
Head of School

Sullins Academy

Bristol, Virginia

July 1, 2014

www.sullinsacademy.org



The Opportunity

Sullins Academy has engaged in a search for its next Head of School. Sullins Academy enjoys a proud history and a wonderful reputation in the Tri-Cities region. The school is the area's only non-sectarian, independent school fully accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS). The closest VAIS day school is almost 150 miles away. The Academy is both an integral part of the local community and a community unto itself. Located in an attractive, modern facility, Sullins enjoys such traditions as back-to-school picnics, art shows, science fairs, spring concerts, pancake breakfasts, and weekly school-wide assemblies. Visitors are greeted by an impressive sense of order, cleanliness, and mutual respect, the results of which are steadily increasing enrollment, debt which was retired approximately five years ago, significant technology capabilities, and financial reserves rarely seen in a school this size.

Many kindergarten-through-grade-eight schools espouse positive and nurturing environments. What sets Sullins apart is its insistence upon pairing warmth with excellence in academics and character. Small classes allow for individual attention. Everyone knows and cares about each other. People describe Sullins as a happy place where real learning thrives and true character develops. Sullins graduates accomplish great things in high school, college, and life. They become leaders wherever they go. Board members, faculty, staff, and parents share enthusiasm and palpable love for children and for what is best for them and for the school.

When asked to pinpoint the Academy's strengths, community members cite the faculty's skill and dedication. Approximately half of Sullins' teachers hold graduate degrees. Their average classroom tenure is almost fifteen years. As a group they are loyal to their craft, to their school, and to their students. Sullins teachers take great pride in their whole-child approach. They prepare kids to learn and to lead. Sometimes small schools in small towns take on a provincial mien counter to 21st-century education. Not so at Sullins. The Academy has been described as a classroom on wheels. Students travel to such places as New York City, Tybee Island, and Space Camp. Older students instruct younger students in foreign languages. They perform community service projects. Assemblies celebrate student accomplishments, both personal and for school and community. Sullins Academy is a school where great things happen every day.

To Apply



Sullins Academy has selected Southern Teachers Agency to lead the search for their next Head of School. For application instructions, please see page 10 of this position profile.

Performance Objectives

Sullins Academy's next Head of School will arrive at a time of stability and reflection. The 2016-17 school year marks the school's 50th anniversary. The new Head will therefore enjoy two years in which to learn about the school's past, assess its current strengths and opportunities, and start to shape a vision for its future. The following will be important factors for the Head's consideration:

Enrollment

Sullins has enjoyed a period of enrollment growth. Further increases are desired in order to expand the middle school and sports capabilities, improve diversity, and ensure greater short-term financial flexibility. The Head of School will help the admissions team design and promote regional branding, create a focused marketing plan, and design and implement a broader scholarship plan, with the purpose of enhancing enrollment.

Long-term Financial Strength

An objective of particular importance is maintaining and building upon the current strong financial state, in order to ensure the long-term financial strength of Sullins. To that end, the successful Head must have a working understanding of budgeting, financial statements, and financial forecasting. This will allow the Head to assist the Board of Directors in making effective short- and long-term fiscal decisions for the school.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Sullins Academy is currently operating under a strategic plan adopted in summer 2012. This plan contains both short term and long term goals. Though most short-term goals will be complete by the time the next Head of School begins, the long terms goals will provide a good roadmap for the new leader. These goals cover areas of program improvement, enrollment growth, financial management, and physical plant. Partnering with the Board and various constituencies, the new Head of School will assess progress made and chart the course for completing goals within the expected timeframe.



Communication

The next Head of School will be expected to communicate effectively with all constituencies. This will include, but not be limited to, reviewing organizational structures, clarifying positions and enhancing overall school communication.

Faculty and Staff

One of the Academy's strengths is its faculty. The next Head of School must be able to hire outstanding, mission-driven teachers, encourage and support their professional development, and design a retention plan to encourage the best teachers to stay and grow at Sullins for many years. The Board acknowledges that continuing to raise faculty salaries in a fiscally responsible manner is a priority.

Curriculum

Supported by an excellent leadership team, the Head of School remains actively involved in and ultimately responsible for the ongoing review of curriculum, improvement of instruction, and enhancement of technology resources to ensure that students develop 21st-century skills in preparation for high school, college, and beyond.

Atmosphere

Sullins prides itself on the wonderful atmosphere that is present in the school. The warmth, caring and respect that our teachers, administrators, families and students experience are very important factors in our school's success. The Head, in great part, sets and helps maintain this tone within the school and the new Head will be expected to support and nurture this atmosphere.

The Position

The Head of School is responsible for Sullins Academy's development and management, within guidelines established by the Board of Directors in the following areas:

Financial

As stated in the school's performance objectives, one of the most important aspects, from a business perspective, for the Head is to maintain and improve upon the financial stability and long term viability of Sullins. This will be accomplished through effective budgeting procedures, working closely with the school's finance committee to ensure financial goals are realistic and can be met both in the short and long terms, and to working closely with the Board of Directors to develop an attainable 3-5 year strategic financial plan.



Academic

The Head will serve as the chief academic officer of the school. In this capacity, the Head will be responsible for assessing curriculum, recruiting and hiring appropriate faculty, managing student acceptance/selection criteria and making recommendations regarding extra-curricular activities provided to students. One of the most important pieces of our mission, as a school of excellence, is to ensure that we are providing a top-notch academic program that will make our students successful and productive global citizens. Our faculty is devoted to our children and our school, and they work very hard to help our children navigate the academic world successfully and to the best of their abilities. One expectation of our Head is to provide moral, educational and developmental support to our faculty, in essence to serve as a “teacher of teachers.” Our successful candidate will be someone who can help our faculty develop professionally and to their full potential.



Advancement

The Head's role will support our advancement efforts by serving as chief development officer. There are currently a number of arms in the school's advancement strategy. They include: an annual fund, annual fundraising events, marketing (both externally and internally), admissions, and alumni. The Head will work closely with the Advancement Committee, the Sullins Parents Association President and the administrative team to ensure fundraising goals are met, that the school continues to attract top-notch students, and that the “Sullins Brand” is marketed effectively in the Tri-Cities, Tennessee/Virginia region. The Head's role will be made easier, because Sullins has been blessed with a very supportive parent base. The Sullins Parents Association has been very successful with their fundraising endeavors for many years, and we also have a small but dedicated group of very generous families that have donated both their time and money to ensure the success of our school.

Personnel

The Head will be responsible for hiring and leading the administrative team and faculty of the school and should spread the positive message of our school's mission and vision to all employees through both words and deeds. He or she will also be responsible for all employment matters, including but not limited to: personnel retention or dismissals, orientation and training, and performance evaluations throughout the school year.

Leadership and Board Relations

The Head serves as an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors and will be responsible for advising and working with the Board in carrying out school policies. He or she will provide input to the Board in decisions regarding the strategic direction of school and will implement those plans. The Head will also help prioritize and then oversee facilities needs to ensure a safe, healthy learning environment.

Qualities

The most successful candidates will have proven leadership skills and the ability to create and empower a highly effective educational team for Sullins Academy. He or she will set a clear vision, lead by example, and challenge faculty and staff members to take risks and share their ideas. Other desired qualities include:

- Honesty and integrity
- Transparency
- Approachability
- Confidence
- Flexibility
- Enthusiasm about working with children and their parents
- Empathy
- Wisdom
- An appropriate sense of humor
- Courage to make difficult decisions
- Respect for traditions and core values of the school
- A willingness to nurture the Sullins culture



Skills

Sullins seeks a highly accomplished school professional to be its next leader. The Head of School should be a skilled leader, educator and delegator. The Head should establish a culture of accountability within the school and set forth an expectations and rewards system that empowers and incentivizes our school community. The successful candidate should possess excellent skills in the following areas:

People management

- Developing interpersonal relationships
- Building consensus and collaboration
- Managing conflict
- Delegating and establishing accountability

Business/Financial Management Skills

- Administering school finances
- Fundraising / development
- Strategic plan implementation
- Decision making



Understanding of independent schools

- Working with the organizational structure of small schools
- Exhibiting an appreciation for the regional community

Facilitating curriculum development

- Empowering, developing and supporting faculty and administration
- Enhancing and managing a PS - 8th grade curriculum of excellence
- Understanding of technology uses within the educational community

Communication skills

- Developing visibility in schools and communities
- Warmth, combined with confidence

The School

History

Sullins Academy was founded as Episcopal Day School in 1966 by Lena Woods Anderson and Charles Adair Bledsoe, Rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church. Initially, the Academy served kindergarten through grade two. Another grade was added each year until the late 1970's, when the school reached its current format. The Academy's name and mission date back to an institution founded in 1869, Sullins College.

Sullins College offered both an academy for younger girls and a two-year college program for young women. The college became a local landmark in Bristol and an integral part of community life. However, economic hardship in the 1970's eventually forced the college to close its doors. A year later, Episcopal Day School left its church home and reopened as non-sectarian Sullins Academy. Mr. Bledsoe resigned as rector and led the new school.

Today, Sullins Academy continues to develop young minds and character by offering a challenging and enriching curriculum to children of the Tri-Cities area. Drawing on the heritage of both Sullins College and Episcopal Day School, the Academy family enjoys a strong sense of mission and purpose.

Academics

Academic excellence is Sullins Academy's guiding principle. The curriculum is designed to exceed state standards in both Tennessee and Virginia. Small classes permit individual attention. Teachers care about each child's success and confidence and have the flexibility to adapt their classroom

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure success for our children in the global community, the mission of Sullins Academy is to provide a positive educational environment that fosters academic excellence while maintaining a commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty, respect, responsibility and service to others. We develop minds and character while providing inspiration for a lifetime.

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1966

Grades: PS3-8

Total Enrollment: 228

ELC Enrollment (PS3-K): 63

LS Enrollment (1-5): 98

MS Enrollment (6-8): 67

Boys: 57%

Girls: 43%

Diversity: 10%

Students Receiving Aid: 17%

Total Faculty: 28

Female Faculty: 86%

Male Faculty: 14%

Average Faculty Experience: 14.6 yrs

Average Faculty Tenure: 6.5 yrs

Faculty with Postgrad Degrees: 43%

Student/Faculty Ratio PS-5: 11-1

Student/Faculty Ratio 6-8: 13-1

Average Class Size: 11

Annual Budget: \$2,136,766

Endowment: \$2,345,610

Highest Tuition: \$7,590

Total Debt: \$0

Annual Fund/Scholarship: \$125,000

Accreditations: 2012 (VAIS)

Board of Trustees: 15

teaching to the daily interactions of children and/or the unexpected. A warm, family-centered atmosphere nurtures children in body and spirit and engages them in critical thinking and intellectual inquiry.

Discovery begins in the Primary Division - preschool, junior kindergarten, and kindergarten - where open-ended activities in centers and groups orient students to classroom environments, sharing, socialization, and hands-on learning. Emphasis is placed on activities that foster growth cognitively, creatively, and emotionally, with an additional focus on developing fine and gross motor skills in a happy, safe environment. Core academics are complemented with special area classes in Spanish, music, physical education, art, technology, and library.

Lower School, grades one through three, is more sequential and structured. Classroom instruction varies from whole group and guided small groups to independent assignments and projects. By grade three, students begin developing independence, managing assignment planners, and writing compositions.

In grades four and five, the Intermediate School, students start receiving instruction from multiple teachers in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, along with special classes in music, art, computer, library, physical education, and foreign language.

Students in Middle School, grades six through eight, are encouraged to think beyond themselves and to inquire about the world around them. They show initiative in exploring their own interests, abilities, and leadership skills. Students take core academic courses and electives, such as Latin and public speaking, and participate in advisory groups. Programs reinforce self-discipline and develop maturity to ensure that Sullins Academy students enter high school confidently and academically prepared.





Arts, Athletics, and Enrichment

Each child's gifts are fostered both in and out of the classroom. School trips intersect with academic disciplines to help students understand and connect with the world around them. Off-campus activities complement the curriculum and encourage students to discover, dream, and imagine.

A full arts program includes particular emphasis in the School of Music. Experienced teachers provide weekly lessons in piano, voice, violin,

and guitar. Students showcase their talents at school recitals and performances.

Physical education begins in the Primary School, and starting in grade six students can participate on any of eleven interscholastic teams. Athletics emphasize teamwork, individual challenge, and sportsmanship.

Opportunities for experiences beyond the classroom abound. Students begin field trips at age three. Lower School students visit a one-room school in period dress. Intermediate students enjoy trips to Williamsburg and Washington, DC, and Middle School trips include Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, a marine biology and environmental science adventure off the Georgia coast, and an arts and cultural experience in New York City.

Student Profile

Students from throughout the Tri-Cities area come to Sullins Academy for strong foundations in academics and character. Recent graduates have gone on to more than fifteen boarding, day, and public high schools and have achieved many honors, both in and out of the classroom. Sullins graduates emerge as leaders, and the school takes great pride in the number of alumni who enroll their own children at Sullins Academy.

Faculty and Staff Profile

Sullins teachers know each of their pupil's strengths and weaknesses, their possibilities and challenges. The experienced, committed faculty understands children's developmental needs. Teachers are passionate about their work, willing to undertake new challenges, and adept at building authentic relationships for students' positive learning experiences. The head will have an excellent support staff to assist with his or her duties. Many staff members have been at Sullins for years and their hard work and dedication to the school has been a reason for its continuing success.





Administrative Team

The Head of School is supported by a talented administrative team. Teachers are led by two division heads, one for the Primary and Lower Schools and one for the Intermediate and Middle Schools. A highly experienced business manager keeps school finances in order. The Directors of Admissions/Marketing, Development, and Technology/Communication ensure that enrollment stays strong, alumni and donors remain engaged, and internal and external messaging is timely and consistent.

Board of Directors

The Sullins Board of Directors is currently comprised of a group of fifteen parents and community leaders who reflect the professional expertise and diverse perspective necessary to help uphold and further the mission and strategic objectives of the school. In addition, the Board

has traditionally served as leaders in giving to the school, with 100% participation in donations to the annual fund and to major events or scholarships.

Campus

Situated on a 32-acre campus, Sullins features classrooms equipped with televisions and Internet, a computer lab, a science lab, a spacious library, and rooms dedicated to art, music, and foreign language. Facilities also include a gymnasium, cafeteria, track, tennis courts, and ample space for outdoor play. All facilities are debt free.

The Community

Bristol is one of the most unique cities in the United States. Actually, two independent cities stand side-by-side and share the name Bristol - one in Virginia, the other in Tennessee. Both cities have their own council-manager form of government with their own planning commissions, zoning ordinances, and industrial development authorities. The Tri-Cities region, joining Bristol with Kingsport and Johnson City, TN, has a population of nearly 500,000. Bristol also enjoys its easy driving distance to North Carolina, West Virginia, and Kentucky.



Bristol is remarkable for its natural beauty, cultural amenities, and quality of life at the foothills of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Throughout the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and along the Blue Ridge Parkway, sightseers enjoy breath-taking landscapes, steep mountains, rock outcrops, and waterfalls. The 640,000-acre Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee's largest tract of public land, offers endless opportunities for camping, fishing, wildlife viewing, rafting, and hiking. The famed Appalachian and Virginia Creeper Trails lie just east of Bristol.

Bristol is the birthplace of country music, home to the renowned Carter Family. The city celebrates its place in the history of country music with the annual Rhythm and Roots Festival. The Bristol Motor Speedway is the eighth largest sports venue in the world, with a seating capacity of 165,000. Eight racing events are held there each year, including two at NASCAR's highest level, the Sprint Cup Series. The Bristol Ballet Company's productions are highly regarded throughout the Southeast, and Theatre Bristol presents numerous performances annually at the Paramount Theater. Local patrons and guests also enjoy the Bristol Concert Choir, Bristol Art Museum, and performing arts at area colleges. Neighboring city Abingdon's world-famous Barter Theater has delighted audiences for over a half century, and the William King Regional Arts Center, an affiliate of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, offers several galleries, studios, a museum store, classes, workshops, and lectures.

The Bristol Regional Medical Center provides excellent health care facilities. The region offers over a hundred places of worship for congregations of wide-ranging faiths and denominations. Retail and service options abound in downtown and suburban shopping centers. Despite its relatively small size, Bristol boasts one of the most advanced broadband networks in the country. Housing in Bristol costs just two-thirds the national average and the local unemployment rate is lower than the national average. Bristol, as its motto states, is a good place to live.

Application Process and Timeline

For most thorough consideration, applicants for the Head of School position should submit the following:

- A Southern Teachers Agency [application](#), available at www.SouthernTeachers.com
- A cover letter describing their interest in pursuing this position at Sullins Academy
- A current resume
- A statement of educational philosophy
- A list of references, including present and recent administrators/board members

Applications should be sent via email to

Mr. Jamie Estes
Estes@SouthernTeachers.com

Initial interviews with the consultant at Southern Teachers Agency will be ongoing. Semifinalists will interview in December, and finalists will interview in January. Selection of the Head of School will be made in February. The new Head of School will begin work in July 2014.