

MIDDLE SCHOOL HEAD SEARCH

ALTA VISTA SCHOOL

San Francisco, California

altavistaschool.org

Start Date: July 2025



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

To prepare students to thrive as creative thinkers, innovators, and catalysts for positive change in the world.

Vision

Alta Vista School aims to help children grow dynamically, by providing them with a vigorous, interactive educational experience that engages their imagination and nourishes their curiosity, while teaching them how to think effectively and solve problems. With an emphasis on science, math, engineering, the arts, and social emotional learning, Alta Vista School encourages students to go beyond a strong academic foundation to pursue their passions as well as engage their community and environment.

At a Glance



Established
2010



Middle School enrollment
103



Faculty in the Middle School
17



Average homeroom size
14



Students of color
51%



Financial aid awarded
\$1.3M



Faculty with advanced degrees
37

Enrollment: 325
Zip codes represented: 30
Total faculty: 74
Faculty of color: 35%
Student/teacher ratio in the Middle School: 14:1

Students receiving tuition assistance: 21%
Annual operating budget \$12.5M
STEAM-based curriculum: 100%
Campus size: 37,000 sq ft (23,000 sq ft at the Lower School and 14,000 sq ft at the Middle School)



Overview

Founded in San Francisco in 2010 as an inquiry-based STEAM program, Alta Vista School (AVS) has grown quickly and now enrolls more than 300 students in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 5 on the Portola neighborhood campus and Grades 6 through 8 on the Mission campus. AVS's STEAM-powered curriculum fosters creative engagement with relevant issues within an integrated, multi-disciplinary framework. AVS students question, analyze, iterate, fail, persist, and create. They learn to see the world's complexity from multiple perspectives. Students also learn to be inclusive, responsible, and respectful, creating a culture of kindness and acceptance. True to its mission, AVS is deeply committed "to preparing its students to thrive as creative thinkers, innovators, and catalysts for positive change in the world."

Since its founding, Alta Vista has quickly built an enviable reputation in the Bay Area education world and the school has recently received a seven-year accreditation from the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). Last summer marked an exciting new chapter for the school as Head of School Sean Hamer concluded a successful five-year tenure and the community welcomed Rob Cousins as Alta Vista's new Head of School.

The Middle School program graduated its first eighth-grade class in 2018. Under the guidance of Middle School Head Dr. Liz Davis, the division has matured and grown, and AVS graduates matriculate to an [impressive list of Bay Area high schools and nationally ranked boarding schools](#), where they are known for their creativity, problem solving skills, and community spirit. The next Middle School Head will join a warm and deeply engaged community and lead a whole-child, progressive, inquiry-based program tailored to the particular academic and developmental needs of middle schoolers and aligned with the AVS mission.



Opportunities and Challenges

Leadership and Vision in Middle School Instruction

In Alta Vista's evolution from a start-up to a mature school, AVS has cultivated a dynamic academic environment where teacher autonomy and creativity flourish alongside clear professional standards. The next Middle School Head will have the opportunity to shape Alta Vista's future by:

- Engaging deeply with the program through active classroom presence
- Contributing to the evolving curriculum with fresh perspectives
- Building upon the culture of innovation while maintaining instructional excellence
- Mentoring and supporting both veteran and new faculty members

Supporting the Lower to Middle School Transition

As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Middle School Head plays a vital role in facilitating students' transition between divisions. This leader will:

- Partner with colleagues to support families as they move from a project-based, inquiry-focused Lower School program to the Middle School experience
- Maintain an interdisciplinary approach while preparing students for departmentalized high school learning
- Collaborate with the Lower School team to understand curriculum connections and student needs
- Build meaningful relationships with AVS families before their children transition to Middle School
- Continue Alta Vista's tradition of student-led engineering challenges and learning celebrations

Strategic Leadership Opportunities

The timing is perfect for a dynamic leader to join AVS as the school implements its new strategic plan. Key initiatives include:

- Advancing STEAM curriculum embracing the recommendations of the Leadership + Design group
- Leading the approach to standards-based assessment using Alta Vista's innovative mastery scale (MPEN)
- Using graduate data to continuously enhance the program
- Strengthening the inclusive community that celebrates all forms of diversity

Championing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

At AVS, the commitment to DEIB is woven into the fabric of the community. The Middle School Head will build upon this foundation by:

- Fostering a “down to earth” and welcoming school culture
- Strengthening a collaborative classroom approach that celebrates student differences
- Supporting faculty in creating inclusive learning environments
- Partnering with families to ensure all voices are heard and valued
- Leading initiatives that enhance the school’s ability to welcome and support a truly diverse community

Qualities

Professional Experience and Expertise

- An experienced educator with five or more years of elementary or middle school teaching experience
- A curriculum leader who possesses strong understanding of middle school pedagogy
- An instructional leader who can provide concrete feedback to support professional growth
- A demonstrated champion of diversity, equity, and inclusion with experience leading diverse communities

Leadership Style

- A highly visible and joyful presence in both the Middle School and broader K-8 community
- A consensus builder who is open to input while capable of making hard decisions
- An outgoing “connector” who builds authentic relationships with all constituencies
- A team player who collaborates effectively across divisions

Student-Centered Approach

- An educator who demonstrates deep understanding of adolescent development
- An enthusiastic leader who embodies lifelong learning
- A positive presence who genuinely enjoys interacting with middle school students
- A participant who actively engages in all-school events and student life

Communication and Relationship Skills

- A clear and effective communicator, both verbally and in writing
- An empathetic listener who builds trust with faculty, students, and families
- A leader who can navigate diverse cultural and social situations respectfully
- A professional who maintains appropriate boundaries while being approachable and accessible

The AVS community is one where students question, analyze, iterate, fail, persist, and create. Alta Vista seeks a Middle School Head who will help write the next chapter of its story while honoring the qualities that make the school special.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Alta Vista School.

[School Website](#)

[High School Matriculation](#)

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[About San Francisco, California](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each.

References will not be contacted without the candidate's permission. Please submit materials to:

Karen Whitaker
Senior Consultant
karen.whitaker@carneysandoe.com

Charlotte Brownlee
Consultant
charlotte.brownlee@carneysandoe.com

We would appreciate receiving your application materials by Friday, December 13, 2024.

The full-time equivalent salary range for this position is \$150 to 200k. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.