn an instrument.

Already, our performing arts both support and benefit from the Hackley goals of community and mutual support and encouragement; the periodic student “coffeehouses” (musical talent shows) are invariably “standing room only” events, with warm applause for all performers, not just members of a given social group. Our students learn that at Hackley, you make something cool just by being passionate about it.

We are fortunate to announce that the final major building project in Hackley’s 25-year campus master

plan is under construction. The Center for the Creative and Digital Arts is slated to open in the fall of 2024. This 50,000 square foot collegiate-level facility will house a 550-seat auditorium, 100-seat black box theater, art gallery, visual arts studios and classrooms, Makerspace, and flexible computer science classrooms. The Center is designed to provide Hackley students with unique, cutting-edge space for imagination and creativity across disciplines.

VII. CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD

Rapid increases in applications and an increased “yield” from admission offers suggest that the surrounding community sees Hackley as a resounding success. And we think it is. Yet we also see challenges ahead.

First, every human institution falls short of its ideals, so the description above is inevitably somewhat aspirational, and we must continuously endeavor even to approach these goals. If our leadership does not devoutly believe in and preach these same aspirations, we will lose them. The selection of a new Head could hardly be more critical. If we were willing to settle for merely measurable goals of “success” such as strong test scores and college admissions, the field of suitable candidates would be wider.

Second, Hackley’s very success poses a challenge to its culture and unique identity. In the past, those who did not truly share our vision had other more prestigious and perhaps “flashier” options among the New York City and Westchester independent

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schools. Now, our truly spectacular facilities—from the handsome entry gates through the inviting and well-equipped academic spaces and on up to the truly idyllic setting of the playing fields—strongly appeal to many who may not genuinely agree with (or even comprehend) our vision. As an impressive new Creative and Digital Arts center rises over the next two years, we expect that reaching out effectively to find those who truly want what Hackley wants to offer, while screening out those who think of Hackley as merely a “prestige purchase” or a utilitarian ticket to an elite college,

will require increasing determination, effort, and resources.

Hackley seeks a Head for whom this admittedly aspirational self-description sounds like a dream come true, and who will come to us absolutely determined continually to recreate, protect, and strengthen this unique identity, rather than to preside over a “success” embodied by continually increasing prestige and test scores amid a loss of that which makes Hackley a very different place than its peer schools.

