

# LOWER SCHOOL DIRECTOR SEARCH

## MOUNDS PARK ACADEMY

St. Paul, Minnesota

[moundsparkacademy.org](http://moundsparkacademy.org)

Start Date: July 2025



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES

[CARNEYSANDOE.COM](http://CARNEYSANDOE.COM)

# MISSION STATEMENT

We teach students to think independently, communicate effectively, and act with respect and integrity in a diverse community that models intellectual ambition, global responsibility, and the joy of learning.

## MOTTO

Dream Big. Do Right.

## AT A GLANCE



Established  
**1982**



Total students in the  
Lower School  
**178**



Total faculty  
**78**



Student/teacher ratio  
**7:1**



Students of color  
**36%**



Financial aid awarded  
**\$4.3 million**



Faculty with advanced degrees  
**60%**

Total students: 575

Faculty of color: 6

Students receiving aid: 39%

Endowment: \$6.9 million



## OVERVIEW

Mounds Park Academy is a top ranked PreK-grade 12 private college preparatory school serving students from 77 different zip codes throughout the greater Twin Cities community. Spanning 32-acres and home to a diverse community of students, faculty, and families, MPA is a vibrant learning community where academic rigor prepares students to stir the human spirit, stand for justice, and shake the world.

MPA offers a wide variety of academic and extracurricular offerings while providing enriched individualized attention through small class sizes and a connected community. Here, faculty and staff embrace every child in a welcoming community built on shared values.

Mounds Park Academy is seeking an experienced and inspiring educational leader to serve as its next Lower School Director. The Lower School Director is responsible for leading the PreK-grade 4 division and for overseeing the day-to-day operations, academic and co-curricular programs, student life, faculty professional development, and other related aspects of the Lower School. As a member of the school's leadership team, the Lower School Director works closely and collaboratively with colleagues across the school and in partnership with the Head of School. The ideal candidate will be a forward-thinking school administrator aligned with the MPA mission and values looking to make an impact on the community.

## THE SCHOOL

Founded in the fall of 1982, Mounds Park Academy opened its doors with slightly more than 100 students. The reputation of this amazing school spread quickly and within four years MPA quadrupled its enrollment and celebrated its first graduating class of nine students.

Today, MPA has approximately 575 students in PreK through grade 12, and graduates as many as 65 students each year who then move on to well-respected colleges and universities throughout the United States and abroad. From its inception through today, MPA has provided rigorous learning opportunities for students in a nurturing environment, establishing itself as a top-tier college-preparatory school in the Twin Cities.



MPA is a school for dreamers and doers. The school engages students in a rigorous college-preparatory experience through an academic program that is demanding, but not draining, and goes far beyond memorization. Students apply the principles of design thinking to create real-world solutions utilizing the latest technology and are challenged to apply their understanding to stir the human spirit, stand for justice, and shake the world. Throughout the program, students cultivate meaningful relationships across each grade level, and are encouraged to question the answers and find their confidence as they express their ideas. At MPA students learn that their identity in the world is not measured by a test score, but by the depth and decency of their impact on the world.

The continued advancement of Mounds Park Academy's academic priorities is guided by a three-year strategic plan called *2024ward*. Specifically, to the academic portion of the plan, it calls for MPA to empower students to live, learn, and thrive in our increasingly complex and globalized society. The primary work will include creating customized pathways of learning for students through curricular innovation and leveraging advances in educational technology. Goals include:

1. Drive curricular innovation to enhance the student experience and increase mastery, ensuring every student has a competitive advantage in our globalized society.
2. Provide integrated whole-child support services that enhance each student's academic, emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Additional priorities of *2024ward* include:

- Ensure an equitable and inclusive community.
- Affirm and inspire our exceptional and dedicated faculty and staff through competitive compensation.
- Enhance institutional capacity by continuing to strengthen financial sustainability.

The school is accredited by and is a member of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States. It is also a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and The College Board.



## ACADEMICS

At every grade level, MPA fosters a spirit of innovation that fuels creative thinking and allows students to experience the joy of learning. The academic environment is individualized and challenging, but not overly competitive. Teachers emphasize collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, and deep understanding over memorization, creating active and engaging learning opportunities with real-world applications. MPA prepares students for college, and more importantly, for life, cultivating students who forever *dream big and do right*.

### **The Lower School (PreK-Grade 4)**

The Mounds Park Academy Lower School is designed to provide a joyful and nurturing environment with a focus on developing the whole child. Lower School is colorful, lively, and inviting. It is also calm and safe so that young learners feel free to explore, ask questions, and develop a sense of who they are. Activities are engaging, hands-on, and challenging as students are given the tools and confidence to explore and discover applicable solutions and apply deep content knowledge in real-world ways.

Lower School lessons are integrated around central themes that touch on all the major disciplines, including math, social studies, science, language arts, and health—as well as many specialty topics. World language is taught several times a week; music and art classes occur on alternating days; physical education occurs daily; drama classes occur several times per week; and technology and library classes are taught once per week.

As students master skills and grow in intellectual sophistication, the curriculum becomes more complex. For example, kindergarteners explore a myriad of topics as they learn the alphabet and embark on the first steps of a long journey of public speaking as they share this information with their peers and older students. Building on these skills, the second grade “Traveling Teddies” program teaches students about world geography and cultures as the students’ small stuffed animals are mailed around the world to acquaintances who return postcards from each stop. By fourth grade, students are combining writing, history, art, and debate into the study of current and historic civil rights issues.



## THE ARTS

The arts at MPA engage the whole person and build skills in creativity, self-expression, and social interaction. Lower School courses give students a chance to explore and experiment with multiple forms and mediums to unlock their own unique talents and passions.

The visual arts curriculum in the Lower School helps develop fine motor skills, creative thinking, and self-expression. Students engage as artists as they study concepts, vocabulary, and techniques through multiple forms of media. The performing arts in the Lower School offer ample opportunities for students to shine in both music and theatre. Students explore music through singing, playing instruments, listening, and movement. Creative drama is an integrative process that develops imaginative thought and creative expression in children. Through use of movement, pantomime, story dramatization, improvisation, and group discussion, children acquire language and communication skills, social awareness, problem-solving abilities, self-concept enhancement, an understanding of theatre, and life skills.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mounds Park Academy strongly believes health and wellness is an integral component in the academic experience and provides balance to students' lives while fostering school spirit. With first-rate facilities, the daily physical education program promotes development in motor coordination, spatial awareness, and personal confidence. Through the curriculum students improve their foundational movement and coordination abilities and develop strong cooperative skills. Lower School students also have the opportunity to participate in summer sports camps.

As students enter the Middle School, they can participate in athletic teams including cross country, soccer, alpine skiing, basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, and track and field. MPA proudly boasts 11 team state championships and 28 individual state championships, with many students continuing to play at the collegiate level.

## SCHOOL LIFE

Mounds Park Academy ensures students have opportunities to explore and grow in confidence in their skills and passions. Knowing that students consistently perform better academically when they are involved in other parts of the school, extracurricular activity involvement is expected and encouraged, and has a profound effect on the culture and character of the school. Lower School activities include art enrichment, chess club, cooking class, golf, karate, STEM club, swim club and more.



The extensive before and after school care program for Lower School students called Panther Club is a safe and nurturing program in which children are allowed choices in play areas, arts and crafts, as well as large muscle activities and games. Panther Club includes planned lessons, time for study and homework, science activities, arts and crafts, age-appropriate games, indoor and outdoor play, and a daily snack.

## Campus

Since MPA's founding, not only has the student body flourished, but the sprawling 32-acre campus has as well. MPA expanded and enhanced its facilities through the years with the addition of the Lansing Center, a four-court sports center with 200m running track, full weight room, training rooms, and stadium seating for 800 people; Fine Arts facilities including a black box theatre, scene shop, multi-use art gallery, ceramics, painting, drawing, and photography studios, band, orchestra and choir rooms, and The Nicholson Performing Arts Center; more than a dozen new Upper School classrooms and science labs, an Upper School student commons, and a state-of-the-art Makerspace. The fall of 2019 brought the new Family Commons, kitchen, and library to the heart of the campus.

## St. Paul, Minnesota

St. Paul, the capital of Minnesota, adjoins Minneapolis on the west, and together they form the Twin Cities metropolitan area. St. Paul itself, situated in the southeastern part of the state, lies along a deep S-shaped bend of the Mississippi and is built on a series of bluffs rising from the river to the surrounding plains. Nature is an integral part of the city's identity: eight lakes are located wholly or partially within the municipal boundaries. St. Paul is a major education, health care, and industrial center; highly diversified manufacturers—from automobiles to medical devices to 3M—call the city home. It is a truly wonderful place to live and work and draws people from all corners of the country who seek a vibrant community of intelligent, adventurous, diverse, and hard-working peers.



Minneapolis and St. Paul are home to a thriving arts community, dynamic nightlife, and a nationally renowned restaurant scene. The Twin Cities boasts more theater seats per capita than any U.S. city except New York, and its nightclubs and live music venues (headlined by the famous First Avenue) are legendary. Foodies enjoy the wide range of Twin Cities restaurants and chefs, which are often featured on various Food Network shows, and sports fans can cheer on Minnesota’s professional sports teams: the Minnesota Vikings (NFL), the Minnesota Wild (NHL), the Minnesota Twins (MLB), the Minnesota Timberwolves (NBA), and the four-time WNBA champion Minnesota Lynx. Families and visitors also enjoy the Minnesota Children’s Museum, Como Park Zoo & Conservatory (the nation’s oldest free zoo), and the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Minnesota’s legendary winters are beloved as an opportunity for outdoor recreation: skiing, snowshoeing, and skating are all popular and prevalent in the Twin Cities region. Winter may also find you enjoying one of the Twin Cities’ many winter festivals, such as St. Paul’s Winter Carnival or Luminary Loppet in Minneapolis. All year round, residents of Minneapolis and St. Paul take advantage of the area’s renowned park system, which includes 52 parks, eight special recreation features, and 340 miles of interconnected trails. Popular with residents and visitors alike, the Twin Cities’ regional parks boast more than 47 million visits every year—even more than the famed Mall of America, one of the nation’s largest shopping destinations, located near the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport in suburban Bloomington.

With so much to offer, St. Paul is a fantastic place to visit, but an even better place to live.





## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Mounds Park Academy has experienced enrollment growth over the past few years, and there has been an attendant addition of faculty and staff in that time. As the school—and the Lower School division specifically—looks forward, there are opportunities to build bridges between more veteran faculty and newer hires, between the Lower School division and the PreK-12 institution, between faculty and families, etc. MPA knows itself as a community well. The belief in teaching the “whole child” is universally shared, and there is also an openness to shoring up existing practices and thinking creatively and collaboratively about new program offerings to make MPA’s approach to teaching the “whole child” as excellent as it can be. Recent initiatives could use a leader to help with implementation and adoption, all while staying true to the school’s founding mission.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

In seeking a new Lower School Director, Mounds Park Academy desires candidates who possess the following identifying traits:

- An experienced educator, who has taught students at grade level, who is both joyful and creative, and who believes in MPA’s “whole child” approach to education;
- A collaborative, relational leader, who will work well on the school’s leadership team, connecting the appropriate dots between the Lower School division and the broader PreK-12 program;
- An advocate for age-appropriate, student-centered teaching and learning, who will listen first and draw upon existing expertise in the faculty and seek out opportunities to thoughtfully evolve the school’s program;



- Someone who exhibits a true, non-performative commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging;
- A transparent and effective communicator, both in oral and written formats;
- Someone who can coach and support a faculty who have come through COVID well, but who (like all faculty right now) need an advocate and a cheerleader;
- A systems thinker who has shown an ability to be both strategic and tactical;
- Experience supporting neurodiverse students, familiarity with Universal Design for Learning, and demonstrated commitment to social-emotional learning.

## 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) to:

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