



The Massachusetts School of
Science, Creativity and Leadership

Director of Middle/Upper School Job Description

September 2021

Acera: The Massachusetts School of Science, Creativity and Leadership
Winchester, MA (10 miles north of Boston) 5 Lowell Avenue

Overview:

Acera is looking for a highly experienced leader and administrator with multiple decades of experience who has passion, superior organizational skills, excellent listening and facilitation capacities, superior parent communication abilities, and a deep commitment to progressive education. Our grade 5-10 Upper School Program includes substantial student choice and readiness-based learning for all facets of our highly differentiated learning program. We empower and support our talented and experienced core and specialist teachers to customize high engagement learning experiences; we catalyze a sense of purpose among our students, in ways that fit the unique interests, needs and potential of every child. We seek to add a school leader who can complement our administrative team.

Acera Mission:

At Acera, students explore and learn at a pace appropriate to each child's unique motivation and potential, not their age. Our culture is not about pressure to achieve; it is about freedom to thrive. We support our students' innate curiosity and love of learning. Through developing emotional intelligence, complex and creative thinking skills, and systems awareness, we develop thinkers and innovators who will be able to make positive change in our world.

The Director of Middle/Upper School Focus Areas:

- Manage grade 5-10 teaching staff: hiring, staffing, scheduling, role clarification, performance feedback, compensation recommendations, and substituting among teachers focused on Upper School (currently defined as grades 5-10)
- Address parent concerns and feedback, concurrently partnering with faculty, to hear, understand, collaborate, maintain, and augment strong parent/school partnerships, even in times of struggle.
- Facilitate regular upper school faculty meetings and/or check-ins among teams as is most effective, soliciting needs, ideas, and clarifying next steps. Continuously enable excellence in education which uniquely is tuned to students' needs, leveraging teachers' insights and ideas for continuous program improvement.
- Support fundraising efforts to maintain and grow upper school program.
- Galvanize plan: Through dialogues with parent community, pledges, and analysis, pave the way to decide and act re: continue a very small high school program which strongly tethers to middle school, to revert back to our prior Bonus Year/grade 9 program, or to expand our high school through fundraising and catalyzing a growth plan.
- Maintain our mission in our educational program focusing on high engagement student learning via inquiry, projects, and responsive education. Fight the tide of enacting norms that are typical but do not align with our values, beliefs, mission, and the data about how kids best grow, learn and thrive (e.g. pressure to grade, pressure to use pre-ordained teacher-led curricula, pressure to have common outcomes across students.)
- Partnering with other school directors, counseling team, and teacher mentors, maintain a high teacher empowerment program, in which teachers create and design educational experiences that foster generative joy, possibility and initiative among our students. Focus on developing students' capacities (not covering content) as the priority.
- Manage situations based upon living our values (not enacting/enforcing rules, policies and norms.) Foster a climate of freedom (not control) in which highly creative and capable people can truly express, be, and grow as the best version of themselves.
- Maintain a culture focused on that which is best for students.
- Intentionally create space for staff and students to talk across diverse viewpoints and beliefs, designing discussions to include and promote voice and place for everyone across religion, politics, race, gender, and all orientations. Have space to hear and respect diverse beliefs and viewpoints.
- Continuously tune to evidence-based learning approach which tap students' intrinsic motivation and wellbeing and follow neuroscience, psychology, and education research. Enable Acera to model what is possible, and therefore



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be an inspiration which can help catalyze change in public education.

Acera Philosophy:

- We offer a high ceiling for conceptual and critical thinking, with a focus on enabling students' growth in Acera's core capacities (systems thinking, problem solving, creativity, perspective taking, ethical decision making, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and leadership).
- Our school is designed for gifted students as an alternative to regular education program which can put a ceiling on student development; we admit and customize a learning community and individual learning pathways for students gifted across one or more domains (academics, creative, leadership). Acera admits many different student profiles with a wide range of strengths and needs, all of whom have qualified for admission to Acera as gifted students.
- We do not follow set curricula nor hold ourselves to age-based standards. We build excellent relationships and knowingness of every child, and teachers create differentiated learning pathways for each student which fit their skills, needs, and interests.
- We foster a community of belonging and growth, build great relationships with and between all students and staff, and embody Acera's core values of openness, community, integrity, curiosity & innovation, and leadership.
- We are about freedom ... when a student has an idea to initiate, solve, or create something ... we strive to say yes! We intentionally design our school culture and space to be a place where kids practice innovative problem solving and develop agency in their community. We free our students – and teachers – to be the best version of themselves through listening, empowering, and coaching.
- The yearly “owner” for a child's individual learning plan (ILP), who leads definition of each child's learning path through school that year, is their core classroom teacher. ILP's incorporate academic, social, and emotional growth goals based upon start-of-year assessments and observations, parent listening conferences, admissions input, specialist teacher and counseling team input, and checkpoints with prior years' teachers. Our middle/upper school program includes project-based core classroom time with copious literature and primary source material and writing opportunities, as well as electives (social sciences, sciences, and hands-on arts/STEM), Inquiry, Maker and Passion projects each student catalyzes, and ability-based math block.
- We seek a professional who has a deep love of and respect for young people, who wants to support our beliefs in student and teacher freedom. Together, we continuously re-invent exciting, creative classrooms, rich in projects and deeply engaging topics that are relevant to our times and which resonate and respond to students' interests.

The successful candidate will have philosophical alignment with our core values and learning approach, which are outlined on our website: www.aceraschool.org

Qualifications:

- Bachelors level degree, preferably in an area other than education
- Masters levels degree in education, business, or other field is a desirable but not required
- At least 20 years of professional experience, with at least a decade in management of staff
- Experience with gifted education, special education, progressive learning approaches and/or a goal for understanding orientation (instead of a focus on core knowledge acquisition) is highly preferred
- Exceptionally strong spoken and written communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills
- Excellence in leadership and management; able to galvanize others around shared mission and values
- Able to organize others with constancy in structure, prioritization, and clarity which is flexible and innovative
- ***You must provide documentation of a completed COVID vaccination series***

Application:



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Please submit cover letter and resume along with a personal statement of educational philosophy, description of your classroom management/discipline beliefs, any experiences and/or training in gifted education you have had, and salary expectations to: hiring@aceraschool.org

~~Highly qualified applicants should include, but not be limited to, the following information in their resumes: a list of all schools where they have worked, including the dates of employment, a list of all positions held, a list of all subjects taught, a list of all students taught, a list of all awards and honors received, a list of all professional organizations and memberships, a list of all continuing education courses completed, a list of all conferences and workshops attended, a list of all publications and presentations, a list of all projects and initiatives led, a list of all committees and task forces served, a list of all professional development activities, a list of all leadership roles held, a list of all mentoring activities, a list of all community service activities, a list of all volunteer activities, a list of all other relevant information.~~
