



**ST. MICHAEL'S
SCHOOL AND NURSERY**



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

Wilmington, Delaware

Position Starts July 1, 2026



AN EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADER

Visiting St. Michael’s School and Nursery, one is immediately struck by the fact that this is a school with a mission that goes well beyond providing a high quality program for children from newborns through pre-kindergarten. With a storied history in Wilmington, St. Michael’s serves a population that does not typically have access to high-quality early education. Eighty five percent of the families served have household income less than \$40,000 per year. The vast majority of children enrolled receive state funding, supported as well by the generous contributions of financial supporters in the Wilmington community. Founded in 1890, St. Michael’s is the oldest early childhood program in Delaware, dedicated to serving children and families with a mission rooted in accessibility, inclusion, and excellence in education. With a long tradition of providing high-quality early learning in a nurturing environment, the School stands at an exciting moment in its history—poised to build on its legacy and expand its impact in the years ahead.

The opportunity to lead this highly respected, thriving school requires a deep commitment to underserved families while serving as a strong, visible advocate for Early Childhood Education at the state level. The Executive Director will be charged with leading the School’s strategic vision, ensuring financial sustainability, strengthening community partnerships, and supporting a dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to preparing children for lifelong learning.



MISSION

St. Michael's is dedicated to building strong foundations for all children in the first five years of life and to supporting families as their educational journey begins. We foster a safe, nurturing, inclusive environment and seek the highest standards in our practice, curriculum, and professionals.

St. Michael's is committed to the community it serves and believes a sense of community is a core strength for children, families, and educators.

A STORIED HISTORY AS A LEADER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Originally, St. Michael's offered shelter with safety, comfort and life lessons to children whose working parents had limited choices. In its early days, St. Michael's also operated a hospital for babies and was the only place in the city where families of color could receive medical attention. St. Michael's also offered shelter to homeless and abandoned children as well as facilitated adoptions.

Today, 135 years after its founding, St. Michael's has evolved from being primarily a childcare agency to a premier school for early childhood education in Wilmington for newborns through pre-kindergarten. It is a caring and stimulating environment designed for the way young children grow and learn.



Although much has changed during the school's long history of service to Wilmington and its surrounding neighborhoods, providing access to high quality, affordable childcare and early education for young children of working parents remains the school's core mission, culture, and values, which include the following elements and features:

- **Comprehensive Early Childhood Program:** *Serving children ages six weeks through five years, with developmentally appropriate curricula that emphasize play, discovery, literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning, and creativity.*
- **Commitment to Access and Inclusion:** *St. Michael's mission ensures that children from diverse economic, cultural, and family backgrounds can thrive, supported by tuition assistance and community partnerships.*
- **Dedicated Faculty and Staff:** *Teachers and caregivers are highly trained in early childhood education and deeply committed to nurturing each child's development.*
- **Rich History and Strong Reputation:** *With 135 years of service, St. Michael's is known for its excellence in early education, its warm and welcoming environment, and its vital role in supporting working families.*
- **Community Engagement:** *The School partners with families, local organizations, and the wider Wilmington community to foster strong connections and provide wraparound support for children and parents.*



EXPANDED AND RENOVATED FACILITIES

St. Michael's is in the final stages of a major capital campaign, raising over \$6 million to renovate, upgrade, and expand its facilities. Among the improvements made over the last two years are:

- The addition of two new pre-school classrooms, enabling the school to increase its enrollment
- Renovations to existing classrooms as well as the addition of an art and STEM gallery
- New administrative offices and designated spaces for staff and family meetings, community programming, and professional development
- Infrastructure and systems upgrades throughout the building
- Renovations to the lobby, library, and cafeteria

The result of the above is a school building that is updated, modern, clean, safe, and highly functional. Bright, cheerful spaces have been designed specifically for early learners, each furnished with age-appropriate materials, reading corners, and activity centers that encourage exploration and play. The nursery and infant areas include secure and welcoming spaces for the youngest children, featuring soft play areas, as well as their own designated inside and outside gross motor areas. Over 30,000 sq. ft. of outdoor space includes an outdoor classroom, traditional playground equipment, several gardens, and other natural learning features which are incorporated into the curriculum for all ages. Indoors, two multipurpose rooms are used for assemblies, family events, indoor play during inclement weather, and enrichment activities.



SERVING WITH A SKILLED ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM AND BOARD

The Executive Director is supported by an administrative team that includes a Finance Director, a Director of Facilities and Operations, a Community and Family Outreach Coordinator, a Director of Curriculum and Supervision, and two Family Support Specialists. In addition, the school contracts with an advancement consultant who provides extensive guidance and support on fundraising. The result of this leadership structure is a well-functioning school that prides itself on the unique needs of each student and the continuous professional development of the faculty to ensure professionalism and growth.

The St. Michael's Board of Directors is hard-working, dedicated, generous, and well-connected in Delaware. Directors meet regularly with the Executive Director, providing appropriate support around strategic decisions and the future of the school.

ST. MICHAELS FACTS

- Founded in 1890; oldest early childhood program in Delaware
- Serves a maximum of 184 children from 6 weeks to Pre-K
- Follows a whole-child approach
- Supports families using Purchase of Care
- Recently completed expansion funded by federal/state support to increase childcare capacity
- Non-profit, tax-exempt since October 1933
- Modernization includes ADA upgrades, new classrooms, infrastructure improvements, and a Faculty Resource Center
- Builds strong family partnerships and collaborates with community service providers



LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As St. Michael's looks to the future, several areas of focus will shape the work of the next Executive Director.

Continue to recruit and retain mission-aligned, passionate teachers, supporting their wellness and professional growth

Committed teachers are at the heart of St. Michael's and continuing to invest in their growth and development is a key to successful teacher recruitment and retention. This includes the distinct challenge of managing teacher turnover and continuing to help professionalize teachers in Early Childhood Education practices. The next Executive Director will work to consciously blend professional development with teacher evaluation to support a culture that values creativity and autonomy as well as ongoing growth and accountability.

Nurture relationships with state agencies community partners and other Early Childhood Education providers to continue to provide visionary leadership advocating for high quality Early Childhood Education

St. Michael's heavily relies on state support for its families to attend the school. Maintaining and developing important relationships within the state is an important responsibility of the Executive Director, and vital to the ongoing success of the school. The Executive Director should continue to build community partnerships, lead the sector and be a visionary advocate for the Early Childhood Education profession.

Continue to develop community partnerships to best serve children and families

St. Michael's has developed important relationships with local museums, enrichment programs, and health practices and resources to bring enriching experiences to children and families. These partnerships will be continued and expanded by the next Executive Director, who will also explore ways to better serve as a community resource for families.

Expand philanthropic support as a source of reliable funding for the operating budget

To maintain the high quality of its program, maintain its facilities, and support teacher and administrative compensation, the next Executive Director will partner closely with the advancement consultant to steward existing relationships and develop new sources of philanthropic and agency support.

Carefully manage the budget and enrollment management of the school

St. Michael's finances are distinct from those of most schools, because of its heavy reliance on state aid. Moreover, enrollment management carries with it timing challenges, as children leave for kindergarten in the late summer and new infants in the program join at various times throughout the year. The next ED will need to thoughtfully manage the school's finances, with the support of a solid and well-respected administration.

Maintain St. Michael's strong reputation as a leader in Early Childhood Education

St. Michael's has a well deserved reputation as a Delaware institution—the state's leader in high quality Early Childhood Education. This distinction carries with it many benefits—respect from state leaders, funding, enrollment, and philanthropic support. Nurturing and building on this reputation will be an important priority for the next ED.

Connect with Families and Build Relationships

Families at St. Michael's are its most important constituent. Working with two Family Support staff and their supervisor, the next next ED will be asked to continue to develop relationships with St. Michael's families by being visible, empathetic, approachable, and accessible while managing complex family situations with deep care and respect when they arise.

Maintain and Enhance Facilities

St. Michael's is in the enviable position of having recently renovated and expanded its facilities. The next ED will be responsible for maintaining these facilities, developing a long-term repair and replacement budget, and addressing some near-term maintenance requirements in the outdoor learning and play spaces.





The Position

The Executive Director serves as the chief executive officer of St. Michael's School and Nursery, reporting to and working closely with the Board of Directors. This leader is responsible for the overall management of the School, including educational program oversight, operations, financial stewardship, external relations, and advancement. The Executive Director will inspire and support faculty and staff, strengthen enrollment and fundraising, and ensure that St. Michael's continues to fulfill its mission with integrity and excellence.

Key Responsibilities

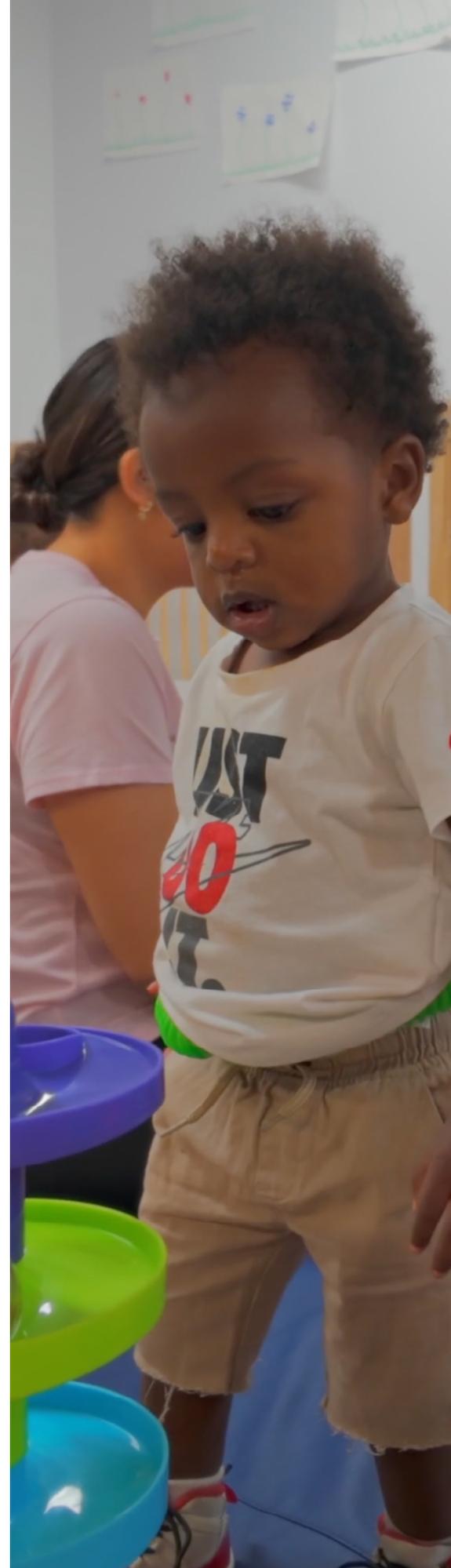
- **Leadership & Vision:** Provide strategic leadership that ensures program excellence and long-term sustainability.
- **Educational Program:** Support best practices in early childhood education and maintain a nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment.
- **Faculty & Staff Development:** Recruit, retain, and support talented educators; foster a collaborative and mission-driven culture.
- **Financial Management:** Oversee the budget, operations, and advancement efforts to ensure stability and growth.
- **Professional Advocacy:** Provide adaptive leadership while advocating for improvements and policy advancement in the early childhood education profession statewide.
- **Community Relations:** Serve as the primary ambassador for St. Michael's, cultivating strong relationships with families, alumni, donors, and community partners.
- **Governance:** Partner effectively with the Board of Directors to advance strategic initiatives.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

St. Michael's School and Nursery seeks a caring leader and passionate educator to step into the challenging role of Executive Director. The school takes great pride in nurturing a compassionate and kind environment that serves as a model for high-quality Early Education for children. An individual who brings energy, integrity, professionalism, and joy will thrive and experience success in the St. Michael's community.

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

- A commitment to servant leadership that includes empowering and inspiring others, working in partnership, and holding people accountable in ways that support continued professional and personal growth
- Demonstrated success in leadership roles in Early Childhood Education
- Deep knowledge of best practices in Early Childhood Education as well as the principles of Early Childhood Development
- The capacity to facilitate inclusive dialogue, make difficult decisions, have courageous conversations, and build trust
- An appreciation for the mission and values of St. Michael's, and the positive role they play in a school environment
- Proficient understanding of strategic financial sustainability, budget development, teacher recruitment and retention, and enrollment management
- A deep love for children, an earnest belief in joyful learning, and unbridled enthusiasm for the school's compelling mission of guiding young children to do and be their best
- An inspiring communicator who is warm, personable, collaborative, transparent, and approachable and who listens deeply to all community members while taking the time to understand the culture of St. Michael's
- A visionary builder who can think strategically in partnership with a hard-working Board and capably execute plans to bring initiatives to fruition, while managing community expectations and the impact of change
- Skilled in building relationships within and beyond the St. Michael's community, advocating for Early Childhood Education and generating support for the school's mission to serve its families





SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials by **November 30, 2025**:

- EC Summary Sheet and Disclosure Statement
- Contact George Sanderson for these documents
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Current Résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- A list of five or more references with contact information
- Name, relationship to candidate, phone and email addresses

Application materials are to be sent electronically via email in a single, merged pdf to:

George Sanderson, Partner, Educators Collaborative
Email: gsanderson@educatorscollaborative.com



**700 N. Walnut Street
Wilmington, DE 19801**

www.stmichaelsde.org

Non-Discrimination Statement

St. Michael's does not discriminate by sex, race, family composition, national origin or religion. The broad socio/economic background of our children and families helps foster harmony and understanding.

The Search Schedule

The Search Committee plans to identify a preliminary group of candidates to interview (virtually) in late November and December. From this group the Search Committee will select finalists for a full day of interviews on campus in January. The Board expects to reach a decision and appoint a ED-Elect shortly after finalist visits with the term of office to commence on July 1, 2026. The salary range and benefits for this position are highly competitive with similar preschool leadership positions.