



Assistant Head of School for Program, Community, and Innovation

The Orchard School
Indianapolis, Indiana



Introduction

Established in 1922 by nine dedicated mothers, The Orchard School was founded with the aim of providing an alternative elementary school experience grounded in John Dewey's philosophy and the Progressive school movement. Over the course of the past century, Orchard has remained true to its founders' vision by creating a joyful learning environment rooted in experiential learning, an integrated curriculum, abundant access to the outdoors, and a focus on addressing each child's unique academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. Today, this nonsectarian independent school serves more than 500 students from age three to grade eight.

Orchard has flourished under the leadership of Dr. Sherri Helvie, Head of School since July 2018. The school continues to ride the momentum from its centennial celebration last year and the success of an \$11 million capital campaign. With an exciting strategic plan in place, the school is actively seeking a dedicated, visionary, and energetic Assistant Head of School to join a thriving leadership team.

This is an outstanding opportunity for a collaborative and experienced leader with a passion for Progressive education. It will be a highly visible role throughout the community, and ideal candidates will be creative problem solvers, excellent communicators, future-oriented, and eager to be actively engaged in supporting and inspiring the work of faculty and staff across all aspects of school life.

Orchard's Mission & Philosophy

The Orchard School's mission is to develop and educate the whole child. As a progressive, non-sectarian, independent school, Orchard commits to advancing each student's academic success, self-confidence, open-mindedness, ethical character, leadership, and love of learning.

Orchard provides a Progressive education with a focus on experiential hands-on learning. Our 43-acre wooded campus provides many outdoor learning spaces letting us stay true to our commitment that nature is the best teacher.

Progressive Teaching Orchard engages students' curiosity in an active, child-centered, and experiential learning environment. It offers a comprehensive education covering core academics, arts, physical education, environmental stewardship, community service, and extracurricular activities. Differentiated instruction meets individual student needs to support a range of learning styles.

Academic Excellence Orchard fosters high achievement, surpassing grade-level standards. It encourages independent thinking, self-expression, practical knowledge application, critical thinking, problem-solving, persistence, and collaboration. The school develops lifelong learners, nurturing a passion for learning beyond the classroom.

Diversity & Education for a Global Society Orchard values a diverse faculty and student body, promoting an inclusive and supportive environment. It emphasizes equity and social justice, fostering students' capacity to know themselves and respect differences. The school integrates diverse perspectives into the curriculum, encouraging open inquiry and learning from various viewpoints.

Character Development & Behavioral Excellence Orchard cultivates personal integrity, respect, and civic responsibility. The school instills core values such as friendship, fairness, honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, respect, trustworthiness, compassion, and moral courage. Weaving these values into its culture, Orchard creates a nurturing environment that fosters strong character and ethical responsibility, preparing students to contribute positively to society.

Please visit the school's website to learn more about the facilities, people, and programs at Orchard:

<https://www.orchard.org/>.

About Orchard

For 100 years, Orchard has instilled self-confidence, open-mindedness, love of learning, leadership, and ethical character in its graduates. The school's Progressive approach and emphasis on experiential learning have set it apart locally and across the region. The school's commitment to environmental education and stewardship, hands-on learning, diversity and inclusion, and the social and emotional well-being of students has been a consistent draw for families in the area.

Academic Program Serving students from age three through grade eight, Orchard emphasizes hands-on learning and structures much of its curriculum around building a connection between students and nature. The nationally acclaimed Early Childhood program (P3-K) empowers students to build strong relationships with the children and adults around them. Balancing social-emotional and academic growth, the program provides a strong foundation as young learners progress through their academic careers.



The Elementary School (grades one to four) program continues to focus on the whole child and helps students begin their journey toward becoming cooperative and empathetic citizens. Students continue their studies of math, language arts, literature, social studies, science, Spanish, art, music, and physical education, and develop increasing levels of academic and personal independence in preparation for Middle School.

Orchard has cultivated a Middle School (grades five to eight) community whose inclusive and encouraging atmosphere allows young adolescents to flourish. With a program that is centered around the academic, social, and emotional needs of pre-teens and teenagers, the division allows students to gain confidence while cultivating the academic and life skills that allow them to thrive in high school and beyond. In addition to the challenging academic program, Middle School students enjoy a rich variety of co-curricular clubs, an intensive two-week “Winterm” session that focuses on specialized studies and student projects, and a robust, no-cut sports program that includes soccer, cross country, tennis, volleyball, basketball, flag football, baseball, softball, and track. Orchard graduates are well known for their strong ethical character, academic excellence, and commitment to making their communities better places.



Campus Since 1957, The Orchard School has occupied a breathtaking 43-acre campus in north Indianapolis. A defining strength of the school, the campus boasts a bright, 160,000-square-foot main building that houses three gyms, a library, a LEED-certified makerspace, a performing arts theater, community gathering spaces, and ample dedicated facilities for art, music, and science. Orchard also has impressive grounds that feature a running track, soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, and multiple playgrounds. Outdoor education is supported by a challenge course, shelters and a rustic cabin, open-air classrooms, gardens, a greenhouse, and an extensive network of trails that span

Orchard’s 18 wooded acres.

Capital Campaign In May 2021, Orchard concluded its first capital campaign in more than two decades. Titled *Celebrating our Roots, Cultivating for the Future*, the campaign surpassed its \$11 million goal and finished 18 months ahead of schedule. The planning process for the campaign began in 2016, and Orchard launched the public phase in 2019. The campaign inspired an historic \$2 million gift from an anonymous donor. The campaign has significantly enhanced Orchard’s facilities, programs, and profile in the community. The campaign also secured endowed support for faculty to increase compensation and expand professional development opportunities. Scholarships for students, sustainability initiatives, technology upgrades, and contributions toward the general endowment were also part of the campaign.

Governance Structure Two boards oversee Orchard. The 20-member Board of Trustees—composed of parents, alumni, and supporters—meets quarterly with the Head of School to review the budget, policies, and plans. The Assistant Head of School serves as a liaison to this Board as a member of the Diversity, Finance, and Buildings and Grounds Committees.

The 14-member Board of Governors comprises former trustees, alumni, and grandparents. The Board of Governors also meets quarterly to focus on the mission of the school, manage the endowment, and approve budgets and plans. The boards convene jointly annually. The Head of School reports to both and is a non-voting member of both boards.



About the Opportunity

Orchard is a community that creates joyful learning and meaningful connections for children and adults alike. The incoming Assistant Head of School (AHOS) will play a crucial role in daily operations and long-term planning and will be a key member of the school community. The AHOS reports directly to the Head of School and is a member of the Senior Administrative Team, which includes the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Advancement Officer, and the Head of School. The AHOS oversees the educational program to ensure continuity, consistency, and coordination across divisions, and is supported in this work by two Division Directors, the Director of Student Services, and the Head of School, who comprise the Academic Leadership Team. The AHOS works with these leadership teams to align programs and actively pursue strategic priorities. The AHOS directly supervises a team of eight, including: the Early Childhood/Elementary and Middle School Division Directors; the Director of Student Services; the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator; the Makerspace Coordinator; the Outdoor Education Coordinator; the Library Specialist; and the Extended Program Manager.

The AHOS oversees the coordination of faculty evaluation, student evaluation and discipline, and proactively leads the ongoing improvement and innovation of the school-wide academic program, including counseling and learning support services. The AHOS also supervises and coordinates the school's accreditation process, helps to coordinate the implementation of strategic plan initiatives, ensures smooth operations of the school's before- and after-school programs, designs and implements faculty and staff meetings, serves as an ambassador for The Orchard School at community events, and represents the Head of School when she is not present. The AHOS is a passionate advocate for Progressive education, and a collaborative thought partner for the Head of School as Orchard plans for its second century.

Who Should Apply

The Orchard School seeks an experienced educational leader who is passionate about Progressive teaching and learning, driven to cultivate a school-wide community of belonging, and excited to find mission-aligned ways to innovate across the academic program and daily operations.

The ideal candidate is energetic, innovative, and proactive, and someone who is eager to work side-by-side with talented faculty, division directors, and fellow administrators in pursuit of Orchard's mission and strategic plan. Successful candidates will have a strong record of classroom teaching, faculty and staff supervision, curriculum review and improvement, and data analysis, as well as the professional skills to support student growth and instructional differentiation across a range of student learning profiles. This role is designed for collaborative problem solvers, future-oriented thinkers, and excellent communicators who enjoy being present and highly visible across all aspects of school life.

Preferred Qualifications & Personal Qualities

- A track record of innovative thinking and determined follow-through.
- Expertise in Progressive education, instruction, and assessment across divisions.
- A strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and direct experience leading conversations and growth in a school environment.
- Experience as a respected colleague on a high-functioning leadership team.
- Experience overseeing student support services and ensuring that accommodation plans are maintained and implemented.
- Excellent communication skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Eagerness to collaborate on and build buy-in for mission-aligned initiatives.
- Bachelor's degree required, master's preferred.
- Socially skillful and personally authentic.
- Ability to connect easily with constituents of diverse ages, backgrounds, and perspectives.
- A resilient and enthusiastic mindset, coupled with a fierce work ethic.
- A genuine love of working with early childhood through middle school age students.
- Capacity to make difficult decisions when necessary.
- An accessible and approachable leadership style and a willingness to get to know the people and programs that define campus life at Orchard.
- A collaborative and energetic work style that fosters teamwork and common purpose.
- Motivated by joyful learning that creates meaningful connections for students, faculty, staff, and families.

Search Outline

Butler/White Strategies is partnering with the Head of School, Dr. Helvie, to lead the recruitment and selection process for this opportunity. For priority consideration, candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible at <https://tinyurl.com/Orchard-AHOS> and no later than January 5, 2024. Candidates may be considered on a rolling basis, and the school reserves the right to fill the position at any time.

Applicants will be expected to submit a cover letter, resume, statement of educational philosophy, and a preliminary list of three professional references. (No references will be contacted without the permission of the applicant.) Nominations may be submitted directly to jo@butlerwhite.com.

This document was prepared by Butler/White Strategies with information and editing support provided by TOS. It reflects our best understanding of the opportunity at this time and may be updated or changed as the search unfolds according to the wishes of the client or the needs of the consulting firm.



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