



**Position Statement for  
Head of School Search  
The Healdsburg School  
Healdsburg, CA  
Start Date: July 1, 2024**



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**THE HEALDSBURG SCHOOL** is a place on the move. With strong demand for admission, growing enrollment, an excellent reputation, and a new, permanent home identified, all metrics are pointing in the right direction. “Scrappy” is often used to describe a school culture where everyone—faculty, staff, parents, and students—is willing, able, and ready to pitch in. As THS has solidified its place within the community, it has accomplished something unique: an excellent academic product that is, as one parent put it, “approachable in terms of cost and culture.” After the successful five-year tenure of the current head of school, THS seeks a new leader who can continue the current trajectory and deliver on the promise of an outstanding independent school in one of California’s most charming small towns.

Founded in 2007 by a career educator who believed in a constructivist philosophy before that became a buzzword, The Healdsburg School has grown steadily from 16 trailblazing students to its current size, with 233 students in TK-8. The only school in the area to offer the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, THS



lives its mission by building skills and confidence in its students through a challenging inquiry-based curriculum, small classes, differentiation, and a focus on social-emotional growth.

Located in a grove of redwoods set back from the main street, the tidy four-acre campus is home to roomy, cheerful, and active classrooms, including stand-alone buildings that house a library, engineering/innovation space, and a science lab. Classrooms open to the outdoors surrounding a central courtyard where the entire community gathers each morning for student-led announcements. A large garden is tended to by students and a professional gardener. There are play spaces for each age group to let their imaginations run wild with the latest addition being an old wooden yacht that has been converted into a play structure. As lovely as the current campus is, it is leased by the School. A spectacular new site has been secured to be The Healdsburg School’s permanent home. Located two miles from the current campus and surrounded by vineyards, the new location occupies a lovely 11-acre site that will allow for the construction of a purpose-built campus. The next head of school will have the opportunity to bring this long-held dream to reality.





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## MISSION

To cultivate the intellect, courage, and compassion to lead lives of inquiry and purpose.

## CORE VALUES

Community  
Integrity  
Curiosity  
Respect  
Perseverance

## THE PLACE

Located an hour's drive from San Francisco, Healdsburg, population 12,000, has long had an economy based on farming. Today, the town is home to some of the world's premier wine growers and restaurateurs, many of whom are also members of the THS community. Its location makes it within easy reach for city dwellers' second homes as well. There are many reasons to visit Healdsburg, but the Healdsburg Future Farmers Country Fair and Twilight Parade is a local tradition and highlight of the spring that bridges the town's past, present, and future. THS kindergarten and first grade often participate on their own parade float. As one parent put it, "Healdsburg feels like a New England small town, but one with an airport just 12 miles away."



### THE PROGRAM

Founded with the philosophy that “children learn best when they construct meaning through authentic experiences,” THS has developed an integrated curriculum based on essential questions and hands-on learning that inspires children and faculty alike. Throughout the School, THS challenges students with rigorous academic coursework, social and emotional learning, language instruction, art, music, and dance instruction, outdoor education, and community service. The School’s core values infuse the program, preparing students to be mindful global citizens and guardians of the planet. Encouraging curiosity and independent and creative thinking is a goal at all ages and in all classrooms.

Guiding children on how to think, not what to think is evident. Upon entering active classrooms, it’s readily apparent that children are guided and challenged by their teachers. At all ages visitors are greeted by students who

welcome them, introduce themselves, and provide information about the work of the moment. A visit to a few classes might find you in a Middle School Humanities class with students preparing their reports on revolutions, in the fifth grade where groups of students are preparing reports on topics of their own choosing, and in a primary language class with students who are beginning their study of sounds and letters and reading. Let the students and faculty give you a tour of the campus and insights to life at THS: <https://thehealdsburgschool.org/virtual-tour/>

In small classes with two teachers or two teachers and an assistant in TK-2, Primary students find challenge and individual guidance in a curriculum that centers on the core components of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Moving across, between, and beyond disciplines, the PYP model prepares students to become active and caring people “who possess a capacity to serve and participate in the world.”





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In grades K-5 each year there are six transdisciplinary units of inquiry which have a strong emphasis on the core skills of language arts and mathematics. Among the highlights of this vigorous academic and child centered program are the studies of STEM topics, where the emphasis is on the mastery of concepts and skills and the ability to problem solve. Beginning with Kindergarten, students have classes in both Spanish and Mandarin each week with the goal to acquire an affinity for the cultures, an ear for the languages, and preparation for the more formal study of language in the Middle School. THS is concept driven and from Kindergarten students determine topics, investigate them, take action, and present their research and findings orally and in writing. More depth and detail are found on this link: <https://thehealdsburgschool.org/ib-primary-years-program/>

In grades 6-8, a “carefully crafted curriculum” continues to build on the writing, reading, and thinking skills inherent in the Lower School. Continuing with the Lower School themes in STEM, students encounter a program that emphasizes analytical problem solving and investigative skills and applying them to real-world experiences. The faculty differentiates instruction across the curriculum to meet students where they are and to provide appropriate challenge. All students benefit from a recently adopted schedule with a wide range of electives that include introduction to guitar, plant your plate, the art of civil discourse, watercolor, and rock band. A musical produced each year by the students and faculty has become a highlight for the community. In the Middle School students continue to learn about their responsibilities for the environment and the globe through outdoor education trips, and in the 8th grade through an annual trip to Washington, DC and international travel. Learn more about the Middle School at <https://thehealdsburgschool.org/upper-school/>.

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## THE COMMUNITY

The sense of community at THS is palpable. A visitor need only attend a morning meeting where parents join students and faculty as they assemble under the redwoods, to hear announcements and words of inspiration for the day. As one parent pointed out, “THS places community not before or after academics, arts, and physical education; it places community equally among them.” This is a community built on helping one another and the commitment to ensuring that the School thrives is shared by faculty, staff, administration, parents, and trustees. Collaboration is a hallmark of THS and it is all focused on providing an outstanding experience for the students.

Dedication to THS and to doing whatever is necessary to make things work is part of the “scrappy” nature about which all members of the community are understandably proud. The faculty and staff, in addition to providing subject and grade-level expertise, are willing to do what needs to be done so that the students are well served. Notably, operations/grounds has but one staff member, a situation made possible because everyone pitches in. The administration often sets up for parent meetings and with the task of cleaning up, no job is too small for the faculty, the staff, or the board. Parents are supportive of the School’s fundraising and also extend the dollars raised by helping to construct a playground, by lending heavy equipment for a summer landscaping project, or otherwise providing needed sweat equity and expertise to the School. This helps to keep THS affordable and connected as a community.

Partnership between parents and the School is an important part of the community feel that is tangible. Parents work closely with the dedicated faculty and staff to enrich the environment for the students and the entire School community. Perhaps it is the relative newness of the School and its start-up nature or a



reflection of the greater Healdsburg community, but THS feels different, more accessible, more inclusive, and more comfortable than most independent schools. Parent planning and attendance at various annual events, including Founders’ Day, Grandfriends’ Day, the Winter Concert, Teacher Appreciation Day, Future Farmers of America Parade Float, and Bravissimo, the School’s annual fundraising gala, is noteworthy. Even with increased demand, there is a commitment to remaining small in order to preserve the feeling of connection that is a hallmark of The Healdsburg School community. Strengthening the sense of belonging for students, families, and staff through intentional work on curriculum, systems, and staff representation is an ongoing strategic priority. THS has increased its tuition assistance program as well as community partnerships as it strives to be inclusive and more representative of the local area.

A collegial group with strong ties to the greater community, the fifteen-member Board of Trustees care deeply about the school, are actively involved in strategic initiatives, and are willing to roll up their sleeves and pitch in where needed. Comprised primarily of current parents, including the school’s forward-looking founder, this is a working board of career minded people who have been supportive of the current leadership.



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## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

The Healdsburg School is the little school that could and is proud to be so. The next head joins a vibrant and close community where every child is known, and where parents are active contributors and participants committed to the values that shape THS. This student-centered school seeks a head who will demonstrate the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- Experienced independent school leadership;
- Collaboration with faculty and staff to further develop innovative and interdisciplinary pedagogies that align with the School's rich academic program;
- Optimism, warmth, and energy that reflects the THS spirit;
- Strategic thinker about the School's unique place in the market;
- Understanding and appreciation for the value of developing students of purpose;
- Enthusiastic embracing of Healdsburg and the region;
- Working in partnership with the parents;
- Effective communication;
- Presence and approachability;
- Engaged, hands-on leader who knows when to delegate;
- Leads with empathy, humility, and humor.



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## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As is so often the case, a school's challenges provide it with opportunities and such is the situation for The Healdsburg School, which has, under the current head and in the midst of Covid and crisis, accomplished the goals set forth to develop a TK program, expand the Middle School, achieve financial health, and make the School competitive among its peers. Now as THS looks to its future, it will need to be led wisely and confidently so that it can meet the challenges of preparing the community to inhabit a permanent home in a town with increased cost of living and a growing population. As the School continues to build on its strengths, priorities for the next head include:

- Continuing to strengthen the program consistent with the founding philosophy of inquiry and project-based learning;
- Recruiting, developing, and retaining a talented faculty and staff;
- Ensuring an inclusive and diverse culture;
- Maintaining the School's financial sustainability and affordability;
- Building a culture of philanthropy;
- Understanding the School's place in Healdsburg and building connections with the town and region;
- Assessing the administrative structure and roles in light of School's enrollment and strategic initiatives;
- Lead with the Board the effort to build and move to the permanent campus site.



## SALARY RANGE

Salary Range \$225,000-\$260,000. The Healdsburg School also offers a competitive benefits package, including a head of school house.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The Healdsburg School has retained Resource Group 175 to support the search for its next head of school. To apply, interested candidates should prepare a cover letter, a current resume, and a personal statement. Candidates are requested to submit these materials online at:

<https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

Application Deadline: **August 15, 2023**

Start Date: **July 1, 2024**

For an initial inquiry or to nominate a potential candidate for this exciting leadership position, please contact RG175 consultants Debbie Reed [dereed2014@gmail.com](mailto:dereed2014@gmail.com) and Tony Featherston [tfeatherston@RG175.com](mailto:tfeatherston@RG175.com).