Telluride Mountain School
LABORATE DURE...LUDITE DURE

Head of School - Position Profile

Search objective: Hire a Head of School who will lead Telluride Mountain School for five-plus years beginning July 1, 2011 in delivering its mission-driven educational program while growing enrollment and achieving financial sustainability

Key near-term responsibilities

- Fulfill the regular duties of the Head of School
- Manage transition from two-year Interim Head
- Retain existing students and grow enrollment
- Guide Board of Trustees in executing fundraising plan
- Manage continued evolution and growth of Upper School program
- Manage ACIS reaccreditation process (self-study scheduled for 2011-12)

Overview

- Founded 1998 by parents
- Approximately 110 students in preschool through 12th grade
- 21 FTE faculty and administrators
- $2 million annual operating budget
- 99% parent participation in Annual Fund
- No endowment
- Member NAIS, ACIS
- website: telluridemtnschool.org

School History

Telluride Mountain School was founded in 1998 with four students and a single teacher working around a kitchen table in the Town of Telluride. Three local families joined together to realize a shared vision: an exceptional learning environment that would inspire and ground their children in principles that became known as the school's four "pillars:" challenging academics, outdoor education, a values-based curriculum and service learning. The school expanded quickly, relocating in January 1999 to Telluride Mountain Village.

The Mountain School's preschool and kindergarten program began as a separate school, Telluride Montessori School, founded in 1995. Initially, seven preschoolers and a teacher worked together in the rented basement of Christ Presbyterian Church in the Town of Telluride.

Recognizing a shared mission and values, Telluride Mountain School merged with Telluride Montessori School in 2004. The two schools are now fully integrated, working under one 501(c)(3) designation, a single Board of Trustees, a single administration, and coordinated guiding principles reflecting the developmental levels of the children served. The preschool-kindergarten program is referred to as Montessori at Mountain School.

The future of Telluride Mountain School became more certain in 2005 when the school completed a $4.3 million capital campaign. These funds allowed the school to purchase a former manufacturing facility and convert the building into a permanent home for the school with a capacity of 134 students -- large enough to house the whole preschool through high school program. The Mountain School has been at its current location since September 2006.

The school earned accreditation by the Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS) in 2007 and then became a full member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). The school graduated its first senior in June 2007, and has since graduated four others.

Mission

Telluride Mountain School delivers a program of challenging academics that promotes critical thinking, aesthetic expression and ethical behavior, while encompassing a commitment to community service, global citizenship and engagement with the natural environment. The school culture embraces independence, personal responsibility, compassion, curiosity and joy.

Core Values

Respect: We honor self and community, and value that which is different.

Love of Learning: We foster lasting curiosity, creativity and passion in a challenging and safe environment.

Responsibility: We understand the impact of personal actions, and uphold service as an integral part of scholarship and citizenship.

Integrity: We adhere to values and ethics that enable us to approach our studies and lives with courage, pride, honesty and empathy.

Motto

Laborate Dure … Ludite Dure ("Work Hard … Play Hard")

Campus

Telluride Mountain School owns and occupies its own 14,000 square foot facility. Centrally located in the Lawson Hill community between the Town of Telluride and Town of Mountain Village, the former Scott Fly Rod manufacturing plant underwent a $1.3 million renovation to ensure a spacious and inspiring learning environment for the entire school community. Architectural services for the building remodel were provided by Ewers Architecture of Golden,

CO, a firm specializing in environmentally sustainable design. The facility includes a studio for the Rock and Roll Academy music program, a "school within a school." Nearby amenities include playing fields, public transportation, hiking/biking trails and the San Miguel River.

Setting and Location

Telluride Mountain School is located three miles outside the historic Town of Telluride, a destination ski and golf community surrounded by the dramatic peaks of Southwestern Colorado's San Juan Mountains. The small Victorian mountain hamlet of Telluride was settled in the late 1870s as a gold and mining town. By the late 1970s, with the opening of the Telluride Ski Resort, Telluride found its economic niche in skiing and summer festival tourism.

While small and remotely located, the Telluride community is socially, politically, athletically, culturally and philanthropically active, the latter evidenced by the more than 70 registered nonprofits operating in the region. The Mountain School benefits greatly from working closely with many of these organizations throughout the school year.

Curriculum/Program

The school's program includes its academic, experiential and athletic programs. Throughout these programs runs a thread of values education; faculty in every instance rely on the school's core values to help students develop ethical behavior and critical thinking as it relates to how we treat one another and our environment.

Academic: The school culture holds high expectations for student achievement and provides guidance for each child to meet and exceed personal and program goals in the academic curriculum. In addition to a traditional core curriculum of language arts, math, science and social studies, students participate in comprehensive arts, technology and foreign language study. Integrated studies with a strong emphasis on critical thought, discussion, self-expression and individual interests promote a lifelong love of learning.

Experiential: The experiential program is a key component of the school's identity and the students' experience. Experiential education is a synthesis of three major components: outdoor adventure, cultural and natural immersion, and service learning. The Mountain School commits substantial resources in terms of class time, staff and budget to develop vanguard experiential programming, with students spending up to five weeks of the school year in the field pursuing outdoor education and experiences related to the academic curriculum. Most fall trips feature outdoor education (e.g., hiking, backpacking, kayaking), while spring trips to regional, national and international locales relate to classroom studies and service learning.

Experiential learning takes place in the classroom as well, where active, hands-on work is central to the curriculum at all grade levels. Learning in all disciplines is communicated through traditional written work, as well as through media, public speaking and the arts. Each school year culminates with a spring Immersion Project, where students in Grades 1-12 become "expert" on a subject of interest to them personally, submitting an informative research paper, visual display and oral presentation during the annual all-school "Expo."

Athletic: The athletic program features a five-month winter sports program, where the school schedule is adapted to accommodate virtually all students participating in skiing or snowboarding and other winter sports (including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and ice climbing). The school enthusiastically supports competitive athletes by accommodating intensive training and travel schedules.

More traditional physical education takes place in the spring and fall seasons, including games and sports. A unique feature of the school is the Friday afternoon all-school p.e., where students in Grades 1-12 join together in multi-age sports and games with the entire faculty.

Outside of school, many students of all ages participate in organized team sports sponsored by the Town of Telluride, clubs and/or the public school, including soccer, ice hockey, cheerleading, baseball, lacrosse, track and field, etc.

The school has four effective divisions:

Montessori at Mountain School serves up to forty children from age two years-nine months to age six, and includes the kindergarten year. Two traditional Montessori classrooms are fully equipped and each is staffed with a certified Montessori teacher and an assistant. Students engage in math, language, sensorial, practical life and cultural curricula, including art, music, Spanish language, and cultural geography. They develop the social skills and learning attitudes necessary for their future academic studies.

The *Lower School* comprises Grades 1-4 in two multi-age classrooms of approximately 12 to 14 children. The curriculum incorporates many aspects of the Montessori tradition, while transitioning towards a more conventional, teacher-centered model and academic curriculum. Students engage in reading and writing, math, social studies, and science studies in a homeroom setting and go out for music and art. A Lower School Spanish specialist provides foreign language instruction.

The *Intermediate School* comprises Grades 5-8 in two or three multi-age classrooms of up to 14 students. Students begin to follow a schedule and move between classrooms to work with specialist instructors. The curriculum includes humanities, math following a college preparatory track, general science and an academic Spanish curriculum. The art program becomes increasingly academic. Music features a unique “school within a school” program, the Rock and Roll Academy, where students work together as bands.

The *Upper School* comprises Grades 9-12 in small multi-age classrooms, with total enrollment typically fewer than 20 students. It follows a traditional academic progression with the addition of extensive experiential components, as described above. The Upper School division presents unique opportunities and challenges because of its size. Opportunities include the flexibility to travel, innovate, and adapt curriculum to meet student needs. Challenges include the inherent inefficiency of very small class sizes; the challenges of multi-age groupings spanning up to four years; and concerns related to a small social and academic peer group. The school is developing new programming to retain and attract families to the Upper School division; implementation will be phased-in, beginning in the 2010-11 school year.

Students

The student body at Telluride Mountain School comprises approximately 110 students from preschool through high school. Average class size is eight (with a maximum of 14 per class in Grades 1-12), and the student-to-teacher ratio is 1:7. Enrollment through the middle grades is healthy, with room for growth in Grades 8-12.

Students at the Mountain School are bright and affable. Within the school, expectations for personal behavior are high. The school culture and low student-to-teacher ratios promote close relationships between the faculty and students, and as a result, students are noticeably comfortable and candid in their relationships with adults both inside and outside the school. Friendships exist across age groups and genders, encouraged by the multi-age classrooms, regular activities within four school "families," as well as a culture of understanding and respect.

Academically, students include those bound for top secondary and post-secondary schools and those achieving more typically, including a small portion of students with mild learning disabilities. Admissions are only selective in classes that have reached capacity, yet all students work to their highest potential and together achieve in the top quartile as measured against national norms on the ERB CTP-4 assessment.

Mountain School students participate widely in the broader Telluride community in theater, art and athletics and are generally known for being high-achieving, responsible and respectful.

Families

The Mountain School draws students from throughout the Telluride Region, including the neighboring towns of Placerville, Sawpit, Norwood, Ophir, Rico, Ridgway and Ouray, as well as students visiting and relocating from out-of-state. The school promotes diversity in its enrollment and is successful in attracting and supporting families from different socio-economic backgrounds. Families are active and involved in their children's education, frequently at the school and regularly communicating with teachers and the administration. Twice-weekly Morning Meetings provide a venue for parents to participate and observe the school community in action, as students make presentations, announce their extracurricular events in sports and the arts, and otherwise share their accomplishments with the school body.

Parents support the school via participation in the Parents' Association, which provides volunteer opportunities. Each May, the PA manages the school's largest annual fundraiser, *Friday Night At The Movies*. The PA also organizes Monday bakes sales, Wednesday faculty lunch, Friday student pizza lunch, gear exchanges, faculty gifts and the annual Holiday Party. Select PA parents support the school by representing their respective student's class as a class representative. The goal of the class rep is to mentor new families through their first year at the Mountain School, to host fall class suppers, and to generally encourage participation and answer questions as school ambassadors.

Faculty

The Mountain School employs 14 full-time faculty members and two teaching assistants. Half have completed or are pursuing graduate degrees in their fields. Many are the products of independent secondary education. Generally, the faculty is young, well educated, enthusiastic about the outdoors and the experiential program of the school, and able to embrace the school's mission and values. A hallmark of the faculty is that they are experienced travelers; most have significant experience living, working, adventuring and/or volunteering abroad. Despite two years of frozen salaries, all 2009-10 faculty (with the exception of one new mother) are returning for the 2010-11 school year.

Administration

Telluride Mountain School is currently lead by an Interim Head of School who is in the second year of a two-year term. He succeeded a nine-year Head who left in June 2009 to pursue a career in the private sector.

In addition to the Head of School, the Mountain School employs two full-time administrators, the Associate Head of School and the Program Coordinator who together oversee the program, facility and operations under the direction of the Head. Additionally, the school employs a Business Manager and a three-quarter-time Director of Development. Two faculty-administrators fulfill the roles of part-time Dean of Studies and Dean of Students, while another teacher serves part-time as Assistant to the Administration.

Governance

Telluride Mountain School is governed by a self-perpetuating independent Board of Trustees. School bylaws allow for the appointment of up to 15 trustees, but no fewer than three, including the Head of School who sits on the board as a non-voting, ex officio member. There are currently nine trustees, including a founder of the Mountain School and the founder of Telluride Montessori School. Other than the Head, all but one are current or former parents.

The Board of Trustees is supported by the Advisory Board of Trustees, a formalized network of supporters who work to promote the advancement of Telluride Mountain School, beyond the smaller, working Board of Trustees and enrolled families. There are currently 11 Advisory Trustees, including former Trustees, current and former parents, and part-time residents of the Telluride community.

Accreditation

The school earned full accreditation through the Association of Colorado Independent Schools in 2007 and is a full member of the National Association of Independent Schools. The reaccreditation process will likely begin with a mission review and parent survey in the 2010-11 academic year; a self-study will take place in 2011-12.

The Future

Telluride Mountain School has grown rapidly over its short 11-year existence from four students in 1998 to an enrollment of over 100 today. This was achieved with the strong support of committed donors, parents and staff. Rapid growth presented challenges in

developing and building the school culture and maintaining a strong focus on the school's mission. By virtually every measure, these challenges have been met, presenting the next generation of school leaders with an opportunity to bring the school to its next level of maturity. The next Head of the Mountain School will join a program that is confident in its ability to meet high standards, a community that has proven its willingness to dig deep to support the school, a dedicated faculty, and a well-established, highly regarded curriculum.

An important challenge for the school is to grow enrollment and bolster financial sustainability. Even modestly larger enrollment will benefit the school in many ways. It will create a larger social and academic environment for students. It will create more school families, increasing the pool of potential donors. By achieving economies of scale in operations, it will reduce the size of the Annual Fund to a more manageable size.

To attract and retain additional qualified students, the school is developing an innovative Upper School program that will deliver an even more exciting experiential learning program without sacrificing core college prep curriculum, potentially supported by online learning in appropriate subjects. To successfully launch this program and explore other growth opportunities is among the challenges to be overseen by the school's next Head.

Financial Statements

Detailed financial statements and forecasts will be provided to candidates as appropriate during the selection process.

Qualifications

Professional experience

- Has substantial experience as an administrative leader in independent school(s)
- Has demonstrated experience as an effective fundraiser for independent school(s)
- Has financial acumen, can effectively manage school finances
- Experienced in curriculum development
- Has strong administrative skills, can function independently without dedicated administrative support

Leadership style

- Is a dynamic, ambitious and compassionate leader who will inspire current and potential faculty, parents, students
- Has strong communication skills (listening, writing, speaking)
- Is a hands-on worker and manager who can lead through the full problem-solving cycle (identification, discussion, solution, follow-up)

Cultural fit

- Desires to live in Town of Telluride and engage broadly with the community (beyond immediate school constituencies)

- Understands, embraces and embodies the school mission, core values and motto
  - ethical, of unquestionable integrity
  - intellectually curious, a life-long learner
  - engages with the natural environment (enjoys physical activity/sports and spending time outdoors)
  - appreciates the arts
  - an avid traveler (international)
  - compassionate, warm
  - joyful, a sense of humor
- Understands and embraces a hands-on/experiential learning approach, including Montessori curriculum for the early years
- Understands and embraces opportunities for online learning

Compensation

- Salary and benefits commensurate with candidate's experience and qualifications
- Initial 2-year rolling contract

Application Process

Applications should be submitted by September 30, 2010 and will be reviewed on a rolling basis beginning immediately. At the election of the Search Committee, additional applications may be reviewed through early November. Initial phone/Skype interviews will commence in late August, with finalist visits in November and, if necessary, early December. An offer will be extended in late December.

Interested candidates should send the following materials:

- Resume
- One-page cover letter explaining why you would like to be Head of School for Telluride Mountain School, including the description of a personal experience that is indicative of why you would be a good leader for this school
- Statement of educational philosophy
- List of 3-5 references with contact information, including 2+ board members with whom you have worked, and 1+ teacher whom you have supervised (Note: References will not be contacted without notice to candidates)

Electronic submissions in Microsoft Word or pdf document to:

Diana Mulligan
Trustee and Candidate Coordinator
Head Search Committee
headsearch@telluridemtnschool.org