



**PRINCIPIA SCHOOL**  
St. Louis, Missouri

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**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
Start Date: July 2022  
[principiaschool.org](http://principiaschool.org)



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES



# PRINCIPIA SCHOOL

## OVERVIEW

Principia School is, literally, one of a kind. It is the only pre-k through grade 12 school in the world that is dedicated to the Cause of Christian Science. While they do not “teach Christian Science,” the School is grounded in the values and beliefs that “all people are unlimited expressions of God and we see their possibilities and not their limitations.”

Principia School is a joyous place. Forward-thinking in its academics because of a commitment that its graduates will be “future ready,” Principia pays as much attention to the whole person as it does to the academic learner. A strong academic program is enriched by experiential learning and attention to the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of its students. The many trips that students take are seen as essential ways to go out into the world and learn, as well as one of the most cherished aspects of the School program. Principia is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS).

The School has four divisions: Early Childhood, Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School. There is a boarding program for the Middle and Upper School students, and about half of the Upper Schoolers are boarders. Unlike some schools that see boarding as a cash-generator, the boarding component of Principia serves the worldwide Cause of Christian Science with, for example, 20% of those students coming from Africa.

In recent years, the School has moved to embrace more forward-thinking aspects of its program, as well as expanding its “tent” to those who may not have fit its earlier definition of mission-appropriate students. With a firm belief that all people are loved, the School has expanded its admissions policies, recognizing that its educational program, grounded in its long-standing values, is enriched by diverse



viewpoints and experiences. As a result, enrollment is expanding in the lower grades, and the prospects for filling the entire school are bright.

The School is being led by a capable internal Interim Head of School for the 2021-2022 school year. With a solid foundation of mission clarity and an exciting path to the future, Principia School seeks a visionary, compassionate, energetic, leader who will embrace and live the principles of the School and the values of Christian Science, taking the School forward, beginning July 1, 2022.

## **THE STRUCTURE**

Principia School, along with Principia College, are part of The Principia, the umbrella organization. There is a Board of Trustees for The Principia and a Chief Executive who oversees the entire enterprise and to whom the College President and the Head of School report. The Board operates at the strategic, policy, and fiduciary levels, but also interacts with the School in ways akin to how a best-practices board in a typical independent school might operate. The College and the School have their own administrative staffs, but some functions are centralized in a shared-services division that supports both. The School is located on 365 acres in St. Louis, and the College is about an hour away in Elsah, Illinois. Both campuses are beautiful and would be the envy of many other schools.

The Principia has a substantial endowment that provides the majority of the operating revenue for the School, helping to keep tuition lower than at comparable secular independent schools in the St. Louis area. Annual fundraising is healthy, and the School has a track record of successful capital fundraising efforts that have resulted in an up-to-date, attractive, and well-equipped campus. While fundraising efforts are centralized in the umbrella organization, the Head of School has typically had a significant role in leading the charge for projects and facilities unique to the School.



## ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Home to more than 2.9 million people, the St. Louis metro area is distinguished by a relatively low cost of living and central U.S. location. Average commute times are low, and many St. Louis natives remain in or return to the city; a wide variety of neighborhoods offer options that appeal to young people, families, and more.

Named for Louis IX of France, St. Louis remains a major U.S. port on the eastern line of Missouri. In the early 20th century, the city boomed, hosting both the 1904 World's Fair and the Summer Olympics that same year. The city expanded throughout the early 20th century as industrial companies formed and immigrants flocked to the city, calling St. Louis their home.

St. Louis enjoys a steady economy; the rivers that run through the city continue to play a large role in transport of goods, and manufacturing is the city's largest industry.

Residents and visitors of St. Louis enjoy its music and performing arts culture and its affinity for blues, jazz, and ragtime music. The St. Louis Symphony is the second-oldest symphony orchestra in the United States and regularly tours nationally and internationally. A distinctive landmark in St. Louis is the Gateway Arch, which marks downtown St. Louis and identifies a historic center in the city.

Sports fans cheer on professional teams in baseball and hockey: the Cardinals and Blues, respectively. Additionally, drag racing and NASCAR events, as well as several amateur athletic competitions, occur in St. Louis.

There's truly something for everyone in this welcoming, bustling Midwestern city.



## THE SEARCH PROCESS

The search is being overseen by a Search Committee consisting of several trustees, some faculty, some administrators, some parents, an administrator from Principia College, and someone from Shared Services. The committee is working closely with Carney, Sandoe & Associates, its chosen search firm, to recruit and evaluate candidates. The committee will conduct early-round candidate interviews and narrow the pool to a small group of finalists. It is anticipated that those finalists will visit the School early in the 2021-2022 school year at which time they will have the opportunity to meet with multiple School stakeholders and vice versa. Based on the recommendations of the Search Committee and community feedback from having met the finalist candidates, the Chief Executive will make a selection of the next Head of School. That decision will be ratified by the Board of Trustees.

## STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

Among many strengths of the School, the new Head will find:

- A school community united in commitment to the mission of the School to “serve the Cause of Christian Science.” The School does that “By educating students using an approach and pedagogy reflecting Christian Science values: understanding, love, courage, excellence, diversity, joy, and continuous improvement.”
- The School is guided by 23 known and cherished Policies that are integral to the life of the School. Further guidance is provided by [\*Education at The Principia\*](#), a collection of the talks and writings of the School’s founder, Mary Kimball Morgan.



- Unlike some faith-based schools where religious dogma is constraining or in conflict with what educators know informs 21st-century pedagogy, Christian Science encourages innovation, a whole-person approach to education, and a pursuit of excellence. Principia's actions and values are strengthened by its Christian Science foundation, and the School program is on par with or exceeds that of non-denominational independent schools in the area.
- Members of the School's community most often mention "character education" as a distinguishing strength of the School, in addition, of course, to strong academics and co-curricular activities. The "whole person" approach is central to the program of the School.
- Experiential education and a substantial menu of student travel options are integral to the program of the School and encourages experiencing the world as an important component of learning opportunities.
- Students report that the School forces them to be "multi-faceted" and diverse. "You can't be single focus, and that teaches you how to manage multiple responsibilities."
- Some schools describe their closely-knit community as "a family." At Principia, that is certainly true figuratively, and in many instances, literally. At a recent gathering of some faculty, about half were graduates of the School and about two-thirds were graduates of either the School, the College, or both. It is not uncommon to find multi-generational connections to the School among faculty, staff, parents, and students.
- Knowledgeable and passionate faculty who create real relationships with their students are often cited as one of the greatest strengths of the School. Faculty appreciate freedom to pursue innovative approaches and strong professional development opportunities.
- The School facilities are beautiful, airy, and well-equipped for ever-improving educational approaches. The School is up-to-date on educational technology, utilizing both hardware and software tools.
- The School has strong co-curricular, athletic, and arts programs to go hand-in-hand with its academic offerings. Expanded athletic facilities are under construction at the present time.



- The Principia has a substantial endowment, the draw from which contributes 70% of the operating budget of the School. Continued fiscal prudence is necessary as it is in any school.
- While there remains work to solidify the new, more-inclusive direction of the School, that foundation has been firmly set for the new Head to build upon.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Head of School will find both professional challenge and personal satisfaction addressing a number of opportunities and challenges which include:

- By coincidence, the Chief Executive and Head of School positions are both turning over. On balance, this new team comes at an auspicious time and allows the new Head to enhance the coordination and collaboration between the Board, the College, and the School.
- As the School welcomes a broader range of values-aligned students, it will be important to capitalize on the benefits of greater diversity while staying true to the Christian Science mission, values, and Policies that have stood the School in good stead for decades.
- The School will benefit from full enrollment in the Middle School and Upper School, as there already is in the younger grades.
- As in every independent school, finding appropriate ways to address the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the program of the School at age-appropriate levels will take intentionality and clarity.



- Change and change agents can be disruptive and even divisive. As Principia has broadened its population of students and faculty, as well as strengthening its experiential and future-ready programs, there is now an opportunity to bring unity and a top-to-bottom sense of common purpose and direction as the School moves forward on its path.
  - The new Head will be expected to raise the bar and set higher standards and expectations for students and adults within the School community and assure accountability, while leading with compassion and warmth.
  - Even as new pedagogies and approaches to future-ready student outcomes gain traction, there remains a desire for challenging academic rigor and instilling in students a desire for excellence.
  - Faculty have responded well to “being pushed” and look forward to ongoing support and encouragement toward continuous improvement.
  - The new Head will be guided by the just-completed five-year strategic plan “Thrive! 2025 Plan for Principia,” including priorities of:
    - o Live the Mission
    - o Grow Enrollments
    - o Boost Engagement
    - o Practice Sustainability
    - o Increase Partnerships
    - o Illuminate Pathways
- The full Strategic Plan can be found at <https://www.principia.edu/strategicplan>
- While the School is financially sound, there is an opportunity to right-size the budget based on sustainable endowment-draw levels in the future.



## DESIRED SKILLS AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Someone who works collaboratively with the College and the Board as well as within the School.
- A practicing Christian Scientist who infuses Christian Science values and principles into the everyday life of the School.
- A knowledgeable educator with 21st-century educational vision.
- A humble “servant leader” who puts the School and everyone within the community ahead of themselves; a collaborator, connector, team-builder, and unifier.
- Someone who is inclusive in seeking input to decisions, builds relationships and trust, but can also be decisive and hold people accountable when necessary.
- Financial literacy sufficient to work collaboratively with the CFO and Board to maximize the impact of the operating budget while operating with fiscal prudence.
- An individual who relates well and connects with all different kinds of people.
- Excellent communication skills. Ability to be a compelling “face of the School” to external audiences and a motivator within the School. A charismatic leader who can inspire everyone with the importance and value of a Principia education.
- Someone who loves children and will be visible in the daily life of the School.
- A leadership “presence” who inspires trust and confidence.



## TO APPLY

The School appreciates that humility is an important virtue and that the kind of servant leader it seeks is not a self-promoter. We nevertheless encourage those excited by the position and who have relevant strengths to apply. Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing interest in the position.
- A current résumé.
- A statement of experience with and philosophy of future-ready education in a Christian Science environment.
- 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) to:

### **Skip Kotkins**

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