

# NEWARK ACADEMY

— 1774 —



## MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SEARCH

Position starts July 1, 2025  
Livingston, New Jersey



**EDUCATORS COLLABORATIVE**

EXPERTS IN SEARCH, TRANSITION & STRATEGY





## THE MISSION OF NEWARK ACADEMY

**Newark Academy will contribute to the world engaged individuals instilled with a passion for learning, a standard of excellence, and a generosity of spirit.**

### **An Opportunity to Become the next Middle School Principal at one of the Nation's Top Independent Schools**

With a rich history, a vibrant present, and an exciting future, Newark Academy is one of the nation's leading independent day schools. As it celebrates the 250th year since its founding, the Academy has never been stronger than it is now, boasting an unparalleled academic program, outstanding facilities, record applications for admission, and a robust financial condition. The Academy's next Middle School Principal will build upon the outstanding work of Middle School Principal Tom Ashburn, who will assume the role of Head of School in July of 2025, and continue to provide inspirational leadership to the Newark Academy Middle School community with grace, vision, intellect, and professionalism.

## NA AT A GLANCE

- Founded: 1774
- Number of students: 672 (students come from over 85 communities in New Jersey)
- Upper School (US) students: 474
- Middle School (MS) students: 198
- Students of color: 63%
- Teachers and administrators: 89 (89% hold advanced degrees and 18 hold doctoral degrees)
- Average faculty teaching experience: 15 years
- Average tenure of NA teachers: 10 years
- Faculty and staff serving as academic and club advisors: 65
- Extracurricular clubs for Middle School: 24
- Annual operating budget spent on financial aid: approximately 12.4 %



## Building for Belonging since 1774

Newark Academy was founded in 1774 by a group of civic leaders led by the Presbyterian cleric Alexander MacWhorter, a friend and advisor to George Washington. In the course of the Revolutionary War, the Academy's sympathies to our fledgling nation incurred the wrath of the British, who marched across the frozen Hudson River and burned the original school building to the ground. Not to be deterred, the school rebuilt, flourished, and continued to emphasize its motto: *Ad Lumen* (Toward Enlightenment). From its beginning, Newark Academy was a unique college preparatory school in that it opened its doors to students from a wide-range of backgrounds, offered courses in trades and business skills, and even maintained a division for young women for a time.

The Academy occupied four sites in the city of Newark before moving to its present 68-acre location in Livingston in 1964. Newark Academy became fully coeducational in 1972. Over the years, the Academy has expanded its facilities, with the addition of the Hawkes Memorial Library, the McGraw Arts Center, the Simon Family Field House, the Carol Heaney Nature Trail, the Petrello Upper School Academic Center, Kacur Field, the Wilf Middle School and the Coraci Performance Hall which together have resulted in remarkable resources for its 672 students and the entire NA community.

## BUILT FOR LEARNING

Newark Academy is situated on a beautiful 68-acre campus in Livingston, New Jersey, about 15 minutes from the bustling and scenic town of Morristown and less than 30 miles from New York City. Unlike many other schools, the NA campus allows all students in grades 6-12 to reside in a single structure with an expansive array of outdoor facilities for athletic and recreational purposes, as well as ample green and wooded spaces. NA prides itself on a balanced approach to its program, providing equal emphasis to each of the "three A's"—academics, arts, and athletics.





## THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AT NEWARK ACADEMY

Parents of Middle School students at NA describe the program and atmosphere in glowing terms. They appreciate the recognition that middle school can be “messy” but, most of all, they are grateful that NA’s Middle School teachers and administrators recognize the unique appeal of the middle school years. They speak glowingly of the emphasis on kindness and a generosity of spirit in the Middle School, and how the school balances academic rigor with a sense of fun in every one of its endeavors.

Moreover, there is a deep sense of trust in the Middle School at NA—between students and teachers, between parents and the school, and among teachers themselves. This trust has been nurtured by the school through a deep appreciation of the importance of authentic relationships among all stakeholders. This quality is palpable—it is referenced again and again by parents and teachers alike.

The Middle School faculty describes itself as a close-knit group of educators who are dedicated to the unique needs of middle school students. In the words of one teacher, “I am a 6th grade teacher who happens to teach English.” Parents appreciate that teachers are dedicated to middle school; one made a point of contrasting the approach of NA to that of another school, where the joy of teaching middle school was not communicated in the manner it is at NA. And it is clear that the faculty is in a very good place—morale is high. As one teacher put it, “It is a wonderful place to be every day. Not having a good day is a rarity.”

While all of Newark Academy’s academic program is housed under one roof, the Middle School enjoys dedicated space in the Wilf Middle School building, which opened in 2017. When visiting the school, one is immediately struck by the intentional design of the classrooms and communal space.





The faculty gather together in the bustling middle school office—a large room where all teachers have work areas. Students come in and out of this hub of activity to ask questions, receive extra help, and engage in banter with their teachers. Collaboration among teachers comes naturally, given their close proximity to each other.

The office of the Middle School Principal is centrally located, right next to the teachers. This design encourages communication and teamwork—it is a naturally collegial place to work and brainstorm. Immediately outside of this area is the Middle School Commons where the entire middle school gets together for regular meetings and where 8th graders meet to study and socialize. And just outside are the fields and court that are dedicated specifically to the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

This year, the Middle School introduced “Yondr pouches” for students to store their cellphones during the day. Not surprisingly, this measure was met with mixed reviews by students; some have shared innovative ways to continue to access their favorite games despite the change. That said, a surprising number of students—especially those who are in 8th grade—have recognized the improvement in school culture that this change has produced.

In addition, both the Middle and Upper Schools are navigating a new academic schedule this year. Borne out of extensive research and replacing a daily schedule that had been in place for over two decades, the new schedule features longer class periods that meet less frequently, with the intended goal of reducing stress on students while providing the opportunity for greater collaboration and active learning.





## The Academic Program

Newark Academy provides a strong foundation that is focused on the development of skills that allow one to nimbly adapt to constantly evolving circumstances. NA's curriculum emphasizes skills-based learning grounded in relevant content, highlighted by a skills rubric known as [The Six Cs](#).

In the Middle School, students are encouraged to dive into discovery and also have fun. NA emphasizes both active, hands-on doing as well as deep, reflective thinking. A grade-level rubric clearly articulates the goals and outcomes of each year of the Middle School in order for students to gain a strong intellectual foundation for the Upper School and beyond. Equally important, students develop a resilient curiosity that serves them well for a lifetime.

The Middle School is especially focused on providing experiential learning opportunities for its students. This experiential approach might involve designing and building a sustainable house, creating a cardboard roller coaster, or working on a grade-wide production of *The Tempest*. At the conclusion of the academic year, students in each grade take part in the [Capstone Experiences](#) program, which provides students with a shared travel adventure during which they are able to further develop teamwork and leadership skills.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Middle School Academics at NA.





## Enrollment

The Middle School at Newark Academy, like the Upper School, enjoys robust enrollment. At the school's first point of entry, sixth grade, NA welcomes 55 new students each year and receives applications that are a multiple of that number. The size of each grade grows slightly after that first year—65 students in 7th grade and usually 72 to 75 students in 8th grade. Attrition is very low, both between grades in the Middle School and when the students transition to the Upper School—a clear reflection of parental satisfaction with the program and culture of the school. The Middle School Principal plays an active role in the recruitment of students, especially at Open House events on campus.

## Academic Resources

While Newark Academy is rigorous, the school is fully committed to supporting every student in all aspects of school life in order to ensure that they thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Every student at Newark Academy is assigned a Faculty Advisor, who guides a small group of students during the school year. Viewed as the first resource that a student seeks out when navigating life at NA, Advisors also serve an important role as a liaison to the parents, communicating regularly regarding their child's progress.

NA makes it clear that they do not have the resources to provide support to a broad range of learning styles. That said, one of the many ways NA provides student support is through its on-staff learning specialist who assists students as they become successful, independent learners and strong self-advocates. Newark Academy's learning specialist provides an array of individualized services designed to strengthen study skills, impart test-taking strategies and enhance learning in specific academic subjects.

Explore the depth and breadth of NA's resources by clicking [here](#).





## 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

### Putting People First

By any measure, Newark Academy holds a position of strength among the nation's top independent day schools. This strength does not exist by happenstance but as a result of conscientious long-term planning and persistent execution of those plans. NA's comprehensive strategic planning process is undertaken every three to five years and is led by the Board of Trustees.

Newark Academy's 2023-2027 strategic plan, *Putting People First*, builds on the institution's many strengths as well as articulating an aspirational and inspirational roadmap for the future. The plan's four goals call for the school to amplify support of faculty and staff, refresh and renew parts of the student experience, promote authentic and meaningful community engagement, and commit to impactful spaces and sustainable practices.

View Newark Academy's Strategic Plan, *Putting People First*, by clicking [here](#).

## A DOCUMENTED COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION

When visiting Newark Academy, one is immediately struck by the diversity of its student body. The Academy has a well deserved reputation in the area for welcoming students from all backgrounds and providing members of its community with a strong sense of belonging and equity. The Academy's Equity and Inclusion Statement affirms its commitment to "fostering and maintaining a caring and



As is the case in all schools, NA's work in the area of inclusion and belonging remains an institutional priority. The School has been intentional in increasing the diversity of experiences of members of the Board of Trustees and it continues to work on building a more diverse faculty and staff. To learn more about NA's work in equity and inclusion, click [here](#).

## ATHLETICS

Being part of an athletic team at NA is a rich learning experience—a fundamental part of education that challenges students to continuously improve, to strengthen resolve and resilience, and to cultivate a love of competition. Sixteen student athletes from the class of 2024 committed to playing Division I and Division III college sports, in swimming, fencing, tennis, basketball, golf, softball, and track.

The Academy's athletic facilities are outstanding, and include two turf fields, a field house, a second gymnasium, a natatorium, a fencing center, a dedicated wrestling gym, and a state-of-the art fitness center.

In the Middle School, students are required to play a sport each season. Currently, there are no waivers granted to students who would like to be exempted from this requirement. Fourteen interscholastic sports are offered in the Middle School.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Athletics at NA.





## ARTS

For NA students, the arts take many forms—from a vase spinning into shape on a potter’s wheel or a harmony coming together in a jazz band rehearsal, to patterns traced by dancers’ feet along a stage or tapped out by a graphic designer’s fingers across a keyboard.

The arts are highly valued at NA, where students regularly perform for their peers and attend high level competitions across the country. The celebrated jazz band has achieved particular success at the annual [Essentially Ellington](#) High School Festival where in 2024 it was once again chosen as a finalist out of 3,000 schools across the country.

The Arts offerings to Middle School students at NA are remarkably varied. Students have the opportunity to take courses in filmmaking, dance, 3D Art, technical theater—the list goes on and on. Given the breadth and depth of these offerings, it is no wonder that NA students have a well-deserved reputation for their dedication to the Arts.

Click [here](#) to know more about the Arts program at NA.



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Newark Academy seeks a Middle School Principal who enthusiastically embraces and champions the school's mission, which is grounded in providing a strong academic program that prepares students for continued educational success in college and in life.

The successful candidate will be distinguished by a warm, welcoming, and inclusive personal manner, exceptional verbal and written communication skills, a commitment to the Academy's mission, and a love for the unique academic and developmental needs of middle school students.

Newark Academy is conducting a national search to identify its next Middle School Principal. Search consultants Nat Conard and George Sanderson of Educators Collaborative solicited input from all stakeholders during a recent on-campus visit and gathered additional feedback from the community through an online survey. Based on this input, impressions of the consultants, and feedback from the Head of School, the following represents a summary of the school's strengths, challenges and opportunities, and the skills and attributes desired in the next Middle School Principal of Newark Academy.

### Strengths of the School

- Newark Academy has earned an outstanding reputation in New Jersey and nationwide. It is deeply respected for its academic programs and commitment to nurturing the character of its students. The strength of the school is reflected not only in its full enrollment but also by the fact that its graduates go on to attend the nation's top colleges and universities.





- Newark Academy enrollment has never been stronger, with a record number of over 700 applications for admission received for the 2024-2025 academic year and an extremely high yield for accepted applicants. The robust interest in NA is a clear reflection of its outstanding reputation in the area.
- The finances of Newark Academy have been managed in a conservative, highly professional manner. The Academy has recorded a budget surplus for many years and has minimized draws from its endowment.
- NA's Arts program is especially well regarded, and has earned a national reputation for excellence. The Arts program attracts students to NA, as it is considered to be the premier program of its kind among schools in the area.
- A remarkably diverse school, Newark Academy's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging has remained a core value since its founding. A Director of Equity & Inclusion supports the multiplicity of cultures in its community and leads intentional programming to advance the school's diversity and inclusion goals and the Middle School has its own dedicated DEIB coordinators. DEIB and the socio-emotional experience of individual students is consistently at the forefront in teaching and learning at NA.
- As the entire student body at NA is housed under one roof, the Middle and Upper Schools are more closely connected than they would be otherwise. At the same time, the Middle School benefits from having its own dedicated space, which is intentionally designed to serve the unique needs of its students.



## Opportunities and Challenges

### ***Manage, support, and inspire an outstanding faculty***

NA's Middle School teachers are dedicated, talented, and respected. The next Middle School Principal will be responsible for continuing to nurture and develop its faculty. Although recent attrition is low, the Middle School Principal is responsible for partnering with other school leaders to recruit, onboard, and retain talented teachers when turnover occurs.

### ***Continue to evaluate the balance between academic rigor and emotional well-being***

NA is appropriately aware that its students' high academic and extracurricular achievements have the potential to take a toll on their emotional well-being. An ongoing challenge for the Middle and Upper School Principals will be to develop thoughtful strategies to manage these seemingly competing priorities.

### ***Remain focused on the transition between Middle School and Upper School***

A priority of the next Middle School Principal will be to enhance the work already underway to ensure a seamless transition for Middle School students as they enter the Upper School. Considering the needs of those students who enter the Upper School from the Middle School with those who are new to NA in 9th grade is an important factor in this work.

### ***Maintain active collaboration with the Upper School Principal to ensure that NA is "one school"***

With the priority of ensuring that the Middle School remains a dedicated space and program tailored to and focused on the needs of this age group comes the challenge of effective collaboration with the Upper School around shared expectations, and policy and program alignment.



***Continue to examine the impact of social media and devices on students***

The Middle School this year has taken steps to reduce the impact of electronic devices on students by requiring them to house their phones in “Yondr pouches” during the school day. The next Middle School Principal will continue to study the impact of devices and social media on students, and make refinements to the school's approach as needed.

***Support the Middle School as an important part of the overall NA experience***

Given its size relative to the overall school, the Middle School at NA sometimes perceives itself as receiving less attention than the Upper School. The next Middle School Principal will have the opportunity to continue to support the distinct identity of the Middle School both internally and externally to make sure that it is appropriately valued and celebrated.

***Evaluate and make refinements, if necessary, to the school's new academic schedule***

NA introduced a new daily academic schedule this year, and is currently evaluating how well the new schedule supports its goals. It is likely that some refinements to the new schedule will be made this year, and the next Middle School Principal will continue to evaluate the schedule and how well it serves the needs of students and teachers.

***Evaluate and lead enhancements to the school science and STEM facilities and programs***

NA recognizes the growing importance of STEM and the impact of AI on its curriculum. There is significant momentum to address these areas of the curriculum with the potential for enhanced facilities and program modifications. The next Middle School Principal will work closely with the Head of School and other members of the academic leadership team to bring these changes to fruition.



### ***Continue to develop strong partnerships and engagement with parents***

The next Middle School Principal will need to prioritize the ongoing development of strong relationships with increasingly involved parents, building on the impressive skills of the current Middle School Principal in this area.

### ***Evaluate the Middle School athletics program***

As interscholastic athletics continues to garner attention in independent schools in general and at NA, the need to assess the balance between participation in athletics and the evolving expectations of parents and students with respect to developing high level athletes continues to be an important consideration.

## **Skills and Attributes of the Next Middle School Principal**

Newark Academy seeks a visionary leader and passionate educator to step into the challenging role of Middle School Principal. The school takes great pride in nurturing an environment that is compassionate and rigorous, joyful and disciplined, and intentionally develops head, heart, and spirit. An individual who brings energy, integrity, intellect, and an innovative spirit will thrive and experience success in the Newark Academy community.

The ideal candidates will possess many of the following skills and attributes:

- A deep love for middle school students, an earnest belief that learning can be both rigorous and joyful, and unbridled enthusiasm for the school's compelling mission of guiding students to do and be their best
- A confident leadership style that prioritizes delegating responsibility, empowering and inspiring others, working in partnership, and holding people accountable in ways that support continued professional and personal growth
- A track record of success in the classroom and in leadership roles in middle school settings, as well as an ability to recognize and appreciate outstanding classroom instruction
- Demonstrated evidence of cultural competency and documented success in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff
- Clear and inspiring communication skills from a leader who is highly visible, warm, personable, transparent, and approachable and who listens deeply to all community members while taking the time to understand the culture of Newark Academy
- The ability to inspire a highly capable faculty that includes teachers across the spectrum of experience
- Kindness, patience, and a sense of humor
- The capacity to facilitate inclusive dialogue, make difficult decisions, have courageous conversations, and offer and inspire trust
- Charismatic and skilled in building relationships within and beyond the Newark Academy community, generating excitement about the school's mission to instill in its students intellectual excellence, global engagement, and a generosity of spirit



## SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in a **single merged pdf file** to Nat Conard and George Sanderson as soon as possible, and no later than **December 15, 2024**. Dossiers will be reviewed upon receipt.

- EC Summary Sheet (contact Nat Conard or George Sanderson for this document)
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Head of School
- Current Résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- A list of five or more references with contact information (name, relationship to candidate, phone and email address); references will not be contacted until a candidate is considered for the finalist round of the search process
- Disclosure Statement (contact Nat Conard or George Sanderson for this document)

**Send application materials via email to:**

Nat Conard  
Co-Managing Partner, Educators Collaborative  
Email: [nconard@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:nconard@educatorscollaborative.com)

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