

# HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

## THE ORCHARD SCHOOL

Indianapolis, Indiana

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

Start Date: July 2025



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES

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

# Mission and Philosophy

The Orchard School's mission is to develop and educate the whole child. As a progressive, non-sectarian, independent school, Orchard commits to advancing each student's academic success, self-confidence, open-mindedness, ethical character, leadership, and love of learning.

This is the 103rd year of successful outcomes at The Orchard School. Orchard provides a Progressive education with a focus on experiential hands-on learning. The 43-acre wooded campus provides many outdoor learning spaces letting us stay true to our commitment that nature is the best teacher.

## At a Glance



Established  
1922



Enrollment  
490



Total faculty  
75



Student-faculty ratio  
6.6:1



Students of color  
29%



Financial aid awarded  
\$2M



Faculty with advanced degrees  
43%



Campus size  
43 acres



Faculty of color  
9%



Annual operating budget  
\$13M



Endowment  
\$39M



Students receiving aid  
32%





## Overview

In 1922, nine innovative, visionary mothers started The Orchard School to provide an alternative to traditional education and they embraced the pedagogy of John Dewey. The Orchard School is deeply committed to its mission of educating the whole child through a progressive education. Evidence of that is seen and felt when walking its halls, visiting its classrooms, and exploring its beautiful natural setting. Visitors will find a truly inclusive community; for decades the school has had an intentional commitment to be diverse and welcoming and truly reflective of the greater community. Orchard is a premier opportunity for the right candidate.

Families are drawn to Orchard because of the child-centered developmental approach to learning and the small class sizes that allow students to be known by their teachers in a joyful setting. Orchard provides an experiential, constructivist approach to learning that prepares children to think for themselves and develop a life-long love of learning. All schools want to be places where children love to learn, and the committed faculty of Orchard achieves that in an environment where children are deeply known and cared for. To interact with Orchard students is to encounter confident, kind and thoughtful individuals. Orchard students graduate with a deep self-knowledge and the confidence to take risks in their own learning journey and to speak for themselves. This confidence comes from finding success in curricular experiences like performing on stage as early as Kindergarten, building identity boxes in the Makerspace, challenging themselves on the ropes course as they learn about gravity, and giving speeches at graduation. Because faculty are the very heart of Orchard, the Boards made a commitment to a competitive pay increase this year.

This coed, non-sectarian school, serves students in preschool through grade 8. The school is located on a 43-acre campus near the [Meridian Hills](#) neighborhood on the North Side of Indianapolis. Over the years the school has made significant additions to its facility and is unique in that it is internally connected allowing older and younger students to interact as they move throughout the building. Significantly, with Nature as Teacher serving as a central tenet of the whole school, nearly every internal space allows for easy access to the outdoors where teaching and learning continues through the school's celebrated outdoor education program.

Orchard is a school with many long-standing traditions that has cultivated lasting relationships with generations of families. Fall on the Orchard campus is extraordinary and children spend their days exploring the woods, identifying plants and leaves and celebrating with marshmallows over a bonfire. Every March, Orchard families and alumni attend the annual pancake breakfast, enjoying maple syrup from Orchard's very own maple trees tapped by the students themselves. There isn't a day throughout the year that one won't find muddy boots in the hallways. Pageants, plays, concerts, class trips and family festivals all serve to create memories and bonds that last a lifetime.



The next leader will benefit from an ongoing relationship with the families of the founding mothers and other leaders of the Indianapolis community over the last 100 years. Parents and students care deeply for their school, and they are justifiably proud of the impact progressive education philosophy has on their lives. The next head of school will enthusiastically embrace this passion and work with all constituencies to continue to move the school forward.

## Opportunities and Challenges

The Orchard School occupies a distinct and special spot in the independent school landscape of Indianapolis. Families are drawn to Orchard because they have observed the impact that the program has on students. To be convinced of the value of an Orchard education, one only needs to meet an Orchard student and experience the self-confidence, the clear thinking and kindness that they possess. For over one hundred years the school has maintained its belief that academic success is achieved by following a progressive pedagogy that opens the minds and hearts of all students through a holistic, child-centered teaching and learning program.

In addition to the duties regularly associated with overseeing the daily operations of the School, the next leader will possess qualities to effectively address the following:

- Join with the faculty and Boards to continue to provide a progressive education, while defining excellence in a Preschool-8 school;
- Understand and embrace the unique history of Orchard and appreciate all the bonds to the greater Indianapolis community;
- Ensure that the mission commitment to advancing each student's academic success is realized. By working with the academic leaders, provide a program that fosters a culture of intellectual curiosity and allows each student to reach their full potential while adhering to the progressive mission of the school.
- Determine how best to support those students who learn differently and how the school can best challenge its most able students;
- Initiate ways that relationships with families are strengthened and expanded;
- Support students and parents with their academic aspirations;





- Focus its admission messaging and enrollment management;
- Establish a robust professional development program so that every teacher at Orchard continues to grow in their knowledge and appreciation of progressive education and best practices;
- Identify and implement the administrative structure that can best support the work of the faculty;
- Cultivate and expand the culture of philanthropy at Orchard;
- Identify facility needs that need to be addressed, both short and long term, including development of a long-range campus master plan.

## Qualifications and Personal Attributes

The Orchard School is seeking in its next Head of School an innovative and inspiring educational leader who is eager to make a long-term commitment to the community and the work. The next Head of School will offer the following qualifications and qualities:

- A love for children and appreciation of their developmental differences and delights, which are apparent daily in a Preschool-8 school;
- A joyful, dynamic and engaging presence, visible and active in all areas of school life;
- Attention to current best educational practices and ability to combine that understanding with an appreciation for Orchard School's mission of progressive education, preferably with deep experience working in a progressive school;
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with inspiration, clarity, and decisiveness, both in writing and in person;
- A collaborative and inclusive leadership style built on approachability, responsiveness, humility, and transparency;
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy;
- The skills required to deftly manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy;
- Experience recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and leading talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty;
- Demonstrated track record of successfully cultivating philanthropic relationships;
- Good business acumen to manage the operating budget and determine how best to allocate resources in conjunction with the Boards;
- Ability to work effectively with the school's governance structure.

# Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about The Orchard School.

[School Website](#)

[Virtual Tour](#)

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[Beyond Orchard](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[About Indianapolis, Indiana](#)



# 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;
- Selected candidates may be asked to submit responses to writing prompts and a list of professional references to:

**Burke Zalosh**  
Consultant  
burke.zalosh@carneysandoe.com

**Robert D. Vitalo**  
Vice President, Search and Consulting Services  
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