



Mission Dolores Academy

PRINCIPAL

LOCATION
San Francisco, CA

POST DATE
January 25

APPLICATION DEADLINE
February 26

FINAL ROUND
Week of March 27

DECISION ANNOUNCED
April 14

START DATE
July 1, 2023, or earlier
by mutual agreement

REPORTS TO
Head of School



MISSION DOLORES ACADEMY
In partnership with the Megan Furth Memorial Fund



12M
RECRUITING

Summary + Mission



In the heart of San Francisco's Mission District lies Mission Dolores Academy (MDA), an independent K-8 school rooted in Catholic tradition that serves 195 students, the vast majority of whom come from under-resourced families. MDA was founded on the principles of academic excellence, lifelong learning, and social emotional education. With a rich history behind it, MDA is now looking to the future, including bringing new programs on campus and embarking on a new strategic plan.

At a time where school-wide growth is an exciting prospect, the need for an exceptional leader has never been greater. MDA seeks a principal to unite faculty and staff under dynamic leadership goals, as well as contribute to school-wide strategic initiatives. This principal will be a cornerstone of the school's leadership team, and be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations while upholding the school's mission-driven financial and educational models. The school seeks a passionate individual who is excited by embracing and living MDA's core values and mission. This position starts July 1, 2023, or earlier by mutual agreement.

Mission

Mission Dolores Academy prides itself on its academic excellence as we work to prepare our students to become conscientious and productive members of the community.



We are...

...productive citizens who practice our school's core values:

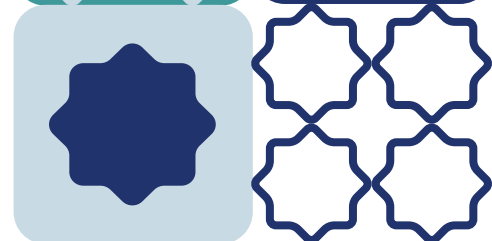
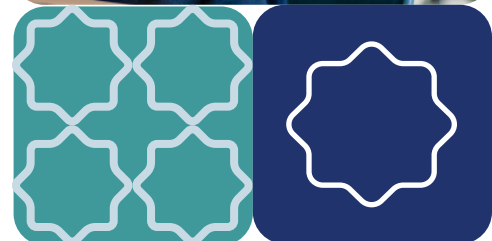
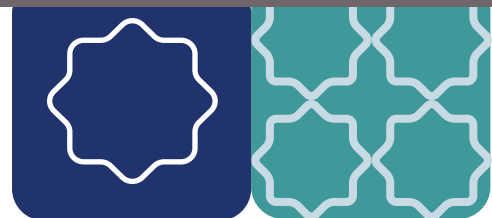
- A belief in God founded by the Catholic tradition, but respectful and inclusive of a broad variety of faiths
- A commitment to be all that we can be, every day, every way
- The knowledge that we are a part of and should contribute to a community; life is bigger than just the individual
- Respect for ourselves and others
- Integrity and honesty with ourselves and others

...active learners who:

- Strive to reach academic goals for grade-level appropriate work
- Think critically in all aspects of our lives
- Communicate our ideas effectively both in writing and verbally
- Understand the value and significance of our education

...members of a learning community who:

- Act safely, respectfully, and responsibly at all times
- Make good choices in all aspects of our lives: academically, personally, and socially
- Recognize, value, and respect cultural and ethnic differences
- Support one another on the Road to Excellence



The Founder of MDA



FATHER CHARLES GAGAN, S.J.

When walking the halls of MDA, the name “Father Charlie” often floats into conversations among students and faculty. As the school’s chaplain, spiritual guide, and founder, Father Charlie Gagan is the backbone of MDA. Ordained as a priest in 1968, Father Charlie is a charismatic, proud San Francisco native. His work has touched the lives of thousands and includes serving as the third pastor of St. Ignatius Church, the iconic “church on the hill” of San Francisco’s diverse Western Addition neighborhood. While he is well known in San Francisco’s Catholic community, Father Charlie also has a humble yet devoted passion for serving under-resourced students. At MDA, he is the driving force behind fundraising and upholding the school’s inclusive financial model. His long-standing relationships with the school’s many donors allow MDA to provide its students with financial aid, discounted meals, and extensive counseling services. At 85 years young, he can be seen walking through the beautifully tiled halls of the school, greeting students and faculty with a warm smile. Father Charlie looks forward to welcoming MDA’s next principal to the community and sharing his lifelong commitment to expanding educational access to all students.

History



2001

In February 2001, Father Gagan was serving as the pastor of Saint Ignatius Church and a volunteer at Sacred Heart School, a majority minority school in San Francisco's Fillmore district. At that time, the Archdiocese sadly announced it was forced to close the school. After receiving support from the parish, Father Gagan went to Archbishop Levada and offered to take over Sacred Heart if it could be considered an independent school. Independent schools are similar to the schools owned by religious orders, which are Catholic, but operate independently from the diocese. Archbishop Levada agreed, and Father Gagan adopted Sacred Heart School.



2004

Following the tragic loss of his daughter Megan, donor Fredrick Furth offered to construct a new school on the Sacred Heart Parish property. While the proposed construction project never got off the ground, Sacred Heart School ended up merging with St. Dominic's School in Lower Pacific Heights, and changed its name to Megan Furth Academy. The Furth Family Foundation was responsible for a five million dollar gift to the school, which began the Megan Furth Memorial Fund. The fund stands at \$8.5 million dollars today and is the cornerstone for allowing MDA to offer scholarships to any family in need.



2011

With the cost of living in San Francisco on the rise, many under-resourced families were becoming displaced within and out of San Francisco. As a result, Megan Furth Academy struggled to attract the very students it was designed to serve. Father Gagan then asked Archbishop Niederhauer if he could implement a similar model of schooling in a neighborhood closer to under-resourced communities. The Archbishop pointed him to Mission Dolores Academy, located right next to the historic Mission Dolores Basilica. In an era of new beginnings, Megan Furth Academy moved to the site where Mission Dolores School had been operating. Out of respect for this iconic venue, the school renamed itself Mission Dolores Academy.



2022

MDA hired its current head of school, Lars Lund. Lars brings decades of Bay Area school leadership experience to MDA, including 35 years as the president of Serra High School. Lars has already helped to restore many of the school's operations that were disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lars is currently leading the school on a strategic planning journey that will result in new and exciting goals for the future.



2023

MDA will welcome a new principal to join its incredible leadership team! The principal will be charged with overseeing day-to-day academic operations, working with the VP of academics to provide ongoing professional growth opportunities to faculty and staff, working with the VP of student life to develop and deliver robust co-curricular programs, and promoting a culture of academic excellence and student success.



2026

In a few years, MDA will celebrate its 25th anniversary. This unique school with humble beginnings has been through multiple physical and programmatic transformations, but all the while its mission has remained strong. MDA is committed to transforming the lives of under-resourced students in San Francisco by providing access to independent, K-8 education rooted in Catholic tradition.



Key Statistics

2001 Founding year

2011 Move to present location in the Mission District

Geography

80% of students live in San Francisco

13% live in San Mateo County

7% live in the East Bay

195 students

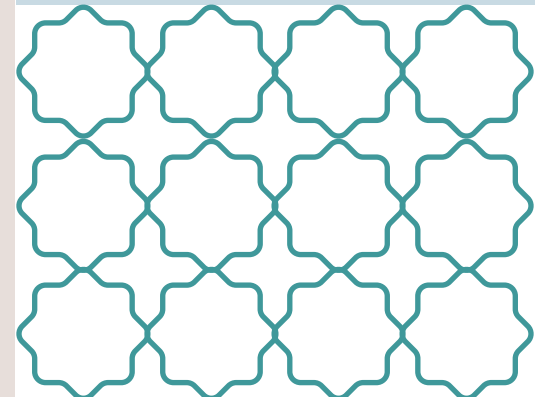
80% of MDA graduates attend independent, Catholic, and public high schools.



Financial Assistance

85% of families receive financial assistance.

65% of families qualify for the free-or-reduced-price lunch program.



Students at MDA

42% Latino

11% Asian/Filipino

26% African-American

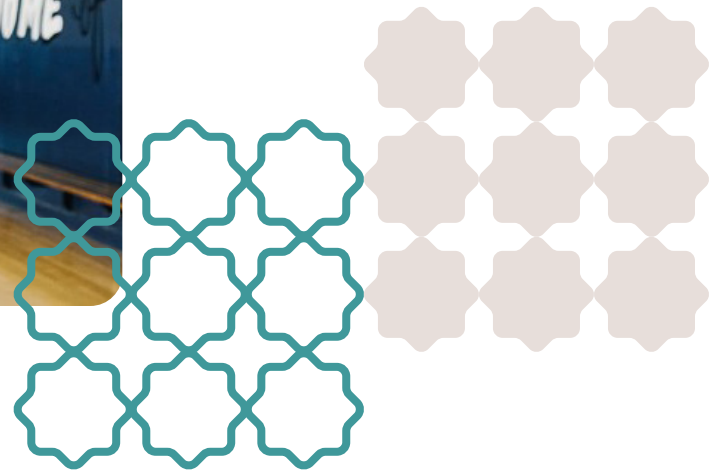
1% Other

20% Multi-Ethnic



www.mdasf.org





The Mission Dolores Academy Experience

MDA provides a transformational learning experience to its students. As a mission-driven school, MDA is home to several programs that are designed to meet the educational, social-emotional and financial needs of each student. These include a discounted lunch program, a learning lab designed to assess educational needs, a student wellness program, and strategic partnerships with UCSF and Samuel Merritt University. With these programs, MDA aims to nurture the whole child, and set each student up for success through graduation and beyond.

Tuition Assistance & Free and Reduced-Price Lunches

MDA understands the financial complexities of living in San Francisco, and strives to give each student equal access to an exceptional, faith-based education. The school works to meet each student's needs in maintaining affordable tuition levels, as well as providing financial assistance to families that qualify. MDA provides three funding sources for tuition assistance, and takes pride in providing students with free and reduced-price lunch services. 80% of the school's revenue comes from generous benefactors, with the remaining 20% coming from the tuition and fees that families are able to pay.

MDA Learning Lab

MDA welcomes students with learning differences, and works to officially identify those with a processing deficit, ADHD, or speech and language impairment from the time they begin at the school. The MDA Learning Lab, which encompasses reading, math, and speech and language pathology, identifies at-risk learners and begins research-based interventions as early as quarter one in kindergarten. Through the school's partnership with the UCSF Dyslexia Center and Samuel Merritt University, MDA seeks to accommodate learning needs at every grade level through both pull-out intervention and within the grade-level classroom.

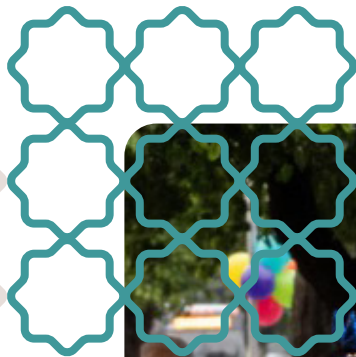


Student Wellness Program

In 2019, MDA established its student wellness program to focus on whole-child education. The program targets individual and group needs that are prevalent in MDA's student body, and includes four important areas of focus: Mental Health, Social-Emotional Learning, Speech and Language Therapy, and Nutrition. The on-campus wellness center is staffed by two wellness coordinators, as well as two intern therapists who work with Title I students. The wellness center, located in MDA's main building, provides students with a safe space for immediate drop-in services, in addition to ongoing counseling options. The services provided through the student wellness program ensure that all children receive sufficient support in regards to their emotional needs, and build the skills necessary to respond to difficulties as they arise.

Strategic Partnerships

As part of its mission to provide each of its students with equal access to a world-class education, MDA partners with UCSF and Samuel Merritt University. MDA presently partners with the UCSF Center for Dyslexia, which aids the school in testing students for dyslexia and developing meaningful surveys for the community as a whole. Approximately 18% of MDA's student population is formally identified as dyslexic, and UCSF works with MDA to ensure that each student is receiving customized support to enhance their learning experience. MDA also partners with Samuel Merritt University in providing students with occupational therapy testing and services. Samuel Merritt assists MDA students in testing motor skills, self-regulation in the classroom, and writing skills. Both of these partnerships allow for MDA to cultivate an nurturing learning environment while simultaneously making strides in creating inclusive learning practices in the community.



Videos of a Passionate Community

Over the past ten years MDA has produced four community-centered videos, which include thoughts from past heads of school and highlight the many programs of the school. Topics discussed include Father Charlie Gagan's role and the school's unique community of students, faculty and staff. Each video provides an inside look into life at MDA and what makes the school's program a life-changing experience for its students.



Nurturing Mind, Body, and Spirit

MDA's wellness program is an integral part of the school's goal to teach and nurture the whole child. This [video](#) outlines the incredible impact that the wellness program has on MDA's students, and the importance of expanding this program into the future.



Our Friend Father Charlie

In this [video](#), members of the MDA community share their warm thoughts and stories about Father Charlie Gagan. Over the years, Father Charlie has built long-standing, genuine relationships with students, faculty, staff and donors. His infectious smile and extroverted personality lights up any room he enters!



The Future Begins Here

The future begins at MDA. This [video](#) spotlights MDA's devotion to educating the leaders of the tomorrow, and assisting each child in reaching their full potential.



Pride in Our Past, Promise in Our Future

This [video](#) was created in celebration of MDA's tenth anniversary. While several years have passed since this major milestone, MDA remains as a mission-centered school that provides growth opportunities and a transformative education to under-resourced students in San Francisco.



Imagining the Future of MDA

While the school currently has exciting projects underway, MDA is also turning its sights to possible future initiatives. MDA is currently in the beginning stages of the strategic planning process, as well as constructing a new in-house kitchen. Other high-level ideas include creating transitional kindergarten and bi-literacy programs, as well as constructing a library on campus. While these ideas are still in their infancy, they highlight the vision that MDA has for future growth.

Formation of a Strategic Plan

MDA is building upon its past to craft a dynamic strategic plan for its future. Working with Partners in Mission, MDA recently kicked off its strategic planning process in early January. With a culturally diverse student body, the school is constantly looking for ways to evolve to best fit the needs of its students and their families. MDA's principal will have the opportunity to work with the board, generous benefactors, and the MDA leadership team to bring an equity-focused lens to the formation of this strategic plan in 2023 and beyond.

New Kitchen

MDA is currently constructing a new kitchen on its campus. This project was inspired by the school's wellness program, which incorporates a focus on nutrition for each student. While the school previously collaborated with a third-party vendor to provide free and reduced lunches each day, MDA found that constructing an in-house kitchen would provide a more nutrition-focused option to each child. The kitchen project is currently underway, and MDA hopes to bring kitchen staff on campus in the future.



ELIZABETH FAHERTY
Director of Learning Services
and Reading Specialist (Current)
Vice Principal for Academics
and Reading Specialist (Next year)

Elizabeth Faherty is currently the director of learning services and reading specialist at MDA. In the 2023-24 school year, she will become the vice principal for academics and work with the principal to develop new academic growth pathways. She will continue to serve as the reading specialist. In our [interview](#) with Elizabeth, she describes her ongoing dedication to MDA's students and families after ten years, and shares her hopes and goals for the future.



Transitional Kindergarten and Biliteracy Program

Many of MDA's students enter kindergarten with little to no preschool experience. Because of this, one of MDA's future goals is to start a transitional kindergarten (TK) program on its campus. This program would ensure that each student enters kindergarten with a better educational foundation and can be ready to flourish during their time at MDA and beyond. In addition to a TK program, MDA is aiming to implement a biliteracy program into its curriculum. With 42% of MDA's student body being of Latino descent, the biliteracy program would teach both native and non-native Spanish-speaking students to read, write and speak Spanish in addition to developing their English literacy.

New Library

One future goal at MDA is to build a library on its campus. With generous support from organizations including the Golden State Warriors, MDA is hoping to provide a communal space for continued student enrichment and growth. One of MDA's most anticipated annual events is a school-wide reading day, in which notable figures in the San Francisco community come to read to students and encourage a lifetime of literary exploration. In addition to hosting MDA's annual reading day, this new library will provide a space for MDA Learning Lab faculty and staff to assess the reading and writing levels of each student.

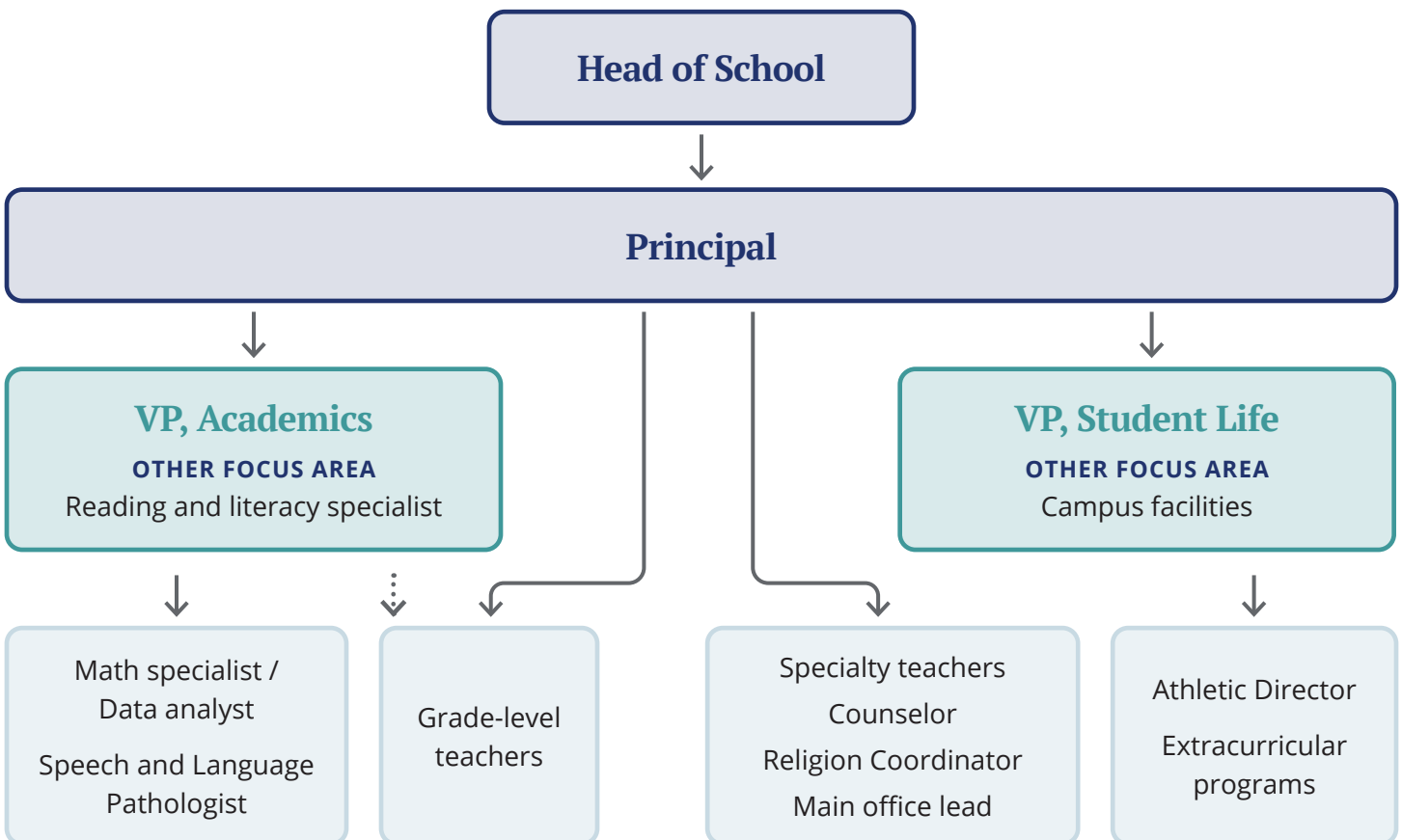


Leadership at MDA

Academic leadership at MDA is shared, collaborative and distributed. The principal oversees day-to-day operations of the school. Next year, two vice principals will report to the principal. The current director of learning services, who for the last ten years has served the school in helping to develop its K-8 curriculum, will become the vice principal for academics. The principal and vice principal for academics will work together to develop new pathways and opportunities for curricular innovation, teacher growth, and faculty evaluation. These initiatives are both crucial and a bit challenging given that MDA has only one section per grade.

School-wide, the head’s leadership team comprises dedicated and highly experienced professionals who care deeply about its mission and are inspired by its founder. The current head of school brings over thirty years of experience leading schools, and he returned to the Bay Area when Father Charlie asked him to serve MDA during a period of interim need. The head of school is now in the first year of a three-year contract with the school, and he would be thrilled to partner with a principal who aspires to one day take the helm of this one-of-a-kind school.

23-24 Academic Leadership Structure



23-24 Leadership Team

Head of School
Principal

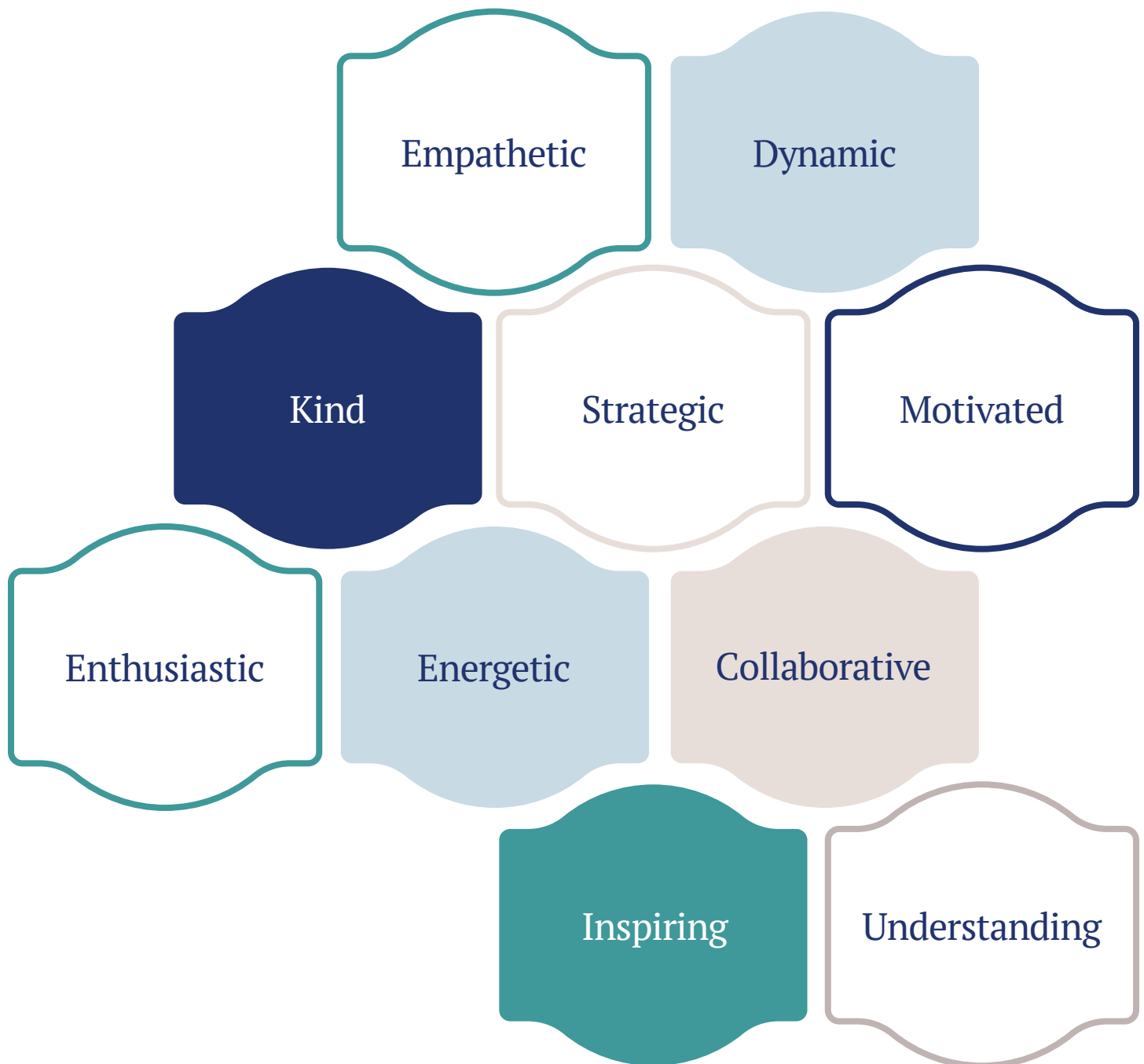
Vice Principal of Academics
Vice Principal of Student Life

Admissions Director
Advancement Director

Business Manager
Founder



Adjectives to Describe the Principal



Background and Opportunities

Mission Dolores Academy (MDA) is a K-8 school that lives out its mission each day. Inside the walls of the school lies a bustling community of 195 culturally diverse learners, supported by a devoted team of faculty and staff. Located next to the historic Mission Dolores Basilica in San Francisco, MDA is an independent school with Catholic roots. The school aims to serve students of all financial backgrounds and learning styles. It is home to inclusive programs that are designed to cultivate students' leadership skills and educational passions into their high school years and beyond.

MDA has specifically crafted its financial assistance model to meet the complex needs of its students and their families. Hailing from San Francisco and beyond, MDA's students often come from dual-income families who may not have access to a transformative, faith-based education without financial aid. The school's highly involved board of directors engages with generous benefactors to fundraise 80% of revenue, which ensures that almost all students and their families are able to receive tuition assistance. In addition, the school's endowment helps to fund new projects and strategic initiatives.

On the educational side, MDA's curriculum provides tremendous growth opportunities for each child. The school works to identify at-risk learners from the very beginning of kindergarten and provides reading, math, and speech and language assistance to help them succeed. Each classroom is home to a "class ambassador," a student who introduces visitors to their learning environment, and shares the projects their class is working on. Additionally, MDA often puts on inspirational activities and events for its students, such as special presentations on computer coding and a community-wide reading day. After graduating, 80% of students move on to Catholic, independent and public high schools throughout San Francisco.

Like many schools, the COVID-19 pandemic presented difficulties for MDA. With students facing financial instability and potentially low access to internet services at home, remote learning was not the easiest task for many families. The school took steps to ensure that students had access to technology by implementing a 1:1 device program, but challenges still remained. MDA's return to in-person learning was not easy, and involved student behavioral issues and school-wide learning loss. In addition, MDA's



previous principal and head of school accepted other employment opportunities during the 2021-22 school year. Since then, the school brought in an interim head of school, who comes to MDA with thirty years of leadership experience in the Bay Area. Last July, he signed a three-year extension to serve as the full-time head of school.

Even with a new head of school in place, MDA has felt the absence of a principal within its close-knit village. Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff have been lacking for some time, which in turn has left the school with a high employee turnover rate. Administrative team members have been forced to fill in the gaps of managing high-level projects, such as the kitchen construction and strategic planning process, in addition to handling student-centered issues that arise during the school day.

All this to say, MDA now seeks an exceptional principal. Reporting to the head of school, this individual should be well-versed in DEIB principles, and eager to facilitate a sense of belonging for MDA's students, families, faculty and staff. The school seeks a principal who will bring genuine enthusiasm to campus each day, and be ready to roll up their sleeves and lead faculty and staff in the

school's day-to-day operations. The principal will be responsible for leading all academic operations, in addition to improving professional growth practices and overseeing strategic projects, which include a transitional kindergarten program, the construction of a library, and more. In a culturally diverse school like MDA, which includes a large population of Latino and African-American students, building long-term relationships with community members is crucial to the school's continued success. MDA's principal should feel excited about making these important connections, as well as encouraging collaboration among faculty and staff.

MDA is thrilled to welcome its new principal in July 2023, or earlier by mutual agreement. The principal will join a community full of rich history, yet poised for future growth.



Major Elements of the Job

Duties

ACADEMIC OPERATIONS: Oversee the day-to-day operations of the academic program, including all aspects of teaching and learning, curriculum, and assessment

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: In partnership with the vice principal of academics, foster a culture of faculty growth and oversee the annual process of teacher goal setting and evaluation.

STUDENT LIFE: In partnership with the vice principal of student life, ensure healthy, diverse, and engaging co-curricular programs.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION: In partnership with the founder and the religion coordinator, ensure the development and expression of faith in the community through its integration in both classrooms and co-curricular programs.

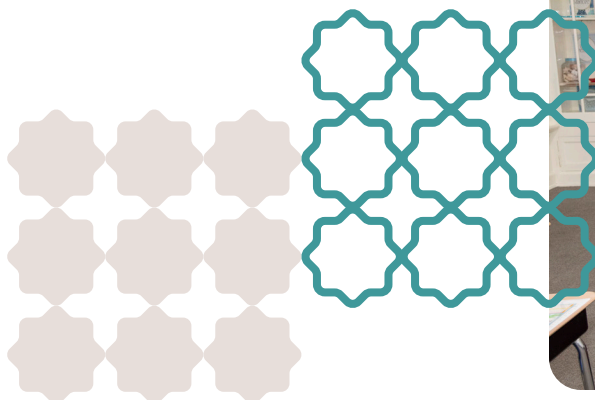
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Promote a culture of academic excellence and student support by serving as a visible presence and effective counsel to faculty and families.

MISSION ALIGNMENT: Be a guiding presence to ensure that the school lives out its mission and vision on a daily basis.

GENERAL LEADERSHIP: Serve as an active, engaged, and collaborative member of the administrative team, run the daily operations of the school as needed if the head of school is away, and perform other duties as assigned.

Qualifications

- Possession of a bachelor's degree in education or in a relevant field from an accredited college or university; graduate degree highly preferred
- Successful track record leading academic initiatives and programs
- Experience as a school administrator guiding, coaching, leading, and supervising faculty
- Prior teaching in an elementary or middle school
- Immersion in diversity work—both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- A compelling advocate and spokesperson for the value of a independent, K-8 educational program rooted in Catholic tradition
- Ability to architect and implement organizational systems, educational models, and operational protocols in support of all aspects of the academic program
- Excellent communication and presentation skills—both written and oral
- A love of elementary and middle school education, and a readiness to support all learning journeys of a diverse student body and faculty



How to Apply

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of Mission Dolores Academy to identify exceptional K-8 academic leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity.



Applications submitted by February 26 will receive priority review.

All applications must be submitted online: www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/MDA.

An application requires submitting four PDFs:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Mission Dolores Academy search committee
- CV or resume
- A list of four references (include each person's name, current organization, title, phone number, email, and past connection to you — though we will not contact any references without obtaining your permission first)
- A response to the following prompt:

Mission Dolores Academy is truly walking the walk of providing equal access to exceptional independent school education to all students, regardless of a family's economic status. In no more than one page, talk about a time when you inspired others to make a greater impact on improving educational access and equity.

\$150,000 to \$180,000, depending on qualifications and experience

