GIRLS PREPARATORY SCHOOL
Chattanooga, TN

UPPER SCHOOL HEAD
Start Date: July 2022
gps.edu
Mission Statement

Girls Preparatory School inspires each girl to lead a life of integrity and purpose by engaging her mind, cultivating her strengths, and nurturing her self-confidence and respect for others.

OVERVIEW

Girls Preparatory School (GPS) — a grades 6-12, all-girls, independent day school in Chattanooga, TN —understands how girls develop and learn and endeavors to create a program and culture purposefully designed to support and inspire girls. The foundation of GPS is an innovative academic program that equips girls with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. The school’s mission, however, reaches far beyond the classroom to support each girl in becoming her most fully developed self, educating the heart as much as the mind. GPS is committed to educating and preparing girls to be active, ethical citizens, and strong forces in the global community.

Girls Preparatory School seeks a confident, caring, and inspiring leader as its next Head of Upper School, starting in July 2022. The successful candidate’s educational beliefs will be consistent with GPS’s mission to inspire girls to lead lives of integrity and purpose and with the school’s values of honor, respect, curiosity, relationships, and individuality. This is an exceptional opportunity to lead an impressive upper school with an unwavering commitment to student success, joining a strong senior administrative team and partnering with a dynamic Head of School.

THE SCHOOL

Girls Preparatory School was founded in 1906 by three educators—Tommie Payne Duffy, Eula Lea Jarnagin, and Grace McCallie—whose intrepid resolve changed history for girls in Chattanooga. GPS seeks to honor its founders’ vision by fostering an educational environment that preserves tradition, values integrity and scholarship, and encourages forward thinking.
The best evidence of the founders’ vision is seen in the generations of families who entrust GPS with their daughters’ education. These families believe that investing in a girl’s college preparatory education is a powerful springboard to her success. They understand the commitment of GPS’s faculty and administration to educating the whole girl. Finally, they value the sisterhood that the GPS community fosters. Girls are welcomed into a sisterhood starting in grade six that uplifts them from the classroom to the playing fields to the stage. This sisterhood strengthens and deepens well beyond graduation day, providing GPS women with an invaluable network through which they can learn and grow.

The GPS Middle School experience is designed to build a strong academic and social-emotional foundation for each girl. The Upper School program balances the humanities and sciences, engages students in the visual and performing arts and athletics, and encourages student connection with the larger community.

Girls Preparatory School is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and the National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS) and is accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS).

ACADEMICS

A rich and challenging academic program is at the core of Girls Preparatory School. Upper School students enjoy a breadth of offerings and expert faculty that allow students to pursue their interests in depth. The curriculum is designed to develop students who are critical thinkers, articulate speakers and writers, empathetic collaborators, and resilient problem-solvers.
As they prepare for college and beyond, students expand their knowledge, strengthen their independence and self-advocacy, and learn to take charge of their education. Throughout their GPS journey, girls are supported by teachers who are deeply invested in each student’s personal success.

Students are offered a wide array of Advanced Placement and honors classes, alongside electives ranging from Neuroscience and Marine Science, to Engineering, Advanced Choreography, and Social Justice in Action.

STEM experiences are abundant at GPS. Students benefit from one of the best-equipped libraries and makerspaces in the region, which includes VR stations, 3D printers, and podcast and green screen studios. GPS is also home to a dedicated, onsite science research laboratory, and select GPS juniors conduct research with a science professor through the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Research Program.

The school offers a Winterim week in February, during which students choose from a slate of focused, intensive courses designed by faculty to allow girls to engage in the broader community. Recent Upper School Winterim options have included choices ranging from Fiber Arts and Archery, to trips to Montana, Hawaii, New York, and abroad.
THE ARTS

The purpose of GPS’s award-winning Fine & Performing Arts program is to provide a curriculum that contributes to the development of aesthetic values and challenges the intellectual, creative, and expressive powers of each student. In both the Middle and Upper Schools, the program encourages students to explore the cultural heritage of our society and the wider world through music, art, dance, and drama. A spectrum of fine arts disciplines in sequential levels helps students develop their individual interests while providing the opportunity for students to become practitioners of and appreciative viewers of the arts.

Overall, the program includes 48 fine arts courses; three major theatre productions each year; three dance groups; six instrumental music groups; and four vocal music ensemble groups. Terpsichord, the school’s modern dance company, holds the distinction of being the longest-running high school modern dance company in the state of Tennessee.
ATHLETICS

Through athletics, girls grow as team players, understand the importance of mental toughness, accept challenges enthusiastically, and value strength, fitness, stamina, and good health. Ultimately, the GPS athletic environment is about aiming to be the best in the field of competition, in the classroom, and in life. That attitude is shared by the staff of award-winning GPS coaches and more than 300 players each year who are involved at the varsity and middle school levels. Athletic team opportunities include basketball, bowling, cheerleading, climbing, cross country, diving, golf, lacrosse, rowing, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track & field, and volleyball. In spring 2021, the nine varsity teams that compete in the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) were all recognized with Academic Achievement Awards.

STUDENT LIFE

Through traditions, clubs, speaker series, student leadership organizations, and a coordinate program with students at the all-boys McCallie School, the girls of GPS explore their interests and passions, fuel their levels of confidence, find their voices, and develop lifelong friendships. Through the student council, honor council, Partners in the Community program, as well as other programs, GPS girls also develop their leadership skills.

Students are also encouraged to get involved in their larger community and give back through community service and volunteer programs. Partnering with Chattanooga community agencies, schools, and volunteer organizations can help students discover their heart to serve and answer the call to lead.

Traditions play a vital role at GPS. On their first day at GPS, sixth grade “rats” meet their senior “cats,” who readily assume the role of Upper School friend and role model. On May Day, students celebrate the May Queen (selected by her classmates for her character and integrity) and her court in a beautiful outdoor celebration. And during their senior year, girls share their voices and passions through individual chapel talks that are in turn profound, humorous, and personal. Finally, at the heart of GPS is its most cherished tradition, the honor code, which creates a foundation of trust, respect, and honesty.

**CAMPUS**

Girls Preparatory School’s campus is located in Chattanooga on the banks of the Tennessee River, just north of the city’s downtown district. Along with its well-manicured outdoor space and gardens for student gatherings, this expansive urban campus includes state-of-the-art classroom, laboratory, and athletic facilities, as well as the Holland Library, Caldwell Commons, Shuford Dining Hall, Frierson Theater, Evans Fine Arts Center, and the stately Founder’s House.

The impressive athletic facilities include two gyms, indoor physical training facilities, indoor and outdoor tennis facilities, an indoor pool, and outdoor track and soccer fields. A state-of-the-art rowing center, jointly shared with McCallie School, opened in the fall of 2021.
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

With a population of 181,099 in 2020, Chattanooga is the fourth largest city in Tennessee. Its location in the southeast section of the state makes it a key transit hub with easy access to all major cities in the region, including Atlanta, Knoxville, and Nashville. It has also earned the distinction of one of the nation’s most livable cities and a key destination for travelers in the U.S. Lonely Planet named Chattanooga among the “Best in the U.S.” and “10 U.S. destinations you need to see in 2018.” The New York Times named Chattanooga one of the “Top 45 Places to Go” in the world.

Incorporated in 1839, Chattanooga grew quickly and is thriving today due to a vibrant economic base (including Amazon, Volkswagen, Coca Cola, and Blue Cross Blue Shield), highly attractive cultural amenities, and an enviable cost of living. Known these days as Gig Town, named for its first-of-a-kind, citywide fiber optic network, Chattanooga underwent a significant transformation in late 20th and early 21st centuries. As a result, this racially diverse city has won three national awards for outstanding “livability” in recent years. Chattanooga also ranked 8th out of America’s 100 largest metro areas for the best “Bang for Your Buck” city, which measures overall affordability, housing rates, and more. Downtown Chattanooga showcases a wide variety of entertainment, dining, cultural and architectural attractions, including family-friendly destinations such as the Creative Discovery Museum, aquarium, and zoo.

The renovated Historic Walnut Street Bridge (the oldest surviving bridge of its kind in the Southeastern United States) and three other bridges over the Tennessee River connect walkways and parks on both sides of the river and make Chattanooga a highly walkable city with appealing outdoor space. In fact, Chattanooga has become such a haven for outdoor sports it has been twice named Outside Magazine’s “Best Town Ever.”
The next Head of Upper School will have the opportunity to work with a talented and dynamic student body, passionate faculty, visionary Head of School, and committed administrative team. The priorities, opportunities, and challenges ahead include:

• Continuing the school’s commitment to academic excellence and student achievement while supporting students holistically and catalyzing a spirit of innovation in teaching and learning;
• Caring for the “whole girl” by prioritizing healthy connections and relationships; fostering a culture where each student is known, heard, and empowered to use her voice; and lifting students in mind, body, and spirit as they discover their potential in a changing world;
• Supporting faculty in their professional growth and development, especially as they provide a consistent, differentiated, learner--centered curriculum that meets each student where she is;
• Positioning GPS as the destination of choice for mission-aligned Upper School girls in Chattanooga;
• Building and maintaining connections and community between and among faculty, divisions, parents, and students; and
• Carefully balancing over a century of history and tradition with a commitment to evolving best practices and openness to new ideas.
DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The most competitive candidates will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

- A thorough and demonstrated understanding of and affection for working with Upper School girls with great energy, warmth, humor, and commitment to their intellectual and social emotional development;
- Eagerness to engage actively with students and faculty and willingness to prioritize visibility amidst the demands of a busy professional schedule;
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with inspiration and clarity;
- Creative, communicative, learner-centered, and collaborative approach to decision making;
- Experience leading and managing adults;
- Classroom teaching experience and a track record of supporting and developing teaching faculty;
- Knowledge of best practices in belonging and inclusion work and the requisite skillfulness to support student and faculty growth in this area;
- Experience recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty;
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback, engaging in challenging conversations with grace;
- A collaborative and relational style built on active solicitation of input, excellent listening skills, and a commitment to building consensus; and
- A joyful spirit.
TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

• A cover letter expressing interest in this particular position; and
• A current résumé.

Selected candidates will also be asked to provide the following materials:

• Responses to writing prompts specific to this position; and
• A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each. (References will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission.)

Candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence and to submit a résumé and cover letter to:

Rhonda Durham
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