

Trident Academy

Mount Pleasant, SC

www.tridentacademy.com

Head of School Opening

Responsibilities begin Summer 2013

“Empowering children who learn differently”

The term “learning disability” was hardly in the American lexicon when Trident Academy opened its doors 40 years ago. On the cutting edge of helping children with learning disabilities, Trident Academy gained a world-wide reputation for successfully personalizing education for those who could not succeed in a traditional academic setting.

Its reputation and success continues today. Many Trident Academy students stay through graduation and then enroll in four-year colleges, but Trident Academy also returns many of its students to traditional schools once their academic skills are remediated and they are emotionally ready for the typical public or private school setting. By offering a comprehensive program in an uncommon educational environment, Trident Academy offers an exceptional education to students and families seeking a school where children with unique learning needs can be successful.

The success of the school has earned it dedicated alumni and parent bodies which are key reasons why Trident Academy attracts students from all over the United States. The school provides limited boarding options. Many families who have searched nationally choose to relocate to Charleston specifically for Trident Academy’s program. As one of a small number of fully accredited Orton-Gillingham schools, Trident Academy uses this proven approach to educate its students. Trident Academy bases its instruction not only on the Orton approach, but also on the best current practices and proven strategies for multi-sensory learning.

The School

Trident Academy Mission

Our mission is to educate bright students with learning disabilities in a multi-sensory environment, helping them to develop academic skills that will prepare them for responsible independence, life-long learning, and active participation in school, family, and community.

The School is divided into three divisions, Lower, Middle and Upper School. In 2004, at its peak enrollment, the school had 167 students. The school’s 10-acre campus was pressed to accommodate all those interested in coming to the school. Over the last few years, however, enrollment has declined, primarily due to increased local competition from LD programs in the public and private schools. The tuition costs associated with Trident Academy’s personalized student experience also has been a factor in the decline as has the last several years with the economic downturn nationwide. For this current 2011-2012 school year, Trident Academy opened with just under 65 students. Its understanding of the need for its specialized program keeps its vision clear to continue meeting the needs of the LD student.

Trident Academy is governed by a 14 member Board of Trustees (The By-Laws allow for up to 15 members.) comprised of seven current parents, four past parents, and three members drawn from the many community leaders interested in the well-being of Trident Academy. The Board has a normal configuration of standing committees including committees on Trustees, Finance, Vision, Marketing,

Executive, and Advancement. The full Board usually meets six times a year with committee meetings scheduled in alternate months.

Trident Academy is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)/Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS), South Carolina Independent Schools Association, and the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. In spring 2011 the school hosted the national meeting of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. Trident Academy is also a member of the National Association of Independent Schools.

The Student Body

Trident Academy's low student-teacher ratio of 3:1 is the key component of the school's success. The Orton-Gillingham approach and multi-sensory methodology shapes classroom instruction. Although the curriculum parallels that of South Carolina's public and independent schools, the small class size and hands-on techniques help ensure that students realize their potential. Every classroom reflects a fundamental commitment to a nurturing learning environment that supports differing learning styles. Prior to admission, each student must have a current psycho-educational evaluation with a diagnosis of a specific learning disability: Dyslexia, ADHD, and challenges with processing speed, working memory and executive functioning, and non-verbal learning disabilities. Trident Academy understands that it is common for students to struggle for several years before they get a specific diagnosis and find Trident Academy's comprehensive program.

Trident Academy is not a place for students with severe emotional or mental problems. On the other hand, it can accommodate students with the low self-esteem often associated with significant learning problems. Positive reinforcement, multi-sensory instruction, and a caring atmosphere combine to allow a skillful and well-trained faculty to address the specific learning issues of every child admitted.

The curriculum is supplemented by after-school enrichment activities and Homework Haven. Care is taken to offer sports and arts activities that allow Trident Academy students opportunities outside the classroom, thus addressing some of the self-esteem issues students bring with them. Trident Academy has an "all-play" policy; everyone gets a chance to represent the school on sports teams and to participate in the arts. Eighty percent of Trident Academy's students participate in a sports activity.

While there is no cure for a learning disability, students who attend Trident Academy learn how to successfully live with their challenges and are well-equipped to compensate in productive ways.

The Faculty

The Trident Academy faculty is well prepared for its specialized role of empowering bright students who learn differently. Sixty percent of the 22 faculty members have master's degrees. The average years of teaching experience among faculty members is over 20, and the average tenure at Trident Academy is over ten years.

All faculty members receive annual professional development, and they are provided the opportunity to participate in an in-service program designed to enhance their skills and keep them up-to-date with the latest research and techniques.

All faculty receive training in the Orton-Gillingham approach. Nine faculty members are members of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Education; eight have attained Associate Level membership, and one is a Fellow of the Academy who sits on the Board of Directors. Six Associate Members are currently working toward Certified Membership

The faculty is fully committed to the students and meeting their needs. The fact that the majority of faculty members have been at Trident Academy for five or more years speaks volumes about their dedication and commitment to teaching in this unique environment.

The Campus

Trident Academy has a blended campus of both new and old. The original building was built in 1975 and consists of administrative spaces, 13 classrooms, and a full size gymnasium. In the mid-1980's an additional wing was added. This wing houses the library, assistive technology lab, and 15 specialized classrooms for language development and remediation. Completed in 2002 is a 9,000 square foot, state-of-the-art classroom building. Currently used as the Upper School, the building has three classrooms, two well-equipped science labs/classrooms, a technology room, a teacher work room, office, and a multi-purpose room of almost 2,000 square feet. In 2011, a fitness center was opened for students and faculty. Trident Academy is a compact campus of 10 acres and almost 40,000 square feet of educational and administrative space. The buildings are equipped with the latest technology, and approximately 100 computers are available for student use, as well as numerous overhead LCD projectors, two smart boards, and wireless capability throughout the campus. Also on campus are a soccer field, fitness trail, and other outdoor recreational areas. Under a mutual agreement with the Town of Mount Pleasant, the soccer field is maintained by the town, a significant financial savings for the school. The town provides some assistance for the basketball court as well.

The Community

Trident Academy has an enviable location in the charming Charleston suburb of Mount Pleasant. The spectacular Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Bridge, which opened in 2005, dominates the skyline and spans the Cooper River connecting Mount Pleasant with the City of Charleston. Although still within the County of Charleston and less than nine miles away from Charleston's historic district, Mount Pleasant has been transformed over the years from a river house haven to escape the city into a thriving, suburban community of approximately 68,000 (2010 Census) people. A growing community with many young families, Mount Pleasant's 2005 census reported that nearly 56.9% of the households were comprised of married couples, and 33.9% of all the household had children under the age of 18. Mount Pleasant enjoys the same mild climate as the city of Charleston; but, it is even closer to the world-class golf courses and the miles of unspoiled beaches and marshlands for which the area is so well-known.

Beautiful homes, cultural offerings outstanding art galleries, and wonderful restaurants are among Charleston's greatest appeals. It is host to the world famous Spoleto Festival which the Washington Post called, "One of the best arts festivals in this country." While the Charleston area benefits from a population of approximately 575,000 people, the city itself projects the air of a small college town. Among the higher education opportunities are the University of Charleston and the Citadel. There are also a number of independent schools in the area including Porter-Gaud, Ashley Hall, Charleston Day School, Bishop England Catholic High School and Pinewood Prep. Another of the area's outstanding educational institutions is the Medical College of South Carolina, a respected research, educational and medical service provider.

Settled in 1670 by English colonists, Charleston attracted many immigrants because of its tolerance for religious freedom and for its lucrative seafaring trade. It continues today to be one of the country's busiest seaports. The city has often played a pivotal role in American history, including being the site of Fort Sumter where the first shots were fired in the American Civil War. The short drive across the bridge from Mount Pleasant brings visitors and residents alike into the heart of this 300-year-old, charming city.

The Opportunity

After 5 years as Head of School, Joseph Ferber has announced his retirement at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. Following Mr. Ferber's leadership, an interim Head of School appointment is anticipated for the 2012-2013 school year. The school has a rich history of service in the learning disability community. With a careful, thorough search, Trident Academy expects to attract a candidate who will engineer both its growth and continued rise in prominence within the LD community. At this important point in the school's history, the next Head will find the opportunity to build upon the school's strong programs and harness the energy of the faculty and the good will of the community.

It is imperative that the next leader of Trident Academy have a deep compassion for students who confront learning challenges and the accompanying emotional struggles that often attend these impediments to learning. As an Orton-Gillingham school, it will be necessary for the successful candidate to understand and be fully supportive of this multi-sensory approach to learning. Preference will be given to candidates with independent school experience. More critical than credentialing, however, the next Head of School, through professional training or personal experience, must truly understand schools for special needs students and possess the talents and skills to further position Trident Academy for success in the educational community.

Clearly there are a number of opportunities and challenges that will require specific talents from the new Head. They include:

Financial leadership

Trident Academy like many schools its age is tuition driven. Its small endowment provides some support in addition to tuition, but the frailty of the economics of the school will require aggressive marketing from a sound independent school leader.

Enrollment management

Unique to Trident Academy's mission is its effort to return as many students as possible to a traditional school setting. Each year, a third of the student body may leave. For this unique school, attrition is a sign of success. Nevertheless, the next Head of School must be a savvy enrollment manager and spokesperson, continuing to attract students and families to the school.

Communication and community presence

The school needs a "hands on" leader and an experienced educator who can support the work of the faculty and can take the message of Trident Academy to the wider community.

Team leadership and role modeling

Trident Academy wants a team builder, a person of high energy and personal integrity who can build upon the *esprit de corps* that is the hallmark of the school's faculty and parent body.

Community building

The Board is clear that it wants a leader who can take the school to the next level and expand the school's enrollment by working sensitively with the faculty, the Board, the alumni, and the parent body.

Effective administration and management

While the next Head of School must be an energetic, master communicator, this is not merely an admission or marketing position. The next leader must understand the nature of an independent school and be able to apply sound management and fiscal oversight to its operation.

Effective fundraising

The new Head must have the ability to be a fundraiser and a friend-raiser. Both are critical needs for the future of the school.

A commitment to the school and its mission

The school does not want or need someone who might see this opportunity at Trident Academy as a short-term stepping stone to other opportunities. The school appreciates the benefits of stability at the top. Therefore, the Board of Trustees will give priority to a candidate who can embrace the Trident Academy philosophy and who wishes to be part of the Mount Pleasant and greater Charleston area community for years to come.

The Board believes that there is significant opportunity for Trident Academy. With continued effective leadership and increased efforts to market the school, the school is poised and excited for its forward development, serving the needs of a devoted group of students and families.

Application Calendar and Process

The following calendar is anticipated for the search:

- August 15, 2012 Interested candidates submit letter of interest, current resume, personal statement and references (confidentiality of candidates will be respected)
- August 15-October 15 Preliminary Interviews with selected candidates
- October 15-November 20 Semi-finalist interviews with the Search Committee
- November 20 - December 14 Finalists visits on campus
- December 14- 31 Completion of the Search
- January 15, 2012 Announcement of the permanent Head’s appointment

Application materials, to include a letter of interest, resume, statement of educational philosophy, and a list of five references with contact information, should be sent to:

Trident Academy Head of School Search
Mary E. Kesler
The Education Group
5430 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75240
800-369-9102 • FAX 214-369-4979
mary@educationgroup.com

Trident Academy at a Glance

Founded:	1972
Grades:	Grades K through 12
Total Student Enrollment:	63
Number of Faculty & Staff:	22 full-time and 8 part-time professionals
Annual Budget:	\$2.5 million
Endowment:	\$1 million
Campus:	10 acres, 40,000 sq feet of space
Tuition:	\$25,000

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Trident Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, physical disability, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administrated programs