



Opportunity for
Head of School
Elgin, Illinois
School Year 2012-13

Bright and Engaged students! These are the attributes of Da Vinci Academy students.

Da Vinci Academy invites nominations and applications for its position of Head of School. It is anticipated that an appointment will be announced in spring 2012 with the position responsibilities beginning July 1, 2012.

The School

Located on the southwest edge of Elgin, a city 40 miles west of Chicago, Da Vinci Academy is an independent, coeducational day school founded in 1999, and enrolls approximately 130 intellectually gifted students in grades PK-8. Since its founding, Da Vinci Academy has promised, and kept the commitment, that each student will be well-known and valued by the school staff, will be challenged and engaged, and will leave the school well-prepared for his/her next educational experience.

Da Vinci Academy is accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) and holds memberships in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Illinois Association of Gifted Children (IAGC).

Mission Statement

Da Vinci Academy provides intellectually gifted and talented students a unique educational community that develops a student's strengths, interests and potential. We offer a challenging curriculum focusing on the learning process, personal growth and self-direction, while providing students with an excellent base for becoming productive leaders in an ever-changing society.

The Setting

The Fox River Valley is a particularly picturesque area, amidst the Norman Rockwell-esque many towns and surrounding countryside. The Fox River itself, which originates in Wisconsin, winds its way through many of the towns from which DVA students come. Many of the towns are particularly charming, including very nearby Geneva and St. Charles, and they are destinations for people from Chicago and the suburbs north of Chicago to come for the restaurants, nice shopping, river attractions, festivals, and inns.

There are extensive recreational, cultural, educational, social action, and spiritual resources and opportunities in the area for all ages. Some of these include bike and hiking trails, kayaking and other river activities, beginning and intermediate downhill skiing opportunities in Elgin and nearby, and perfect locations and conditions for cross-country skiing. There are a broad variety of team sports available and organized for all ages, and there is a professional baseball farm team and stadium in Geneva. There are many parks, dog parks, several area theaters, a fine orchestra in Elgin,

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and several colleges and junior colleges located within a range of 5 minutes to 45 minutes from Da Vinci. And the area is home to a variety of religions, including Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Islam, Mormon, Quaker, Buddhist and Baha'i.

The Fox River Valley location provides its residents with the best of both worlds. To the east one hour by car or comfortable train is the wonderful and cosmopolitan city of Chicago. With its plethora of cultural, architectural, and so many other riches; while to the north less than an hour is the bucolic world of

Wisconsin, and to the west the beautiful rolling plains of Midwest farmland.

The Campus

The campus is located on 5 acres amidst farmed fields in a still rural area on the southwest side of Elgin. The building is approximately 14,000 square feet with the land and building having an estimated value of \$2.5 million. At the heart of the school building is the library/computer lab. The library/lab is surrounded by classrooms and the building is anchored by the music/art room, a half-size gym, and the commons/eating area. Soccer fields and an attractive outdoor play area complete the campus.

The People at Da Vinci Academy

Students

Da Vinci Academy was founded for children with exceptional academic and intellectual abilities to provide them with the type of school and educational environment in which they can best thrive. The goal has always been to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which our students have every opportunity to develop and realize the full potential of their skills, talents, and abilities.

Our school attracts a diverse social, economic and ethnic population, with at least 23% of the student population being of non-Christian and/or non-Caucasian background. Da Vinci provides an excellent program for young learners who show signs that they need a more challenging academic environment. These students are intellectually curious, have a natural passion for learning, and demonstrate accelerated development in one or more areas. IQ testing is required for grades 1-8 with students required to have results of 125 or higher. Many families send multiple students to the school, as they see their first Da Vinci student thrive there.

Da Vinci students leave 8th grade well-prepared to succeed academically in any high school environment, and have excellent success records at all high schools to which they have gone – including not incidentally at the very selective Illinois Math and Science Academy (IMSA). In addition to IMSA, other schools where Da Vinci students matriculate upon graduating include a variety of the area's well-funded public high schools; and fine area private schools, including Wheaton Academy, St. Francis High School, and Elgin Academy. In addition, a few Da Vinci graduates have chosen to attend elite eastern prep high schools.



Parents

Da Vinci Academy's parents are a largely professional upper middle-class group. Occupations from a wide range of industries are represented including many small and medium-sized business owners, as well as those engaged in large-scale family businesses. Also represented are doctors, lawyers, technologists, and consultants. Every parent of a Da Vinci Academy student is a member of the Parent Association and they support the school's mission and programs through a variety of activities.

Parents come to Da Vinci with the expectation that a better education can be offered by a school that is dedicated to the intellectually gifted, and that provides each child an intimate learning environment. This includes child-specific curriculum adjustments that are based on each child's needs. Parents also are attracted to the quality and talent of the student body, where it is "cool" to be smart and intellectually-curious and to enjoy school.

Faculty

The students at Da Vinci are served by a long-established and professionally adept faculty of 17 full time and 5 part-time teachers. Almost all have master's degrees or the equivalent graduate-level training. Teachers employ a challenging curriculum using flexible teaching strategies to best support individual learning styles. Their innovative programming encourages creativity and promotes positive risk-taking in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Their experiential learning practices emphasize the development and growth of the whole child. This group of dedicated professionals is active in professional development pursuits such as graduate work, college teaching, gifted summer programs, conferences and seminars.

Administration

The faculty is supported by an equally talented and experienced administration. The current Head of School for these past 5 years, Jeffrey Stroebel, has an advanced degree and an endorsement in gifted education. His prior experience was with a school also dedicated to gifted education, and Jeff is widely known through his presentations at state and national conferences on topics related to gifted education.

The Director of Admissions and Marketing, Jeff Oldham, has been with Da Vinci for 6 years, and has degrees in psychology and social sciences, as well as extensive independent school knowledge and experience, and internet and other technology expertise. In addition to his admissions and marketing responsibilities, Jeff Oldham also maintains the website and provides administrative support for the school's development activities. The Director of Finance, Larry Steffens, has an MBA and CPA, and worked as the comptroller for a large and prestigious not-for-profit prior to joining Da Vinci 8 years ago. Larry manages the business office and also serves as the facility manager. All are supported by our experienced and knowledgeable Administrative Coordinator, Alison Bruns.

Board of Trustees

Da Vinci Academy is governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. Currently 9 Trustees serve and focus on long-term planning, managing the school's financial health, and evaluating the head of school. Permanent committees include the Executive, Building and Grounds, Development, Finance, Mission and School Life, and Trustees Committees. The Board has worked to develop the

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effectiveness of these committees, and most new business is brought to the Board through its committees.

School Programs

In carrying out the goals set forth in the mission and vision of the school, the staff of Da Vinci Academy uses various instructional methods suitable for intellectually gifted students. These include the following :



Providing a challenging curriculum, appropriate for intellectually gifted students

- Greater curriculum depth and breadth
- Acceleration (exposing students to more complex content than would normally be afforded to students of their age)
- Curriculum compacting (summarizing and condensing curriculum that students can quickly master)

Creating a unique and innovative educational community

- Hands-on activities
- Cooperative learning
- Flexible grouping
- Utilizing outside resources (speakers and field trips)
- Integration between subject areas (cross-curricular activities and lessons)
- Mixed age grouping and cross grade level activities
- Real world applications (authentic learning activities)

Employing multiple methods of instruction to address individual learning styles and abilities

- Multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge
- Differentiation of instruction
- Pre-assessment, scaffolding, and compacting
- Process, content, product
- Depth, complexity
- Tiered assignments

Developing each student's strengths, interests, potential and creativity

- Teaching problem-solving, creative thinking, and experiential learning
- Encouragement of risk-taking in a safe and supportive environment
- Providing students choices in learning activities

Fostering personal growth, self-direction, and leadership by providing:

- Leadership experiences and opportunities
- Opportunities to render meaningful service to others
- Lessons in character development (including ethics and morality)
- Experiences and direction in appropriately taking responsibility



Immersion Week

In this week-long distinctive program, Da Vinci provides all grades, PK through 8th, with the opportunity to focus on projects related to that year's central theme. Classes set aside the usual curriculum to spend extensive time on the Immersion Week theme. At the end of the week, parents and students have the opportunity to learn what each class has developed. PK through 4th students perform a musical/play as their culminating project; and Middle School students give small group presentations in which they expose their great depth of work on and understanding of a specific subject related to the Immersion Week theme.

Extracurriculars

Da Vinci Academy offers a broad range of choices for extracurricular activities to its students. Some of these are band, chess, robotics, arts, theater, aeronautics, MathCounts, and an array of sports including basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Through these sports and activities Da Vinci students compete with other Chicago-area private schools.

New Leadership

Da Vinci Academy seeks a visionary leader capable of reaching the future goals of the school. This will require a person committed to the school and its success; a professional who is knowledgeable about gifted and talented academic and social/emotional issues; someone who is professional and deals fairly with all; and someone who is organized, energetic, proactive, approachable and an effective communicator. And these are just some of the strengths that Da Vinci is seeking in its new Head. Other important requirements follow.

To continue its forward momentum, Da Vinci Academy seeks a Head who brings to the school:

- Strong leadership skills
- Strong development skills
- Knowledge of gifted education
- Awareness of the independent school environment
- Experience in guiding an innovative and creative faculty
- Passion for working with bright, inquisitive, and intellectually stimulating children
- Strong financial and management abilities
- An ability to increase the school's visibility, attract new families, and extend its development activities
- An ease interacting with all constituencies, both within the school and in the larger Fox River Valley communities

Search Timeline

Da Vinci Academy anticipates conducting an aggressive search resulting in the appointment of a Head of School by mid-March 2012. Candidates will be presented to the search committee by January 31. Semi-finalists' visits will be scheduled from mid-February until early March.

Application Procedures

Interested candidates are encouraged to submit their application materials at the earliest possible date and credentials will be reviewed as received. Materials required to complete an application include a letter of interest, resume, philosophy/personal statement, and a list of 5 references. Electronic submission is preferred and credentials will be reviewed as received. Application deadline is January 31, 2012.

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Da Vinci Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or national or ethnic origin, in the administration of its admissions, employment or academic policies, or any school administrative programs.



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