



## HEAD OF SCHOOL Winchester Thurston School

Pittsburgh, PA

*Guided by its founding credo, "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others," Winchester Thurston School (WT) has been a beacon of progressive education in Pittsburgh since it opened its doors in 1887. In recent years, WT has achieved national recognition as one of only five schools in the country to receive both an E.E. Ford Foundation Leadership Grant and an invitation to participate in the Malone Scholars Program. In particular, the school's innovative City as Our Campus program has emerged as a model of rigorous, experiential learning that develops independent leaders and learners with a strong civic mindset.*

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Committed to cultivating confident, curious, students who are articulate and self-directed, WT serves 685 students, grades PreK-12, on two campuses – one near the heart of Pittsburgh and the other (home to 82 Lower School students) on seven acres of rolling farmland just north of the city.

With its City as Our Campus program, WT offers a unique academic experience that connects students of all ages with people, resources, and institutions across Pittsburgh to execute student-led projects and research. Other distinguishing features of the institution include its commitment to diversity and inclusion, Post-AP courses, a robust outdoor education program, and a focus on ethics and character development.

Under the leadership of Gary Niels, Head of WT since 2002, the school has improved its facilities, strengthened its financial position, and crafted an outstanding curriculum. WT today is justifiably proud of its improved standing among independent schools in the city and across the state.

The school's recent run of success has led to a new generation of challenges and opportunities, particularly in the areas of enrollment management, facilities, fundraising, and curricular innovation. This is a unique opportunity for an energetic, strategic, forward-thinking leader to partner with an outstanding Board and a strong administrative team to help a dynamic, mission-driven institution seek new heights while remaining true to its roots.



**APPLICATION DEADLINE: September 28, 2017**



# WINCHESTER THURSTON SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

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## MISSION

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*Winchester Thurston School actively engages each student in a challenging and inspiring learning process that develops the mind, motivates the passion to achieve, and cultivates the character to serve.*

## CORE VALUES

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- *Critical Thinking*
- *Integrity*
- *Empathy*
- *Community*
- *Diversity*

## EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

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*As a means to fulfill our credo, "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others," Winchester Thurston will be an inclusive community and will pursue the social and pedagogical benefits that diversity brings. We will place the highest value on enabling students to understand their own cultural identity and those of others. It is our moral imperative to be courageous and intentional in promoting understanding, addressing bias, identifying and honoring qualities of justice, respecting multiple perspectives and contributions, and valuing the dignity of all.*

## ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID

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TOTAL ENROLLMENT	685
LOWER SCHOOL (CITY CAMPUS)	212
LOWER SCHOOL (NORTH HILLS)	82
MIDDLE SCHOOL	135
UPPER SCHOOL	242
STUDENTS OF COLOR	34%
TUITION RANGE (2017-18)	\$16,900-\$29,500
FINANCIAL AID (2016-17)	\$2.8 million to 32% of families

## FACULTY AND STAFF

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TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	141
FULL-TIME FACULTY	81
FACULTY WITH ADVANCED DEGREES	63%
AVG. FACULTY TENURE AT WT	9 years
STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	7:1

## FINANCES & FUNDRAISING

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ENDOWMENT	\$18 million
INDEBTEDNESS	\$6.7 million
TOTAL FUNDS RAISED (2015-16)	\$1.1 million

PARENT PARTICIPATION	73%
ANNUAL FUNDS RAISED	\$1 million

## PHYSICAL PLANT

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**LOCATION:** The City Campus is located in the Shadyside neighborhood of downtown Pittsburgh, half a mile from Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh. The North Hills Campus is in the suburb of Allison Park and features a pond and wooded surroundings.

**FACILITIES:** Winchester Thurston's eight acres, divided between two campuses, feature a gymnasium, auditorium, dance studio, multi-sport athletic field, and a wide array of outdoor education spaces.

## AFFILIATIONS

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**ACCREDITATION:** Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools

**MEMBER:** National Association of Independent Schools

**ON THE WEB:** [www.winchesterthurston.org](http://www.winchesterthurston.org)



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## THE STUDENT BODY

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Hailing from 74 zip codes, WT students are engaged, empathetic, and well prepared for life after their time at the school. The school strives to immerse students in a nurturing environment that encourages thoughtful, considerate inquiry and engagement with the wider world.

The school's admissions slogan, "Where Smart Meets Heart," epitomizes the ideal WT graduate. Apart from their pursuit of academic excellence, students are distinguished by their independence, compassion, and genuine commitment the school's credo and mission. They form a welcoming, diverse community that acknowledges the needs and strengths of each member while striving for a healthy, inclusive community. Students describe the school as a place where "it's cool to be smart." Thoughtful and empathetic, WT students generally embrace a love of learning and cooperation that undermines the competitive mindset that can often take hold in a rigorous academic environment.

Winchester Thurston School's commitment to racial and socioeconomic diversity is particularly noteworthy. In 2016-17, the school distributed more than \$2.8 million in financial aid to nearly one-third of the student body. The school is one of 49 independent schools endowed by the Malone Family Foundation to provide scholarship support for high-achieving middle- and high-school students. More than a third of WT students identify as people of color, and the school is actively working to expand the breadth and depth of the experiences and perspectives its students bring to the table.

On average, WT second-graders read at a fifth-grade level, and the median WT student in grades 4-8 scores 35 points above the national average in reading and 42 points above average in mathematics. In the Upper School, all WT students who enroll in an AP course are required to sit for the corresponding exam. In 2016, 150 students took 333 AP exams, and nearly half of those students were recognized as AP Scholars. WT students also perform well on the SAT and PSAT, with 20% of the Class of 2016 recognized by the National Merit organization.

Winchester Thurston alumni are well prepared for college and enroll at a wide range of schools across the country. Ninety-eight percent of the Class of 2016 was admitted to at least one college designated "Very Competitive" or better by *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, and 58% of the Class enrolled colleges and universities designated "Most Competitive." Between 2012 and 2016 two or more students matriculated to the following universities:

American University  
Baldwin-Wallace College  
Boston University  
Bowling Green State University  
Brandeis University  
Brown University  
Bucknell University  
Carleton College  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cornell University  
Davidson College  
Dickinson College  
Duke University  
Duquesne University  
Georgetown University  
Harvard University  
Illinois Institute of Technology  
Indiana University at Bloomington

Ithaca College  
James Madison University  
Kenyon College  
Lehigh University  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Northeastern University  
Northwestern University  
Oberlin College and Conservatory  
Pennsylvania State University  
Point Park University  
Purdue University  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Stanford University  
Swarthmore College  
Syracuse University  
The College of Wooster  
The George Washington University  
The New School–Eugene Lang College  
Tulane University

University of Arizona  
University of Chicago  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Delaware  
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign  
University of Maryland, College Park  
University of Michigan  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Pittsburgh Honors College  
University of Virginia  
Vanderbilt University  
Vassar College  
Washington and Jefferson College  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Wofford College  
Yale University

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## FACULTY AND STAFF

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Winchester Thurston’s 81 full-time faculty members are accomplished in their field and committed to continued excellence and innovation in the school’s programming. They are engaged professionals who are supported in their efforts to share their expertise and learn from others. Many attend conferences, publish articles, and take classes to advance their work in the classroom and the community. Winchester Thurston aims to grow its reputation as “the smart place to learn and the smart place to teach,” and the school’s innovative professional development program is an essential tool in that effort. The school’s approach was featured in *Independent School Magazine* and has led to the successful recruitment and retention of dynamic, forward-thinking educators.

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## ADMINISTRATION

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Experienced and widely respected, the administrative team at WT is a high-functioning unit and a clear strength of the institution. Seventeen administrators report directly to the Head of School, including the Associate Head for Strategic and External Affairs, the Assistant Head for Operations, the Director of Finance, the four Division Directors, the Director of E-Learning, the Director of City as Our Campus, the Director of Equity and Inclusion, and the Director of Athletics. The Head of School and Board of Trustees benefit from the support of an assistant. These administrators, along with several faculty members, form the Head’s Cabinet, which meets periodically throughout the academic year.



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## GOVERNANCE

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WT’s Board of Trustees comprises 22 voting members and five emeritus members. The Board is well balanced and populated with a talented mix of parents, past parents, and alumni. Loyal, professional, and committed, the trustees form a strong team that knows its role in the school community. The Board is well disciplined, focusing on long-range strategic issues and how to best guide and support the Head of School. All trustees understand their responsibilities as fundraisers and stewards of the school’s financial resources.

## SCHOOL SETTING AND CAMPUS



Known for the better part of the last century as a transportation hub and a leader in heavy industry, the Pittsburgh of today is a model of Rust Belt reinvention. Home to self-driving cars and more bridges than Venice, the city has become a national center for innovation in technology, medicine, and education. Pittsburgh has evolved swiftly from fading industrial town to booming STEM hub. Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU) top-flight computer science and engineering programs have attracted a new generation of entrepreneurs to the region. Google opened a 200-employee office near the campus in 2011, and Uber recently

moved its Advanced Technologies Center in Pittsburgh to develop a driverless car program. There are also exciting startups like Duolingo, a language-learning app used by 110 million people worldwide, and Anki, a toy company that is building on the latest research in robotics and artificial intelligence.

Pittsburgh is also home to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, a \$13 billion enterprise and the state's largest private employer. It anchors an impressive life sciences industry that includes pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology research firms, and medical equipment manufacturers. With its rich social and economic history, dramatic natural setting, robust STEM economy, and flourishing universities it is an ideal location for a school committed to engaging with its surroundings. *Money* and *The Economist* have recently placed Pittsburgh among the most livable cities in the United States, and *Forbes* magazine ranks Pittsburgh just below Boston/Cambridge as the most educated metropolitan region in America.

Winchester Thurston's City Campus is located in Pittsburgh's Shadyside neighborhood, approximately five miles east of the city center. Shadyside is an established, highly walkable area known for its mature trees, historic homes, hip boutiques, and lively restaurant scene. With the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and CMU just a short walk away, Shadyside epitomizes qualities of Pittsburgh that have attracted families and young professionals to the city in recent years.

WT's City Campus makes the most of the school's available land with two stately, red brick buildings that cover one-and-a-half city blocks. The Lower- and Middle Schools are housed in a large building with multiple wings, while the Upper School is across the street in a more compact, two-story building. Students enjoy a contiguous grass playing field suitable for lacrosse, field hockey, and soccer. Facilities at the City Campus also include a dance studio, auditorium, cafeteria, and multiple maker and art spaces.

The North Hills Campus is located 10 miles north of the City Campus on a picturesque, seven-acre plot in the suburb of Allison Park. The North Hills Campus features two classroom buildings, gardens, a spring-fed pond, natural playground, greenhouse, a log cabin, and a student-designed nature trail. The North Hills Campus has been recognized by the North



American Association for Environmental Education for its efforts to connect young children with nature. Whether students are studying watersheds, pollinators, pollution, or genes, the school makes the most of its setting to encourage outdoor learning and enhance the curriculum for both North Hills and City students.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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Winchester Thurston’s academic program prepares young people to thrive – intellectually and ethically – in a rapidly changing world. Through academics, athletics, and the arts, the school strives to challenge and inspire students every day, graduating lifelong learners and leaders. The school blends rigorous, traditional approaches (e.g., AP courses) with sophisticated experiential programs (e.g., City as Our Campus).

### CITY AS OUR CAMPUS

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WT’s City as Our Campus program has become the school’s calling card over the past decade and a half. Initially envisioned as a strategy to make the most of the school’s location and physical constraints, City as Our Campus provides opportunities for experiential learning across divisions and departments. The program connects students with diverse leaders from the academic, cultural, scientific, non-profit, and business community in Pittsburgh. Students learn to work on solutions to real-world problems using a wide range of resources, materials, and methods.

More than a set of discrete projects, City as Our Campus works a guiding philosophy and plays a number of roles in the classroom. The program is flexible and can be integrated with classroom learning on several levels. Opportunities across all divisions can take many forms – guest presenters, field trips, residencies, full-scale courses, community-based projects, and extended experiences.

Students in the Lower School study architecture in partnership with the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation and the Carnegie Museum of Art. They also explore the history of immigration and diversity in their city



as they learn about storytelling and audio engineering with the help of SLB Radio Productions. Middle-schoolers are paired with local policymakers and advocates who mentor them as they research social issues, and they work with communities across the city to plant pollinator gardens. Students in the upper school take control of their learning and may tackle ambitious, two-year projects such as building drones to test air quality or drafting proposed legislation for the Pittsburgh City Council. With more than ninety partners in the Pittsburgh area, teachers have access to resources that excite students’ imaginations and enrich/extend the classroom curricula.

Although the program has only recently reached full maturity, City as Our Campus has already become a crucial tool in enacting WT’s mission and helping it build the thoughtful and engaged leaders of tomorrow. It represents the kind of innovation that is central to WT’s identity and the caliber of work its students and teachers are capable of producing.

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### ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF THE ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

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- At the elementary level, all students benefit from cross-campus collaborations, but families can choose whether the primary experience for their child’s early years is more urban or suburban/rural.

- The Lower School programs on both campuses embrace whole-child education and offer a safe, joyful environment for students and teachers. The Responsive Classroom approach helps students develop social skills and independence while developing a strong academic foundation.
- WT students are exposed to a variety of artistic media beginning in the Pre-K program. In the Lower School, at least 15% of instructional time is spent on performing and visual arts. Fifth-graders on the North Hills campus participate in a two-year Legacy Project, in which the class creates a permanent installation to enhance the campus. In the Upper school, Students have the opportunity to explore media such as metalworking, decorative glass, East Asian pottery, and architecture. The talents of WT students are regularly recognized in city and regional art competitions.
- Each day, rain or shine, students at the North Hills Campus spend at least 90 minutes outside in one or more of the campus's 10 different outdoor learning environments.



- For students in PreK through Middle School Winchester Thurston offers a variety of after school enrichment opportunities including the Winchester Thurston Opera Academy; the Center for Young Musicians; supervised study for Middle School students; and a variety of electives led by parents and other community members.
- Through City as Our Campus and internal programming, students have a variety of performing arts opportunities. Lower School students take Kodaly and Orff-based music classes and dance classes that focus on self-expression and incorporate classroom content and themes. Students with prior music instruction can



take part in the orchestra, and 4th and 5th graders have the option of joining the choir, as well. In Middle School, students take dance, music, and drama twice weekly for one trimester each year. The curriculum is designed to assist students in developing the vocabulary, skills, and attitudes necessary for a high level of accomplishment and a deep level of understanding and appreciation of music, dance, and theater arts. Additionally, students can take part in the orchestra, chorus, dance ensemble, and musical. In Upper School, students choose from a variety of on and off-campus performing arts electives. Courses

emphasize the historical and theoretical foundations of the three related disciplines, and provide a number of performance opportunities for students. In addition to the ensembles available in Middle School, Upper School students can join guitar ensemble or jazz band.

- Beginning in Lower School, WT's curriculum provides its students opportunities for accelerated learning through both in-class and pull-out programs in Math and Language Arts. Identified through ERB testing, students who perform significantly beyond their classmates are given supplemental work and instruction to ensure that they are challenged and engaged. These pull-out and in-class programs allow students to remain in school with their peers, while continuing to provide them with appropriate challenges.
- WT's interscholastic sports program provides opportunities for Middle and Upper School students to grow emotionally, intellectually, and physically as they represent the school on courts, tracks, and fields of the greater Pittsburgh area and beyond. The program encourages student participation and development in a supportive environment. Dedicated and well qualified coaches challenge athletes to compete in a variety of sports at a high level, and work to build, strengthen, and support each player to successfully meet the

demands of interscholastic athletics. Teams have won Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic League championships and Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association state championships.

- Annual events and traditions contribute to WT's strong sense of community. Lower School students participate in the Applefest, Pumpkin Fair, and May Day festivals, along with various ceremonies marking student achievement. Middle-schoolers take annual trips to historical sites like Colonial Williamsburg and Washington D.C. A ninth grade retreat builds the foundation for a strong and cohesive freshman class. Together with their advisors, administrators, and senior class leaders, ninth graders convene at Ligonier Camp and Conference Center to begin to strengthen their bond as new members of the Upper School community.
- Winchester Thurston offers five post-AP courses, including two years of post-AP math. These classes are designed to be equivalent in rigor and depth to a college course, and allow students to explore material beyond the scope what is offered in other Upper School courses. Classes include Urban Research and Design, Advanced Topics in Mathematics, Algorithm Design and Research Science.
- Through the Leadership Academy, WT's Middle School students explore and discover the answers to the fundamental questions of leadership. The Leadership Academy focuses on building leadership skills through community service. In partnership with local organizations, and utilizing our City as Our Campus program, students visit with their selected organization, both on and off campus, work on a project that is related to their chosen topic throughout the year, and share their accomplishments and what they have learned with the rest of the Middle School.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

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The next Head of Winchester Thurston will have the unique opportunity to lead a thriving institution that has enjoyed a remarkable period of growth and development under the leadership of Gary Niels. What was once a second-tier school in Pittsburgh is now seen as one of the city's leading institutions. During Mr. Niels' 15-year tenure, WT has increased its endowment from \$7 million to \$17 million; completed two major fundraising campaigns totaling \$36 million; developed a thoughtful, robust, progressive academic program, attained record enrollment every year since 2006 while increasing campus diversity.

With many of the foundational elements in place – outstanding Board leadership, a strong administrative team, a solid admissions forecast, signature academic programs, happy students and parents, engaged faculty – WT has taken clear steps to maintain its drive toward excellence. In 2015, the school published *A Smart Future 2018: WT's Strategic Priorities*. The document focuses on four main areas: programmatic innovation, enrollment, facilities, and long-term sustainability (financial, educational, and physical). The *Smart Future* will offer an excellent roadmap for an incoming Head of School to make a quick, smooth, productive transition to the school community. Issues for the next leader of WT address will include:



**FACILITIES** Although its location places WT the midst of all Pittsburgh has to offer, the City Campus faces physical constraints typical among successful urban schools. Surrounded on all sides by businesses and residences, WT has met increasing enrollment demand with flexibility and creativity. The success of the City as Our Campus program

will continue to offer some relief as students spend more time off campus; however, the next Head will be tasked with updating the current facilities and working with the Board to ensure that the school's physical resources continue to support its ambitious academic goals. The school has not tackled a major building project since the Campus Center at the North Hills Campus and the Upper School Building were completed in 2005 and 2006,



respectively. The North Hills Campus represents a uniquely complicated mix of opportunities and challenges for WT in terms of finances, logistics, enrollment, academic programs, history, and branding. The incoming Head will play a leading role as the school weighs its options for both campuses and devises a comprehensive facilities plan that addresses current limitations and anticipates future needs.

**ENROLLMENT** Winchester Thurston operates in a highly competitive educational marketplace that includes several well-respected independent schools in and around Pittsburgh. The North Hills Campus also faces strong competition from attractive public school options in the

northern suburbs. Over the past few years, WT has benefited from an outstanding branding and marketing effort to highlight the school's distinctive features, in particular its compelling academic program. The school is eager to maintain positive enrollment trends while aggressively seeking every opportunity to increase the diversity of its student body. Defining diversity, articulating its value, and deciding how to support and promote it across the institution are ongoing challenges at WT, and they are made more acute by the particular demographic profile of Pittsburgh and local inflections of national economic trends. The next Head of School must be an enthusiastic ambassador for WT and a champion of equity, within and beyond the school family. S/he will also be asked to help sustain and enrich the many strategic partnerships already forged through the City as Our Campus program.

**FUNDRAISING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING** Following a successful self study in 2016-17, WT will host the PAIS Visiting Evaluation Committee in the fall of 2017. The delivery of the PAIS accreditation report should roughly coincide with the conclusion of the school's *Smart Future 2018* plan, and the incoming Head of School will have a sterling opportunity to lead the Board and the school community in a conversation about how the school can and should build on its many strengths. The strategic vision for WT is likely to include a major fundraising effort, as many trustees are eager to capitalize on the success of the school's successful, \$21 million endowment campaign (completed in 2014) that supported faculty development, financial aid, and the City as Our Campus program. WT's next Head should be ready to embrace the challenge and the opportunity of helping the school find a "second summit."

**TEACHING AND LEARNING** Not content to rest on its laurels, WT hopes to extend its run of innovation and excellence in the academic realm. The school's progressive curriculum and emphasis on creative pedagogy have attracted many strong educators to the school, but WT hopes to be more competitive with regard to compensation and support for professional development. As the school's academic programs continue to evolve, the community is also aware of the need to maintain discipline and focus. The new Head of School is expected to ensure that WT stays ahead of the curve in terms of 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning while staying in touch with the core values and primary mission of the institution.



## WHO SHOULD APPLY: IMPORTANT QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

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The headship of Winchester Thurston School is a rare opportunity for a visionary, progressive educator. WT is seeking an innovative leader who will embrace the school's commitment to remaining on the forefront of education while honoring its credo, "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others." WT is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic community and strongly encourages applications from people of color, LGBTQ candidates, and women. Ideally, candidates should offer most of the following attributes:

### PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

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- An advanced degree
- An educational philosophy that represents the cutting edge of contemporary education
- Knowledge of current best practices in Pre-K through 12 education
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent communication skills, oral and written
- Demonstrated fundraising ability
- Significant experience working in progressive, independent schools

### LEADERSHIP STYLE

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- A visionary educator, with an eye toward maintaining WT's status as a pioneer in 21<sup>st</sup> century education.
- An open and progressive leader, able to appreciate diverse perspectives and positions.
- A hands-on leader who is an active presence in daily school life.
- A strong and charismatic communicator, able to articulate the importance of WT's mission and academic program.

### PERSONAL QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

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- Diplomacy, openness, and humility
- Commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Understanding of the global community
- Ability to relate to children and young adults
- A philosophical mindset
- A sharp and innovative mind
- Ability to take thoughtful risks
- Deep understanding of WT's culture, ethos, and mission



## ANTICIPATED SEARCH CALENDAR

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Application deadline:	September 28
Selection of semifinalists:	October 11
Semifinalist interviews:	October 21-22
Finalist visits:	Late October
Appointment:	November
Starting date:	July 2018

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND SEARCH PROCESS

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Acting on behalf of Winchester Thurston School, Wickenden Associates is actively recruiting talented academic leaders for this unique leadership opportunity. The lead consultants are Jo Butler ([jbutler@wickenden.com](mailto:jbutler@wickenden.com)) and Jim Wickenden ([jwickenden@wickenden.com](mailto:jwickenden@wickenden.com)). Both may be reached at (609) 683-1355.

Candidates should submit **no later than Thursday, September 28, 2017**, an application package including the following:

- *A cover letter indicating why they are particularly interested in and qualified for the position.*
- *A current résumé.*
- *A statement of educational philosophy.*
- *The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three references. (We will obtain permission from candidates before contacting references.)*
- *Optional: Other supporting material (e.g. articles, speeches, or letters of recommendation) that would be useful to the Search Committee.*

These materials should be transmitted via email attachment to [searches@wickenden.com](mailto:searches@wickenden.com). Candidates who are new to Wickenden Associates are particularly encouraged to initiate the application process well before the deadline.

After an initial review of applicants, the Search Committee will interview semifinalist candidates on **October 21-22, 2017**. Shortly thereafter, finalists will be invited to WT for a more comprehensive series of interviews with representatives of the school's constituencies. An October appointment is anticipated. Wickenden Associates will keep all applicants informed of their status throughout the process.

