

# Head of School Search

Information for Candidates and Leadership Profile



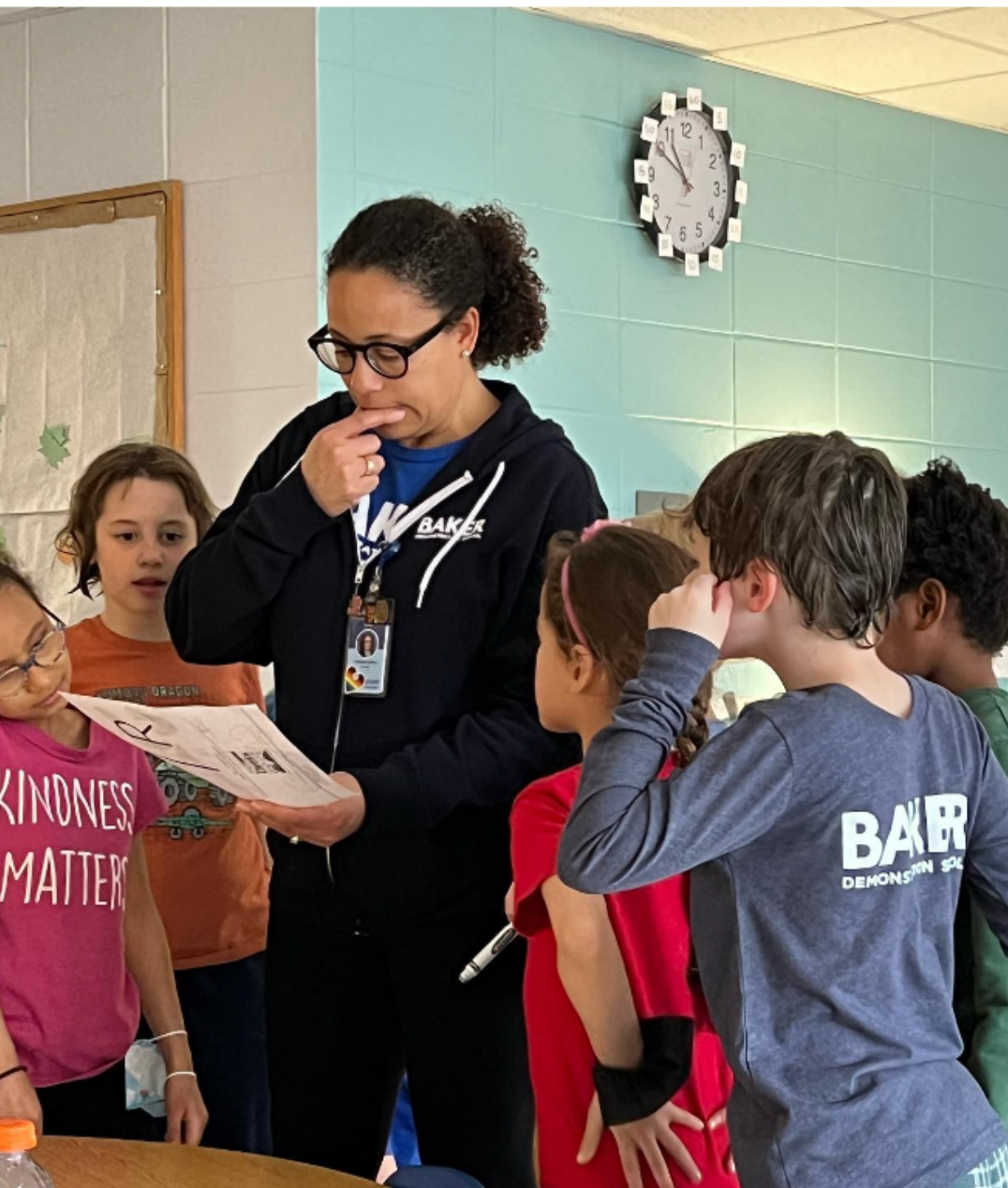
PRESENTED BY

Nat Conard, Partner

André Withers, Partner

# The Baker Mission & Vision

***We champion an exemplary progressive education, which cultivates an intrinsic motivation to learn, values differences, nurtures the whole person, and encourages courageous choices.***



## Vision

*Inspired by our first director, Clara Belle Baker, who worked to ensure children here achieve academic excellence through meaningful and authentic learning experiences, we envision a future in which this model for Progressive Education becomes the standard for all children.*

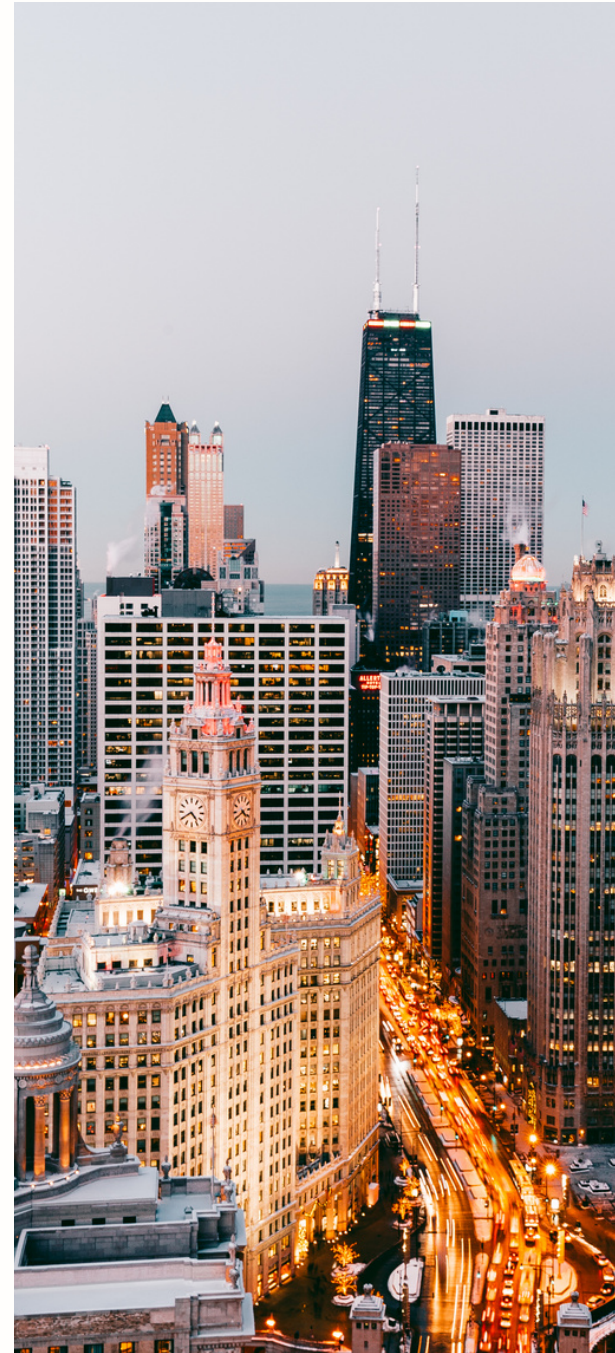
# About Baker Demonstration School

It was the late 19th century, and the world was undergoing dramatic changes. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing. It was rapidly creating new technologies and workforce opportunities for which educators needed to prepare their students. But how do you prepare young people for such an unpredictable future?

Progressive Education arose as an answer to that question. Its proponents, such as American psychologist John Dewey, Italian physician Maria Montessori, and our first director, Clara Belle Baker, suggested the best way to prepare children was to focus more on teaching them through experience how to learn rather than merely what to learn. That would prepare them to adapt and thrive regardless of what the future brings.

Independent schools like Baker are leading the way, providing a truly progressive educational experience that prepares them for a world that is changing more rapidly than ever before. At Baker, your child's natural love of learning will grow into the confidence they need to solve problems, adapt to whatever life brings them, advocate for themselves and ultimately thrive in whatever they choose to do.

Today, Baker is a community staple and purposeful neighbor. The Core Values of the Baker Demonstration School are Progressive Excellence, Partnership, Individuality, Wholeness, and Diversity. These values are well known and lived out on a daily basis in the classrooms, halls, and meeting rooms throughout the School. The curriculum is built around these values and students employ these values in their interactions with their peers and in classes.



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201 Sheridan Rd.  
Wilmette, IL 60091

# Baker's Academic Program

## Early Childhood

We believe in the power of play. Self-initiated play allows children to learn about themselves and their world. It develops intellectual, social, and emotional skills as well as lays the groundwork to promote leadership, collaboration, and problem solving. Our mixed-age preschool program offers a caring and stimulating environment that fosters curiosity and wonder. Young learners are immersed in a wide range of creative and outdoor learning experiences designed to generate questions, learn by doing, and build a community. Our child-centered curriculum offers ample opportunities for young learners to tap into their natural interests.

## Primary

Our Primary School program is designed to engage students in wide range of inquiry-based experiences. Classroom activities such as building a Rube Goldberg machine or studying the physics of light and sound through the "Baker School of Dragonology" are engaging, fun, and collaborative ways to foster deeper and more expansive thinking. During the primary experience, our instructional approach is child-centered and tailored to meet individual needs. Our thematic approach provides a range of contexts to introduce, explore, and reinforce content goals. Children's curricular experiences invite them to make connections within their learning and to apply acquired skills in real life situations.

## Intermediate

During the Intermediate years, students are empowered to use their voices and ingenuity to become agents of change. Through their studies, they learn about diverse current and historical exemplars of community leadership. By the end of fifth grade, students have the self-advocacy skills they'll need to thrive in Middle School. Fourth and fifth grade students continue to engage in thematic studies, allowing for deeper explorations of History, Language Arts, Science, and Math. The Baker Business School is one of the highlights of the Intermediate experience. During this immersive experience, students learn to pitch innovative ideas and move through a design-thinking process to ideate, prototype, and manufacture products. They use their understanding of math skills to manage the finances of their manufacturing company as they work toward the culminating experience which is a community market that raises money for local nonprofits.

## Middle School

Our Middle School is an intellectually stimulating and supportive environment where students continue to apply their critical thinking skills and take greater responsibility for their own intellectual growth. Rich, thematic study continues throughout Middle School in the core disciplines of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics. These disciplines integrate with Baker's World Languages program, which engages Middle School students in the study of Spanish and Latin. One hallmark of our Middle School program is the choice-based Arts Core program. Students choose two electives per semester, enabling them to explore a broad array of arts-based classes. Showcases of student work, such as the Science and Math expos, demonstrate the unique connections between unlikely disciplines.



# Baker's Signature Programs

## Arts

Students are immersed in visual and performing arts from first through eighth grade, including weekly classes in Movement Arts, Drama, Music and Dance as an important part of a dynamic education. Our Kindergarten students take weekly Music and Dance classes.

## Physical Education

P.E. classes are held every day for children in first through eighth grade including Swimming and Dance classes. The program encourages a lifelong love of healthy exercise and builds upon the connection between movement and cognitive development. The entire Baker community celebrates health and wellness during our annual end-of-year 5K at nearby Gillson Park. Preschoolers and Kindergarteners participate in their own 1K with cheers from their older peers.

## Sports

Baker sponsors sports teams for students in fourth through eighth grade including interscholastic basketball, flag football, soccer, and track and field. Teams practice after school and compete against peers from other local schools.

## Service Learning

Service Learning is a fundamental part of a Baker education and provides opportunities for students of all ages to make a difference. Baker's faculty regularly incorporate service projects into their thematic studies so that students can understand issues from multiple angles and serve as positive change agents. In addition, Baker's Student Council leads school-wide fundraising efforts and service projects.

## World Languages

Starting in Preschool, Baker students learn Spanish through rich language interactions, songs, and engaging language activities. From fifth grade to Middle School, students also take Latin to deepen their understanding of World Languages.

## High School Transition

We provide one-on-one support with our dedicated High School Transition Coordinator. Through this process, we aim to set our students up for an outstanding experience as they enter into high school.



# Additional Elements of Baker

- Enrollment: 200
- Grade levels: Pre-K to 8th
- 26% Students of Color
- 52 Faculty & Staff
- Over \$1M in FA given annually

- Including the HoS, a six person Senior Administrative Team
- Affiliations: ISACS, NAIS, ISEEN
- 13-15 Member self-perpetuating Board of Trustees
- 8:1 Student to Teacher Ratio
- Indoor Pool (*w/ Aquatics integrated into the program*)



# Leadership Profile

## Background

Seeking to build on its more than 100-year history of being a leading progressive school, Baker Demonstration School is conducting a national and international search to identify its next Head of School (Head). Baker, like many other schools, is looking forward to a period of post-pandemic growth that inspires community-wide excitement, engages faculty and staff, and attracts families.

As part of this search process, Nat Conard and André Withers of Educators Collaborative visited Baker Demonstration School for two days and met with faculty, staff, administrators, students, parents, and trustees in individual and group meetings. They also conducted a community survey and held virtual listening sessions to gather input from community members who may not have been able to meet with them while they were on campus. What emerged was a clear picture of what makes Baker the special place that it is, the opportunities and challenges on the horizon for the school, and the skills, experiences, and personal qualities that Baker seeks in its next Head.

## Diversity Statement

*We believe that there is no true education without diversity, equity, and inclusion, any more than there is no true education without arithmetic or reading. This belief is rooted in Baker's mission and supported by our progressive principles and practices.*



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# Leadership Profile

## Strengths

Baker enjoys a position of distinction as a leading proponent and practitioner of the tenets of progressive education. Attributes of the school that parents, faculty, staff, and students alike most value are:

- The exceptional engaging, progressive, inquiry-driven, and experiential education that students experience at Baker. Baker's history is one of research-based pedagogy and hands-on contributions to the training of progressive educators. The daily execution of instructional best-practices is at the core of what Baker does. The next Head will continue to provide resources for sustaining this asset.
- A tremendously caring and committed faculty and staff. The teachers at Baker are not only committed to the school and deeply committed to progressive education, they also heartily hold to the tenets of Dewey (and others) as the school's mission asks and as their professional satisfaction requires.
- The strong sense of community that connects families to the school and to each other. The joyful connectivity in K-8 schools is abundant at Baker. Children are known, seen, and deeply cared for. Adults enjoy the Baker experience and speak to a high sense of fellowship with families within and across the grade levels.
- Small class size and the resulting attention to each individual student and family
- A demonstrated commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice (DEIBJ) work
- The school's track record of preparing students for success in a world of interconnection and change
- Integration of arts and broad extracurricular offerings into the fabric of the school



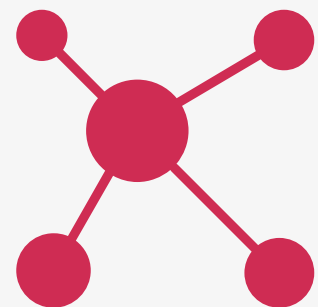
### Global Representation

26% of students are multi-lingual



### Teachers

91% of teachers hold advanced degrees



### Demographics

27 Chicagoland zip codes represented



# Leadership Profile

## Opportunities and Challenges for the next Head of School

Independent schools like Baker have much to offer families, faculty, and staff, including a strong sense of community, mission-focused work, and research-driven teaching practices. They also have room for growth. Some of the challenges and opportunities for Baker and its next Head are:

- Clearly defining Baker's value proposition and brand/profile and effectively marketing it to a highly educated and affluent community, will be an opportunity for the school over the next few years.
- Enrollment at Baker declined during the pandemic and is now beginning to recover, although it is not yet approaching pre-pandemic levels. The next Head will be asked to build an effective enrollment management strategy that maximizes enrollment.
- There is an acute understanding at all schools that the teachers make all of the difference. This is especially true at schools like Baker that are known for progressive teaching. With compensation and competition looming large, one of the key areas of focus will be developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to recruit, train, and retain high quality, enthusiastic progressive faculty members
- When Baker became independent of National Louis University in 2005, the school's financial model changed. There remains a significant opportunity to continue to recruit resources to the school through fundraising and to explore building relationships with other educational institutions, while remaining independent.
- There are many families who have chosen Baker because of its commitment to DEIBJ and the actualization of that commitment in the curriculum and in the adult community. The next Head has the opportunity to leverage this progress as an asset and extend it as part of the Baker value proposition by growing and deepening the school's already robust DEI work.
- Baker continues to exemplify the strengths of a progressive education model that develops intrinsically motivated learners who make courageous choices and achieve academic excellence through meaningful and authentic learning experiences. Building on the school's existing strengths, the next Head of School will be asked to fully execute the school's vision, ensuring the school's on-going contribution and place in the surrounding educational community in the years to come.



# Skills, Experiences, and Personal Qualities of the next Head of School

The next Head of School at Baker will be an experienced, proven independent school teacher and leader with a deep understanding of progressive education. An engaging and inspiring person of great integrity and an excellent communicator and active listener, the next Head will be a friendly, warm, and genuine collaborator and team builder.

In addition, the following characteristics will describe the successful candidate:

## **Connector**

- Ability and desire to build strong personal relationships and nurture a culture of collegiality where trust, respect, teamwork, inclusion, and innovation are the norm throughout the organization
- Leads by active listening and visible involvement in the total life of the school
- Builds authentic connections with the community, parents, and teachers
- Communication skills to articulate the value proposition and academic rigor in a strong progressive, experiential education program
- Compelling and inspirational communicator, storyteller, and explainer-in-chief
- Expands and nurtures connections between the school and the surrounding communities
- Well-developed leadership style that inspires creative and collaborative problem solving and empowers the team to implement mission/vision driven-initiatives while maintaining accountability
- Inspires and nurtures school faculty professionally



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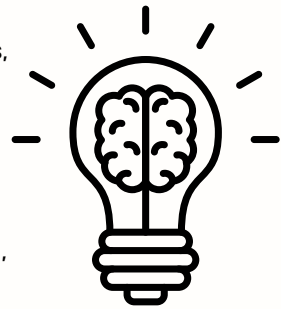
# Skills, Experiences, and Personal Qualities of the next Head of School

## Director

- Brings a deep level of cultural competence. Centers, celebrates, and elevates equity, inclusion, and belonging as a school leader, such that the school's commitment to DEIBJ is continuously reflected in the diversity and sense of belonging of the student body, the school leadership, and the faculty and staff
- Collaborative by nature, yet also firm and gracefully decisive when needed
- Experienced administrator whose decisions ensure smooth operations, balanced workloads, and a shared sense of purpose

## Strategist

- Experienced and skilled in the critical revenue-generating aspects of school administration, enrollment management and fundraising
- A systems thinker, adept at asking thoughtful questions to assess current operational practices for opportunities, leading to a solid, forward-looking plan of action which can be sustained in the organization. Takes in myriad institutional priorities, evaluates and synthesizes them, and then executes a plan by setting clear goals, developing a sequence for their implementation, clearly defining roles and expectations, overseeing process, and ensuring the desired outcomes
- Entrepreneurial thinker with financial and operational acumen, able to understand the school as a business, and share that understanding with the administrative team and Board of Trustees



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# Search Timeline & Application Process

Spring 2023

**Submission Window Open**

Summer 2023

**Submission Window Open  
concurrent with Candidate  
Screening**

Fall 2023

**Semi-Finalists Identified**

Fall 2023

**Head-Elect Identified**

July 2024

**New Head Tenure Begins**

The search began in February 2023 and is predicted to conclude in early Fall 2023. Interested candidates should submit a complete dossier to André Withers or Nat Conard.

Application Materials Requested:

- Cover letter addressed to the Search Committee
- Resume
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- Five professional references with email and phone contact information
- EC Candidate Summary Sheet





For inquiries,  
contact us

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SEARCH, TRANSITION, AND STRATEGY