



Steamboat MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

GRADES K-12 DAY AND BOARDING SCHOOL

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Position Starts July 1, 2027

Ready For Anywhere



MISSION

Steamboat Mountain School cultivates the intellect and imagination of young minds, so that students grow their curiosity, discover their potential, contribute meaningfully to their community, and engage in a dynamic, global society.

—Adopted by the SMS Board of Trustees, January 2022

CORE PRINCIPLES

Our Students Are...

- Courageous in Action—when presented with challenges, students both accept and offer support to strengthen their resilience and develop the confidence to take risks.
- Vigorous in Learning—students find their voices by developing independent thinking skills so they can collaborate productively in an increasingly connected world.
- Purposeful in Exploring—students bring the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world, stepping forward into global citizenship.

Our Students Learn...

- The Power of Connectedness—through relationships within the school community and beyond, students develop empathy grounded in mutual respect, honesty, and open-mindedness.
- The Impact of Wholeness—students embark on two journeys: inward to explore self, and outward to engage with the world.

Our School Believes In...

Thriving Through Contrast: SMS intentionally embraces the dynamic equilibrium between contrasting principles—providing challenge and offering support; developing independent thought while encouraging collaboration; bringing the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world; focusing on the school community while connecting to the global community; fostering self-awareness while inspiring broader impact.



A LEGACY NEARLY EIGHTY YEARS IN THE MAKING

In 1946, Lowell Whiteman started a summer camp for boys on his property outside Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Encouraged by parents, Whiteman soon opened a small boarding school with twenty-one students. From its inception, the school was college preparatory, blending rigorous academics with foreign travel and outdoor education.

Over the following decades, the school—renamed the Lowell Whiteman School in 1963—grew its campus and its ambitions, launching its first European trip to Spain in 1962 and, in 1986, integrating competitive skiing through a partnership with the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club that endures today. A devastating fire in 1977 destroyed the school's lodge, classrooms, library, and offices; the community rallied, rebuilding stronger and welcoming day students for the first time.

In 2014, the school adopted a new name—Steamboat Mountain School—to better reflect its place and its mission. Then in 2017, Samantha Coyne Donnel began her tenure leading Emerald Mountain School, the K–8 community school in downtown Steamboat Springs that had grown from the original Lowell Whiteman Primary School, founded in 1993.

In 2018, leaders from both schools began exploring a strategic partnership. Two years of careful work—including deep engagement with stakeholders and independent counsel—culminated in a formal merger, finalized in January 2021, that united the two institutions into a single K–12 school. A joint task force of faculty, families, and trustees from both campuses then developed the Core Principles that guide SMS today, and the Board adopted a refreshed mission and vision in January 2022.



SMS AT A GLANCE

SMS operates two campuses in Steamboat Springs, Colorado: the Emerald Campus in town, home to the Lower and Middle Schools (grades K–8), and the 150-acre Mountain Campus, home to the Upper School (grades 9–12) and the school's boarding program. Together, the campuses form a single K–12 community united by shared mission and Core Principles.

School & Campus

Founded 1957 (roots trace to a 1946 summer camp)

K–12 day and boarding school, two campuses in Steamboat Springs

On-campus housing for 31 faculty and staff members and their families across both campuses

150-acre Mountain Campus (grades 9–12 and boarding)

293" average annual snowfall; 10 minutes to a premier ski resort

6.25 mi of trails across the Mountain Campus

ACIS accredited; member of NAIS and TABS

Lower & Middle School (Emerald Campus)

Every student plays a stringed instrument through at least 5th grade, Suzuki Method

RULER SEL approach from Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence, used K–8

A grade level above Colorado public and private peers on NWEA MAP reading and math

Orton-Gillingham structured literacy from kindergarten, with limited technology

Signature programs: Siblings Program, Middle School POPs (Physical & Outdoor Pursuits), 8th-grade speeches to the full community

Upper School (Mountain Campus)

Students, faculty, and staff share responsibility for the daily care and upkeep of campus through the Community Stewardship program.

81 students, representing 13 states and 5 countries

6:1 student-to-teacher ratio

10 average class size

Inquiry-driven Honors program for juniors and seniors

40% of students receive tuition assistance; \$1M+ awarded annually



VIGOROUS IN LEARNING

SMS's academic program favors depth over breadth: rather than a traditional AP curriculum, the Upper School uses a modular schedule built around honors-level, inquiry-based coursework that blends rigor with real-world application. Small classes—averaging ten students at a 6:1 student-to-teacher ratio—give faculty room to know each student well and to push them toward genuine intellectual independence.

That same spirit of hands-on, world-facing learning runs through the Lower and Middle School years at the Emerald Campus, where students build the foundation of curiosity, collaboration, and confidence that the Core Principles describe as being 'Vigorous in Learning.'

"My love for storytelling began at Steamboat Mountain School."

—Daniel Wright '09, co-producer of *The Social Dilemma*

The results speak to the model: Students attend colleges and universities all over the US, ranging from large flagship state schools like the University of Colorado and University of California (Los Angeles) to Washington University, NYU Tisch, and Dartmouth, and go on to a striking range of pursuits—from journalism and filmmaking to competitive skiing and beyond.



THE WORLD IS OUR CLASSROOM

Adventure

Outdoor education is woven into daily life at SMS, not bolted on. Students pursue Physical and Outdoor Pursuits (POPs) as part of the regular program, and the school's partnership with the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club gives students access to competitive and recreational skiing and snowboarding just minutes from campus.

Global Studies

SMS's Global Studies program is designed to be more than travel—it is immersion. Rather than sightseeing, students learn to live like locals: eating, traveling, and engaging with each destination in a way that is humble and responsible. Over the course of nearly four weeks each spring upper school students travel abroad to learn from the communities that host them and to understand different cultures, beliefs, and traditions, all while earning academic credit toward their transcripts. Recent destinations include Cambodia, Bolivia, Senegal, Morocco, Nepal, and Ecuador.

Each trip blends education, adventure, cultural immersion, and service learning, and is designed to push students beyond their comfort zones. Students return not only having discovered new places and people but having built the self-reliance, independence, and compassion that come from learning how to give back—to their host communities and to the world.

"At practically the onset of their enrollment at SMS, and on countless occasions over the years, our children have said what every parent dreams about hearing: we love school, we love our teachers."

— Parent, 2030



PENGUINS FOR LIFE

Small by design, SMS has long been known as a community where students, families, and faculty are deeply invested in one another. The Core Principle of 'the Power of Connectedness' is visible everywhere—in advisory relationships, in a boarding culture that becomes a second family, and in an alumni network that stays remarkably close to the school long after graduation.

SMS graduates go on to careers as journalists, filmmakers, Olympians, entrepreneurs, and artists, and they consistently point back to the same formative experience: a school where the classroom extended into the mountains and out into the world, and where independence, resilience, and self-reliance were built by doing, not just by being told.

Elizabeth Findell '08

National politics reporter, The Wall Street Journal

Daniel Wright '09

Co-producer, The Social Dilemma (Netflix)

Avital Shimko '14

U.S. Moguls Ski Team

"Whenever high school comes up in conversation, people's eyes widen with awe when I share my experience. The understanding of how lucky I was to have attended this one-of-a-kind school never fades."

— Kaili Nolte, '09



MORE ABOUT SMS

- [Lower School](#)
- [Middle School](#)
- [Upper School](#)
- [Boarding Program](#)
- [Winter Sports Club](#)



FUN FACTS

- **Ski Town USA.** Steamboat Springs has sent more than 100 athletes to the Winter Olympics—more than any other town in North America—with medalists in freestyle, Nordic combined, and alpine skiing.
- **Howelsen Hill.** Built in 1913 by Norwegian ski jumper Carl Howelsen and in continuous operation since 1915, it is the oldest operating ski area in North America, and many Winter Sports Club athletes still train there today.
- **Champagne Powder®.** Steamboat's snow is trademarked—famously light and dry, and part of why the resort sits just ten minutes from campus.
- **Penguins.** The school mascot reflects the resilient, supportive, and tight-knit community that defines SMS.





LEADERSHIP PROFILE

The next Head of School will inherit a small but growing school that the community describes as fundamentally healthy: a distinctive outdoor and global education program, a well-regarded competitive winter sports program, a close-knit and values-driven community culture across its lower, middle, and upper (boarding) campuses, and a Head whose strategic and financial leadership has propelled the school to a position of strength. This strong foundation gives the incoming Head real running room—both to sustain what makes SMS distinctive and to move deliberately on the priorities the community has surfaced for the years ahead.

At the same time, the community is candid that this transition matters. Continuity, transparency, and trust-building throughout the search and into the new Head's early tenure—including close partnership with the outgoing Head and clear, ongoing communication with the broader SMS community will be crucial as the process unfolds.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Next Head of School

- Recruiting, developing, and retaining excellent faculty and staff in the face of Steamboat Springs' high cost of living—and continuing to make the school's faculty housing benefit work as a differentiator
- Strengthening the rigor, consistency, and reputation of the academic program—particularly at the Mountain (9-12) Campus—to match the strength of SMS's outdoor and global offerings and to support strong outcomes at selective colleges



- Leveraging the heritage and supporting the evolution of the experiential, outdoor, and global education at the heart of the SMS identity, including flexibility for competitive snow-sport athletes, as the school prepares students for an increasingly AI-driven world
- Balancing enrollment growth and financial sustainability with the small class sizes and personal attention that define the SMS experience, and articulating the school's value proposition clearly and consistently to prospective families
- Continuing to articulate and implement the vision for a K-12 program through curriculum integration, outdoor and global programming, professional development, and cross-division student experiences
- Advancing capital fundraising in support of the school's ambitious and forward-thinking master plan while managing tuition levels, financial aid, and affordability so that SMS remains accessible beyond an increasingly narrow band of families
- Strengthening cohesion and belonging—across the lower, middle, and upper school communities, and among Upper School students in particular, some of whom describe feeling disconnected from one another
- Assessing and optimizing the administrative structure to best support strategic goals, K-12 identity, the residential life program, and student and faculty wellbeing
- Honoring the founding vision and Western, rural authenticity of the school's Lowell Whiteman legacy while thoughtfully evolving programs, facilities, and structure to meet a changing educational landscape
- Building trust and continuity through the leadership transition itself—communicating openly with the community and honoring the current Head's legacy while establishing the incoming Head's own voice and vision



Experience of the Next SMS Leader

- Significant senior leadership experience in independent school administration and management
- Deep, firsthand understanding of and passion for experiential, progressive, and outdoor/global education
- A demonstrated track record of recruiting, developing, nurturing, and retaining strong faculty and staff talent
- Experience leading strategic planning and managing institutional change collaboratively and transparently
- Sound financial management and budgeting experience, along with fundraising and capital campaign leadership
- Familiarity with boarding school operations and residential/dorm life
- A background in classroom teaching and credibility with faculty around current research on teaching and learning
- Experience working effectively in partnership with a Board of Trustees
- Understanding of college counseling, admission, and enrollment management

Personal Attributes and Leadership Qualities Desired

- Friendly, warm, and genuine, with an authentic ability to connect across the community
- An excellent communicator and active listener
- Engaging and inspiring, with a strong sense of humor
- Innovative and forward-thinking, with an entrepreneurial mindset
- A real “school person” who engages authentically with students and understands the importance of presence
- Demonstrated business and financial acumen paired with visionary, big-picture thinking
- Unquestioned honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness
- Skilled at navigating conflict and adversity with steadiness and resolve
- A collaborative consensus-builder who leads with transparency
- A genuine commitment to equity, inclusivity, and belonging as a school leader
- Genuine passion for the out-of-doors and enthusiasm for mountain-town life and becoming part of the SMS and Steamboat Springs community

ABOUT THE SEARCH

Steamboat Mountain School enters this search from a position of strength. Under the leadership of Head of School Samantha Coyne Donnel, the school has completed a historic merger uniting Steamboat Mountain and Emerald Mountain Schools into one K-12 community, strengthened its financial footing, grown enrollment, expanded philanthropy, invested in both campuses, and built an exceptional leadership team. A recent accreditation process affirmed the strength of that unified vision and set a solid foundation for the school's next chapter.

EC Partners Nat Conard and Tracy Bennett are assisting in this search. Please reach out to Nat or Tracy to schedule a conversation and learn more.

Candidates interested in the position will be asked to submit the following materials by November 16:

- EC Candidate Summary Sheet (request from search consultants)
- Letter of interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Resume
- Statement of educational leadership philosophy
- A list of five professional references with email and phone contact information
- EC Disclosure Form (request from search consultants)

Please send any inquiries, nominations, referrals, or expressions of interest electronically and in confidence to:

Tracy Bennett, Partner, Educators Collaborative, LLC

Email: tbennett@educatorscollaborative.com

Nathaniel (Nat) Conard, Managing Partner, Educators Collaborative, LLC

Email: nconard@educatorscollaborative.com

Compensation and Benefits

Steamboat Mountain School offers a rich and comprehensive benefits package for full-time employees.

- Compensation range of \$200,000-\$275,000 inclusive of housing (on-campus or stipend)
- Medical, dental, vision, and short-term disability insurance
- Wellness benefit
- Retirement contribution match after one year of service
- Tuition remission benefits after two years of service

Steamboat Mountain School is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



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