



# WOODLAND SCHOOL

*Director of Teaching, Learning, and Professional Growth*

## SUMMARY

**Location** | Portola Valley, CA

**Post Date** | March 4, 2021

**Application Deadline** | March 25, 2021 at 5:00pm PDT

**Semifinal Round** | April 1, 2021

**Final Round** | April 12 - 16, 2021

**Decision Announced** | April 30, 2021

**Start Date** | July 1, 2021

**Reports To** | Head of School





## SUMMARY

Woodland School, an independent day school situated on 10.5 acres in the beautiful and serene community of Portola Valley, is to many people a “hidden gem.” One of the few independent schools on the San Francisco Peninsula to serve early childhood through grade eight, Woodland School benefits from an open and wooded campus that provides children room to breathe, space to play, and freedom to explore the environment around them — all beneficial to their social, emotional, and cognitive growth.

With its 40th anniversary this year, Woodland is arguably no longer hidden, though it remains unequivocally a gem of a school. Last year, Woodland welcomed a new head of school, who brings passion for, and extensive experience with, elementary academics — from teaching and learning to curriculum and design. Now, Woodland seeks a thoughtful educator to step into the role of director of teaching, learning, and professional growth for kindergarten through grade eight. At a small school administrators wear many hats, and Woodland is no exception. However, first and foremost Woodland will want its director to put on the hat of teacher support, mentorship, and development. To that end, Woodland sees academic innovation aligned as much with supporting the growth of the adults on campus as it does with managing content and curriculum. The director of teaching, learning, and professional growth begins July 1, 2021 and reports to the head of school.

## MISSION AND VISION

### MISSION

Woodland School develops collaborative, creative, and confident learners with the strength of voice to follow their hearts and make a difference.

### VISION

*Innovative, compassionate stewards creating a joyful world*





# A CLOSER LOOK AT THE MISSION AND VISION

## BREAKING DOWN THE MISSION

Woodland School develops collaborative, creative, and confident learners<sup>1</sup> with the strength of voice<sup>2</sup> to follow their hearts and make a difference.<sup>3</sup>

*1: Nurturing curiosities, passions, and social-emotional needs, joyful discovery, interdisciplinary learning, engaged problem-solvers, whole-brain thinkers*

*2: Character, self-knowledge, self-advocacy, self-expression, being seen and heard*

*3: Compassionate leadership, real-world problem solving to make a difference, strength of heart and mind to live with integrity, and a moral compass*

## BREAKING DOWN THE VISION

Innovative,<sup>1</sup> compassionate<sup>2</sup> stewards<sup>3</sup> creating a joyful world<sup>4</sup>

*1: A Woodland education cultivates critical thinkers, lifelong learners and “outside the box” problem solvers who are committed to creating and advancing solutions to the problems of their times*

*2: A Woodland education aims to develop students who are empathetic towards others and possess strength of character. Their innovation is guided by this compassion and focused on the positive benefit of others. Compassion is a key characteristic developed through Woodland’s nurturing and tight-knit, supportive community.*

*3: Woodland guides its students to be responsible individuals and leaders who contribute positively to their families, communities, the environment, and the world—now and in the future.*



*4: Woodland is a joyful place, and students take this joy and passion out into the world. They are committed to engaging in their communities and making innovative contributions that change the world for the better.*



# INSIDE WOODLAND

## SIX CORE VALUES

- **Integrity:** The quality of having a strong moral compass
- **Curiosity:** The innate desire to learn new things and explore the unknown
- **Respect:** Honoring the dignity of self, others, community, environment and the earth
- **Equity:** A strategy used to produce fairness - giving everyone what they need to be successful and not necessarily treating everyone the same
- **Resilience:** The ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, to learn, rebound, and grow stronger with each experience
- **Stewardship:** The responsible protection and care of what is of value to self and others



## WHY WOODLAND

Woodland is a small school with a big heart. Families choose Woodland because they feel connected to the core values, which are reflected in Woodland's curriculum and classrooms, as well as the inclusive community. Two recent quotes below demonstrate the positive and lasting impact that Woodland has on so many families.

*"We chose Woodland School because it provided academic challenges within a small innovative and collaborative environment. We have loved Woodland because our child was immediately integrated into all aspects of the community. Our child has a physical disability, and the school has worked to make him feel equal to his classmates. Woodland is a creative, challenging, and joyful place to navigate the wonders of Middle School."* – Parents, class of 2022

*"We were first drawn to Woodland because it was a small school-- supportive and inclusive — with a challenging curriculum. What we found was something much deeper than that. These small classes were tight knit communities of students, teachers and parents. Teachers understood the specific strengths and needs of our son and provided targeted learning experiences to engage him and stretch his thinking."* – Parents, class of 2026



# ABOUT THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

## ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

Students' innate sense of wonder is the foundation of learning at Woodland School.<sup>1</sup> Teachers craft meaningful, multisensory learning experiences, which allow for creativity, ingenuity, and deep interdisciplinary connections.<sup>2</sup> Students explore and develop complex understandings that engender a sense of self and purpose in the world.<sup>3</sup>

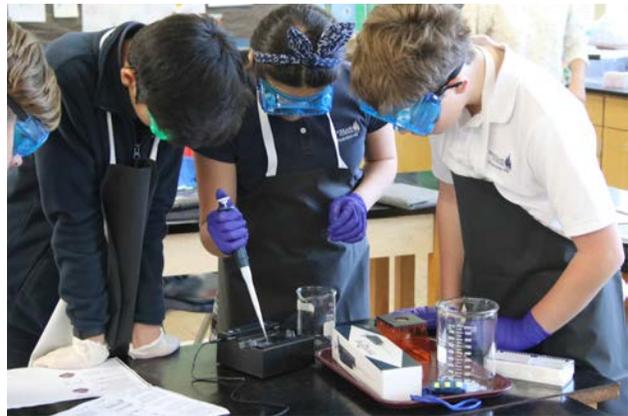
*1: Student-centered learning; explore lines of inquiry; follow and engage students' curiosities and interests; leads to students developing and pursuing passions*

*2: Hands-on, differentiated learning experiences; choice and creativity in how to demonstrate learning; understanding is deep and connected; kids can answer "why" in addition to "how"*

*3: Exploration fuels understanding, which is nuanced and profound through these learning experiences, students develop a stronger "sense of self" and the ability to impact the world beyond them*

## WOODLAND LEARNERS ARE...

- **Insatiably curious** and **unrelenting**
- **Resilient** from testing knowledge and recognizing the value of making mistakes
- **Joyously creative**
- Guided by a **strong moral compass**
- **Appreciative of the interconnectedness** of all living things, cultures, communities, disciplines, and phenomena
- **Whole-brain thinkers** who balance logic and imagination and cultivate grace, fitness, poise, and agility of body and mind
- **Courageous** and embrace ambiguity, uncertainty, and the unknown as a means to discovery
- **Collaborative** and recognize the power of working as a team
- **Engaged** with nature and the outdoors authentically in our setting and through our programs





# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

## MISSION

**OneWoodland** supports Woodland's community to ensure that all are welcome and belong.

## VISION

**OneWoodland** creates spaces for open conversations, advances educational opportunities, raises awareness, and provides strategies and tools to support an inclusive community that fosters a sense of belonging.

## PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Board of Trustees established a task force to:

- Ensure that Woodland is an equitable learning and working environment for all,
- Create resources for families to engage in critical conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion,
- Provide teachers with the tools necessary to deliver a robust curriculum that is inclusive of all perspectives, and
- Ensure that all students have access to instruction that consistently reflects our mission and values aligned with this work.

All employees are engaged with dedicated DEI work this year, beginning with a focus on self-identity and personal engagement with issues related to DEI. Employees have used Thinking Routines from Harvard's Project Zero to guide reflections.

All employees are participating in Book Clubs, sharing thoughts and reflections about one of the following books: *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor*; *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*; *How to Be an Antiracist*; *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*; *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You*; *So You Want to Talk About Race*; and, *Between the World and Me*.

Faculty, administrators, students and alumni will be attending a Pollyanna Conference on March 6 to further Woodland's work establishing a diversity statement for the school. Woodland will be engaging this spring in the AIM Assessment, developed by NAIS, to gather feedback from all stakeholders (students, employees, parents, trustees, and alumni). All this and more will be critical for shaping the next iteration of the school's strategic plan.



# WOODLAND TRADITIONS AND HALLMARKS

## HOUSE SYSTEM

A long-time school tradition, Woodland uses a house system to foster camaraderie and teach students throughout all grade levels to work together toward common goals. Each student is assigned to one of four Houses — Oak, Pine, Maple, or Cypress — when they join the school. Students within each House enjoy numerous activities together, including buddy lunches, house meetings and intramural House Cup Games. Each student is connected with others in their House through the cross-grade Buddy Program. For many students, the friendships formed across the grades through the Buddy Program are a favorite aspect of their Woodland experience. The House Program is a wonderful tradition that promotes student engagement, teamwork, collaboration, and a healthy level of competition.



## SANTA LUCIA

Santa Lucia is a beloved tradition at Woodland. In Sweden, the Christmas season begins on December 13, when the eldest child delivers a morning feast of coffee and gingerbread. At Woodland, eighth grade students wear a wreath of glowing candles, representing the coming of brighter days, or a star hat, representing the night sky. This celebration honors the light in the darkness on one of the shortest days of the year. Guided by the eighth grade, the community takes time to reflect on its love for the school and its agency for stewardship and compassion toward a better world.



## CAPSTONE AT WOODLAND

Culminating their years at Woodland, the Capstone journey empowers students to put passion and agency to work, drawing inspiration from their learning throughout all disciplines, lessons, projects, and discussions. Student action pieces integrate multiple subject areas and ideas, representing each student's unique voice and choice. Over the years, students have recorded documentaries, led service-learning projects, created websites and apps, drafted bills to politicians, written curriculum, led seminars, and organized community events, to name a few of the countless, lasting contributions made through the Eighth Grade Capstone at Woodland.





# BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

## A SMALL SCHOOL WITH A BIG HEART

Established in 1981 by experienced Carden teacher Lynne Nelson, Woodland School began educating students at Sequoia Church on Topaz Street in Redwood City. Two years of a growing student population led to Woodland's move to today's current Ladera location in the wooded community of Portola Valley, which offers over ten spacious and serene acres of indoor/outdoor learning. Through Mrs. Nelson's incredible vision, Woodland has fostered a legacy of developing and educating children who are not only exceptional students, but more importantly good human beings. After 24 years leading Woodland, Mrs. Nelson retired as director of Woodland in 2005.

John Ora, the school's second head of school, is responsible for the growth of the Middle School from 2007 to 2016. During his tenure enrollment increased, and a capital



campaign supported the expansion of the Woodland campus, including construction of the gymnasium. In 2007, Woodland athletics teams left the Small School Intermediate League and began competing in ten sports in the West Bay Athletic League.

As the school has grown, Woodland has held onto a culture rooted in kindness, compassion, and diversity. By virtue of both its proximity to Stanford University in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as its values as a welcoming school for all families, Woodland School represents a rich blend of backgrounds, traditions, and cultures. Over half of Woodland families have at least one member of the family born outside the United States. Many teachers also come from international backgrounds. Altogether, nearly 50 different nationalities are represented at Woodland. These cultural differences have enriched Woodland in countless ways, but it's what those families have in common that is perhaps more vital. Woodland faculty, administrators, and families place a high priority on education, embrace the strength of a diverse community, and believe in instilling a core set of values in young children.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teachers have and always will be at the heart of Woodland School. Their compassion for, and dedication to, all students are hallmarks that have continued throughout the nearly 40-year history of the school. When alumni reflect on their time at Woodland, their first comments often highlight a memorable teacher who built confidence or showed empathy. Professional development of teachers has also been a key component of Woodland. This began with teachers in the early 1980s attending sessions at Charles Armstrong to learn about the Slingerland method of teaching, and it continues today with teachers deepening their understanding around nuanced issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

For the last three years, the school has been guided by a strategic plan that was launched in 2018 by Marja Brandon, the school's third head of school. At the time that the plan was developed, some people thought that Woodland should be transformed from its informal status as a "hidden gem" to an acclaimed institution of innovation on par with the innovative nature of Silicon Valley. While this journey was a great opportunity for the school to experiment quickly with new ideas and curricula, change management at an institution like Woodland requires a more measured approach and commitment to the interpersonal relationships at the heart and soul of the school. Going forward, Woodland sees successful academic innovation emanating from greater investment in supporting faculty programs: induction, annual professional growth, observation and feedback, collaboration initiatives, and interdisciplinary partnerships.





In 2020, Dr. Jennifer Warren assumed the head of school post and has guided Woodland through the challenges of a pandemic-altered school year. Thanks to the school's flexible and spacious campus, in-person learning has been a staple this year. Although Woodland, like every school in the country, will continue to pay extra attention to operational logistics until the pandemic is over, the community is excited to hire a faculty-minded educator to guide its next pedagogical journey.



In the past, the school has tried various models of academic governance. Each model aligned with the needs of the school at the time, and each one was a little bit different from the previous version. Many years ago as the school was coming into its own, Woodland had an assistant head of school to run operations and manage academic affairs. Later, the school had divisional deans to support academic needs by grade. And recently, the school had a curriculum director to lead integration and innovation from more of an instructional content point of view.

At this point in time, Woodland believes that sustaining pedagogical innovation and deepening learning outcomes will all run through faculty professional growth. Thus, Woodland has reframed its academic leadership post to the title of director of teaching, learning, and professional growth. This is not to say that the director won't be involved in some operational matters, or have to think carefully about grade-level needs, or assess curricular needs in important areas like SEL, reading and writing, or interdisciplinary STEM. All those things can and should happen. However, Woodland is excited for someone to think first and foremost about teaching and learning and what teachers need — both individually and collectively — to continue on their journey of growth. For now, that means focusing on core functions: recruiting and hiring, onboarding and early training, as well as observing and mentoring. In parallel that will mean planting seeds for potential external partnerships, institutes, and larger-scale innovation initiatives. In sum, Woodland sees so much opportunity for this role, which begins on July 1, 2021.

## WOODLAND SEEKS A LEADER WHO IS...

**A mentor**

**A community builder**

**A problem solver**

**A partner**

**Collaborative**

**Pragmatic yet personable**

**Supportive**

**Always listening**

**Insightful**

**Visionary**

**Empathetic**

**Positive**

*Aspirational with one eye on the future, while grounded with another eye on the present*



## KEY STATISTICS

**Founded:** 1981

**Location:** Over 10 acres of an indoor/outdoor campus in the community of Portola Valley

**Students:** Nearly 300 students from preschool through grade 8; average class size of 15; over 18 after school programs and 10 athletic programs; over 50% of families self-identify as families of color or multi-race; 9:1 student-to-teacher ratio

**Faculty:** Approximately 33 teachers, nearly 60% of whom hold advanced degrees

**Admission and Retention:** Retention rate of 89%; admission yield of 66%

**Matriculation:** Woodland graduates are accepted into their first or second choice high schools, with roughly 60% attending private school and 40% attending public school

**Accreditation:** California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

**Relevant Associations and Memberships:** National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS); National Business Officers Association (NBOA); California Independent Schools Business Officer Association (Cal-ISBOA); California Teacher Development Collaborative (CATDC); National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM); National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); National Science Teachers Association (NSTA); Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages; California Language Teachers Association; International Literacy Association; California Science Teachers Association (CSTA); Cornell Lab of Ornithology; West Bay Athletic League; Independent School Management (ISM); Common Ground Speaker Series

**Tuition:** Early Childhood (\$28,000); Lower School (\$32,200), Middle School (\$34,000)

**Financials:** Operating budget ~\$9M; financial aid allotment ~\$1.2M

**Website:** [www.woodland-school.org](http://www.woodland-school.org)

## QUOTE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

*"A hallmark of Woodland is the way we prioritize relationships with students in order to individualize our curricular approach and see children thrive. The central focus of this role emphasizes the same for our teachers. We aspire to create a learning community that leverages the expertise of our exceptional educators to design engaging learning experiences for our students throughout their time at Woodland."*

**Jennifer Warren Ed.D., Head of School**



# DIRECTOR OF TEACHING, LEARNING, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

## SPECIFIC DUTIES

### *Teaching and Learning*

- Work with the head of school and the faculty to articulate, implement, evaluate, and continually improve the K-8 instructional and curricular program at Woodland.
- Lead the hiring process for faculty and ensure a high-quality induction program for new faculty.
- Inspire and support teachers to explore, implement, and assess innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration among teaching teams in a way that values individual talents and clarifies school-wide approaches to curriculum planning, documentation, assessment and technology integration.

### *Professional Growth*

- Foster a culture of faculty growth and oversee the annual process of teacher goal setting and evaluation.
- Stay on top of current trends, research, and emerging ideas in the education landscape in order to support academic invention and transformative change.
- Guide and lead the faculty in its exploration, implementation, and assessment of modern learning approaches that improve learning outcomes.
- Facilitate a professional development program that aligns with the pedagogical goals of the school and is customized to the differentiated needs of teachers.

### *Leadership and Administration*

- Serve as an active and engaged member of the senior administrative team.
- Provide guidance to families on matters of curriculum and pedagogy, and develop productive partnerships with and educational opportunities for families.
- Establish and maintain external curricular and programmatic partnerships.
- Be present in classrooms, during special events, and at admission functions.
- Perform other duties as assigned.



## WOODLAND IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...

### ***Professional Qualifications and Experience:***

- Experience leading trainings and major initiatives related to curriculum, pedagogy, and student experience — preferably at an early childhood to grade eight school
- Immersion in diversity work — both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- Experience guiding parents and guardians on sensitive student-related matters
- Multiple years of experience as an elementary or middle school teacher
- Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, which is a minimum requirement, though preferably possession of a graduate degree

### ***Leadership and Personal Qualities:***

- Inspirational, pragmatic, diplomatic, and patient leadership that honors the core values of Woodland, while also encouraging risk-taking
- Authentic empathy, warmth, and collegiality, and an ability to spread these qualities across an entire staff
- A passion for inspiring programmatic change, with an understanding that to do so requires establishing lasting peer-to-peer relationships
- An ability to create organizational systems and apply project management skills in support of gradual institution-wide change within an academic program rooted in interpersonal connections and a familial culture
- Savvy communication and dynamic presentation skills — both written and oral
- A collaborative, cooperative, and growth-oriented mindset
- Enthusiasm for students and teachers to pursue their passions, talents, and interests, both in and out of the traditional classroom
- A vision that is aligned with the needs of a dynamic and diverse faculty
- A love of learning and love of school, and a willingness to support unique and unpredictable learning journeys of both students and staff





## HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of Woodland to identify exceptional educational leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

Gabriel Lucas  
Principal, 12M Recruiting  
[jobs@12MRecruiting.com](mailto:jobs@12MRecruiting.com)

### APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED THROUGH MARCH 25, 2021.

All applications must be submitted online, via:

[www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/Woodland](http://www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/Woodland)

An application requires submitting four PDFs:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Woodland search committee
- CV or résumé
- 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)
- Response to the following prompt:



*What are the essential elements of an ongoing faculty professional growth program at a school like Woodland, and how would you ensure that teachers have the support needed to implement newly learned ideas and methods in order to deliver high quality learning experiences for students?*

*Woodland School is committed to developing diversity within our community and complies with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, or handicapped status in the selection of the Board, in the employment of personnel, in the admission of students, or in the administration of the school's programming.*