



WATERSIDE SCHOOL

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Position starts July 1, 2026
Stamford, Connecticut



THE SCHOOL'S BELIEFS

The School was founded on the belief that the true measure of a child is not to be found in what he is given but rather in what he has worked to overcome; the belief that talent, hard work and character not circumstance should ultimately determine every child's destiny; and the welcome lesson that the Dream, one uniquely American, is alive and well, here and now, with us and with ours.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST DISTINCTIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

As it approaches the 25th anniversary of its founding, Waterside School celebrates its journey to becoming one of the most extraordinary schools in the country. Waterside proudly serves 148 students in grades PK-5, all of whom receive substantial financial assistance, providing a mission-driven, rigorous academic program that prepares them for success in the area's top independent schools and beyond. Waterside now seeks a visionary leader to guide its further development as a leading school serving promising girls and boys regardless of their families' financial resources.

Walking through the halls of Waterside, one is immediately aware of the distinct culture of the School. The School's thoughtfully designed building is located in a rapidly developing section of Stamford, CT, and children arrive early, many by 7:30. The formal day starts at 8:00 with a morning assembly for all students and teachers in the gymnasium. Parents are invited to attend, and many look on with pride as the day begins. A member of the School's leadership team makes announcements, celebrates birthdays, and leads the student body in their daily recitation of the School's pledge: "We promise to work hard, be kind, and respect learning."



THE MISSION OF WATERSIDE SCHOOL

Waterside School is a co-educational PK-5th Grade independent school serving *children* and *families* regardless of limitations in income or circumstance. The School attracts and inspires students of academic *promise* and families deeply invested in their children's *success*.

The School works to instill in its students a belief in their own worth, to *cultivate* in each a commitment to academic *excellence*, and to ensure the fullest development of every child's character. Through a rigorous program of study and experience, the School *empowers* its students with the knowledge, skills and *virtues* required to enable them to excel as students, to gain access to superior academic opportunities, and to go forward to become the *leaders* of tomorrow.

The classroom experience at Waterside combines a traditional approach—students wear uniforms in a structured environment—with current pedagogy. Each class is guided by two full-time teachers whose instruction is informed by a detailed curriculum map, and the School is justifiably proud of the fact that its students perform significantly higher on reading and math assessments in comparison to students at Connecticut's public schools. But instruction at Waterside goes well beyond academics. Teachers help students become not just curious learners, but also solid citizens. One example of this is found when one encounters a student in the hallway or in the classroom—they never fail to shake your hand and welcome you to their school. The academic day is somewhat longer than that at other schools, running until 4:00, and many students remain later to take part in after-school enrichment activities in the arts, drama, Homework Club, and athletics.

“Excellence” and “transformative” are words often used by the Waterside community to describe the culture and impact of the School. Throughout the day and the year, Waterside's commitment to serve children of promise and families of character regardless of limitations in income or circumstance is front and center.



WATERSIDE AT A GLANCE

- Founded: 2001
- Enrollment: 148 students
 - » 41% African American
 - » 36% Latinx/Hispanic
 - » 13% Multiracial
 - » 6% European
 - » 4% Asian American
- Geographic Data
 - » 82% reside in Stamford, Connecticut
 - » 8% reside in Norwalk, Connecticut
 - » 5% reside in Bridgeport/Stratford, Connecticut
 - » 5% reside in other surrounding CT and NY area
- Additional Family Facts & Figures
 - » 72% of currently enrolled students will be the first in their families to attend and graduate from college.
 - » 58% of currently enrolled students qualify for free or reduced lunch.
 - » 16% of students reside in one-parent households
 - » School-wide median household income is \$51,000
 - » 99% of Waterside families earn less than the median household income for the city of Stamford (\$107,474)
- Endowment value: approximately \$59 million as of 2/1/25
- Annual Giving: approximately \$4 million per year, funding over 70% of the School's operating expenses



SERVING THE UNDERSERVED SINCE 2001

Waterside School was founded in 2001 by Konrad “Chip” Kruger, the former co-chief executive officer of Greenwich Capital Markets, Inc. Mr. Kruger’s vision was to provide a superior educational opportunity for children from families without the benefits of advantage—those too often underrepresented in traditional independent schools. His own children had attended Connecticut’s finest private schools; he valued their educational experience and had a dream to provide similar opportunities, expectations, ambitions, standards and, ultimately, destinations to those equally deserving but less fortunate.

In 2001, the School opened with twenty-six students in two classes, kindergarten and first grade, in space leased from St. Clement of Rome Church in Stamford, Connecticut. Each year a grade was added until the School expanded to become a K-5 coeducational day school. When the School outgrew the building on Fairfield Avenue, additional space was leased down the street, and the “Barry Place Campus” was opened in 2005 to allow both the student body and program to expand.

In 2008, the Board set out to build a permanent home for the School and an endowment to help ensure its future. The Board began looking into a plot of land in south Stamford, which was eventually donated to Waterside for the School to create its own building. Waterside opened its new state-of-the-art building in September of 2011. This new building allowed the School to add a Junior Kindergarten class.





Waterside is an independent school with every dimension of a traditional independent school except the security of a steady stream of tuition revenue. Tapping into markets typically ignored, assessing students and families by measures of promise and not means, and generously sharing the life-changing opportunity of an independent school education, Waterside School is certainly a unique model. All students receive a significant financial aid tuition grant, and all families are asked to match that support with their own commitment of daily involvement in their child's learning and time volunteered at school.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

The vast majority of Waterside's students arrive in Junior Kindergarten and stay through fifth grade. An average of over 100 children apply for admission, and from this large group the School selects approximately 21 students for admission in a typical year. Attrition is minimal – the vast majority of students remain at Waterside through to their graduation. The Early Childhood Program includes both Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten, where the focus is on laying a solid foundation for a lifetime of learning. The Junior Kindergarten curriculum is designed around the observed interests and needs of the children while adhering to and maintaining specific learning standards. The Kindergarten program begins to prepare its students for the increased structure of an academic program, while honoring the developmental needs of young children. Both grades seek to foster the following dispositions: curiosity, flexibility, creativity, critical thinking, a sense of purpose, reflection, and social learning.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the Early Childhood Program at Waterside.

GRADES 1 THROUGH 5

The Waterside experience continues for children in grades one through five. During these important years, the School blends academic rigor and discipline with joy, curiosity, and discovery. The School's greatest hope is to develop empathetic, inquisitive, and respectful individuals and to blend the requisite lessons of the classroom with the essential and lasting lessons of character.



Writing skill development is woven into every aspect of the curriculum and, although the School does not have the resources to serve a broad range of learning differences, two reading specialists supplement literacy instruction in small groups. In addition, students engage in hands-on projects in the STEAM Program, develop math skills through the use of Singapore Math, and experience a range of co-curricular programs in the arts, athletics, science, and technology. Research skill development is integrated into all aspects of the Waterside curriculum.

Learn more about the Grade 1 through 5 program by clicking [here](#).

THE ARTS AT WATERSIDE

As one walks through Waterside's hallways, one is immediately struck by the School's commitment to the visual arts. Student work is displayed everywhere one turns. Moreover, it is clear that the visual arts program at the School goes well beyond the creation of paintings and sculpture, as there is a clear emphasis on the history of art throughout the building. Pieces inspired by Kehinde Wiley, Roberto Lugo, Andy Warhol, and others adorn the walls and ceiling. Music and performing arts also play a central role in a Waterside education. Students explore music through song and movement while examining music as a means of expression for both an individual and a culture. Also examined is the powerful role that music has played in social movements throughout history. In fourth and fifth grades, students are given the option to begin learning a musical instrument. The School's jazz band, 'Side Notes, regularly practices after school and performs at assemblies.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the Arts at Waterside.





EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATORS

Waterside School is guided by a talented and experienced group of educators who are described as the “heart and soul” of the School. Working collaboratively, the School’s leadership team relies on the expertise of Waterside’s teachers, who form deep personal and supportive connections with their students. Members of the Waterside faculty are lifelong learners, modeling a depth of intellectual curiosity for their students. Each classroom is guided by two full-time teachers, ensuring that every student is well-known and strongly encouraged to reach their unique potential. Over 70% of Waterside’s teachers hold advanced degrees. Like many schools, Waterside works hard to retain its best teachers but doing so can be challenging. The School will continue to focus on its goal of keeping its best educators for the long run in the coming years.

A SCHOOL THAT LIVES ITS COMMITMENT TO SERVING A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

When visiting Waterside School, one is immediately struck by the diversity of its student body. The School has a well deserved reputation in the area for welcoming students from all backgrounds and financial circumstances while providing members of its community with a strong sense of belonging.

Waterside teachers make every effort to relate their teaching content to the cultural backgrounds of their students. As much as possible, teachers seek to accommodate the dynamic mix of race, ethnicity, class, gender, region, religion, and family that contributes to every student’s cultural identity. Classroom libraries and guided reading book selections represent the interests of the students and reflect the diversity of students within each classroom. Teachers intentionally choose books, which prominently feature the lively and rich histories of the diverse cultures represented in the School. Faculty and staff are respectful of family differences and create numerous opportunities for family involvement in the life of their child’s school. The International Festival, held each spring, celebrates the 36 countries represented by Waterside families. Parents participate through choreographing dances native to their countries, teaching songs, and designing and making special clothing for each student. Parents prepare an extraordinary array of international foods, as the entire school community celebrates its diverse backgrounds with a shared meal.



AFTER WATERSIDE

Maintaining Connections and Providing Support

Since 2020, Waterside has placed 100% of its graduates in local independent schools. Most graduates attend the top independent schools in the area, including Brunswick, Greenwich Country Day, Greenwich Academy, and St. Luke's. Drawing on the School's deep experience with placement together with their close relationships with area independent schools, Waterside dedicates time and resources to helping children find the right fit and financial support when they consider their next school. This support does not end with graduation. Receiving schools work closely with the Alumni Support staff to monitor grades and school work. Waterside provides intentional, personalized assistance for students and families as they consider high school and college. Since 2019, 100% of Waterside alumni have graduated from high school and been accepted to college.

Click [here](#) to learn more about middle school placement at Waterside. Click [here](#) to learn more about the colleges and universities attended by Waterside graduates.

Waterside now has over 400 alumni, and its support of its alumni is ongoing and comprehensive. The School's Alumni Careers Initiative, now in its fourth year, focuses on educating, preparing and placing Waterside alumni at paid internships and work experiences. A 12-month curriculum leverages community, partners, mentorship, and industry professionals to disseminate knowledge and to provide access to participating alumni, paving a pathway to successful and fulfilling careers. In 2023, 39 Waterside graduates were supported through the program with 33 internships, two academic scholarships, and four full-time positions. Twenty-one hiring partners employed Waterside graduates through this program. In 2024, 32 students were placed in paid internships through the program and six full time careers were launched. In 2025, the Alumni Careers Initiative will expand its reach by partnering with additional like-minded schools, securing new hiring partners and adding new geographic markets. Waterside believes that the Alumni Careers Initiative will continue to be a catalyst in the growth of the School's legacy and impact.



FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

Waterside is overseen by a 25-person Board of Trustees, which provides appropriate guidance around strategic initiatives and financial sustainability. In addition, the School has both an Associates Board and an Ambassadors Board, which create opportunities for fundraising initiatives and governance experience for younger supporters.

The School's annual operating budget of approximately \$5.5 million is supported by annual giving of about \$4 million from between 600 and 900 donors and a draw from the endowment. Net tuition revenue contributes only a small amount (approximately 7%) to the operating budget, as 100% of Waterside's families receive financial assistance. The current value of the endowment is approximately \$59 million.

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Waterside School seeks a leader who enthusiastically embraces and champions the School's mission, which is grounded in providing a rigorous, traditional academic program that prepares students for continued educational success in middle school, high school, college, and life.

The successful candidate will be distinguished by a warm, charismatic, and inclusive personal manner, exceptional verbal and written communication skills, a deep commitment to the School's mission, and a passion for early childhood and elementary education and students. They will also bring the vision, skills, fundraising initiative, and drive to help further realize a compelling and sustainable vision for the School.

The Board of Trustees of Waterside School is conducting a national search to identify its next Head of School. Search consultant George Sanderson of Educators Collaborative solicited input from all stakeholders during an on-campus visit and gathered additional input from constituents through an online survey. Based on this input, impressions of the consultant, and feedback from the Head of School Search Committee, the following



Strengths of the School

- Waterside has a distinct mission that guides it to serve students and families who typically are not given the opportunity to attend a high quality independent school. The educational experience that the School provides is truly transformational for its students, and it occupies a unique place in the independent school world.
- Waterside has earned an outstanding reputation in Fairfield County, Connecticut and nationwide. It is deeply respected for its clear mission, as implemented by 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 area's top independent schools.
- Waterside enjoys extraordinary resources, including a \$59 million endowment, annual giving that raises approximately \$4 million each year, and a beautiful, purpose-built school building that opened in 2011. The School is generously supported by a wide range of individuals in Fairfield County and beyond.
- The finances of Waterside School have been managed in a conservative, highly professional manner. The School recorded a budget surplus for many years and has recently been drawing 2-4% from its endowment to support operations.
- Waterside has developed a notably successful program to support its graduates in middle school, high school, and beyond. The relationships that Waterside nurtures with its former students, and the assistance that the School provides them as they begin to navigate their professional lives, is becoming deeper and more effective with each passing year.
- The Board of Trustees of Waterside is talented, extremely generous, and deeply committed to the ongoing success of the School.
- A remarkably diverse school, Waterside is an inclusive institution that serves students who historically have not had access to independent schools. The goal is to create a learning environment that is reflective of the diverse cultures in the surrounding community. To that end, enrolled students currently come from over 30 nationalities. The School places a strong emphasis on providing a program that offers a variety of cultural experiences that reflect the families' cultures, as well as the multicultural nature of the world.



Opportunities and Challenges

Continue to recruit and retain mission-aligned, passionate, world class faculty, supporting their wellness and professional growth

Committed, talented faculty are at the heart of Waterside School, and continuing to invest in their morale, growth, and development is key to successful teacher recruitment and retention. The next Head of School will lead the School's work in consciously blending professional development with teacher evaluation to support a culture that values job satisfaction, creativity, and autonomy as well as ongoing growth and accountability.

Recognize and support the importance of continuity in leadership

Given its recent history, it will be important for the next Head of School at Waterside to acknowledge the importance of continuity in its leadership. Simply put, it will be important for the next Head of School to be prepared to make a long-term commitment to the School in order to support stability in its vision and leadership.

Work closely with the Board of Trustees and School community to develop a vision for the future of Waterside School

As Waterside has evolved, the School is poised to consider its future. To do so, the next Head of School will lead an examination of the School's current state and its future priorities, refining how it defines excellence, studying how the School's programs and facilities best serve its students, and determining a plan for the best use of an adjacent vacant lot, which was acquired in 2021.

Work closely with the Board on the management of the School's finances and facilities

Waterside's substantial financial resources are one of its significant strengths. That said, the School has an unusual financial model in that it relies so much on annual giving (and so little on tuition revenue) to support its operations. The next Head of School will work closely with the Board to ensure that the School has a sustainable financial model for the future.



Clearly communicate and support the culture of Waterside

Waterside has an unambiguous mission and a clear culture. That said, not all members of the community are clear about how this culture is best translated into the everyday work of the School. The next Head of School will need to lead with clarity, conviction, and strength, and in doing so unite the community around its shared values.

Develop a model for the evaluation of faculty and staff members, supporting their ongoing growth

Waterside is in the early stages of developing a system for supporting the growth of faculty and staff while holding them accountable for supporting the School's excellence. The next Head of School will further develop this initiative, with the goal of implementing a process that is fair and clear.

Partner with the Director of Advancement and Community Engagement to strengthen Waterside's long term fundraising capabilities and results while bolstering annual giving

Waterside is heavily dependent on annual giving to support its operations. The next Head of School will be responsible for building lasting relationships with Board members and friends in order to support this important source of revenue.

Make genuine, trusting connections with Waterside families and the community

Waterside's families are not typical of those associated with traditional independent schools. Especially because of parents' socio-economic, racial, and cultural diversity, the next Head of School will need to consciously and intentionally build trusting relationships with Waterside families and the community to support student success and ongoing enrollment goals.

Build administrative infrastructure and efficiency

The next Head of School will work to support an efficient administrative structure and systems, minimizing inefficiencies and supporting the development of the leadership team. The School will benefit from a fresh look at roles and responsibilities as well as lines of reporting and communication.

Develop a close relationship with the Board and help trustees know the School, so they can continue to serve as its most ardent ambassadors

The Board of Trustees of Waterside is comprised of a group of business professionals who are unwavering in their support of the School. That said, none of the trustees are parents of students or graduates and only one has direct experience working with independent schools, so nurturing their understanding of the School's daily life is more challenging than with a more conventional Board. The next Head of School will need to intentionally build appropriate connections between the Board and the School, providing opportunities for the former to engage with the latter.

Skills and Attributes of the Next Head of School

Waterside School seeks a visionary leader and passionate educator to step into the challenging role of Head of School. 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, vision, intellect, and an innovative spirit will thrive and experience success in the Waterside School community.

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

- A commitment to a confident leadership style that includes empowering and inspiring others, working in partnership, and holding people accountable in ways that support continued professional and personal growth
- Proficient understanding of strategic financial sustainability, budget development, fundraising, student and faculty recruitment and retention, and enrollment management
- Demonstrated success both in the classroom and in leadership roles, preferably in elementary school settings, as well as a track record of demonstrating excellence in teaching standards and practices.
- The capacity to facilitate inclusive dialogue, make difficult decisions, have courageous conversations, and build trust
- Thoughtful, respectful words and actions that reflect a depth of self-knowledge, humility, and commitment to the mission of the School
- Demonstrated evidence of cultural competency and documented success in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff
- A deep love for early childhood and elementary school students, an earnest belief in rigorous and joyful learning, and unbridled enthusiasm for the School's compelling mission of guiding students to do and be their best
- An inspiring verbal and written communicator 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 and history of Waterside School
- A visionary builder who can think strategically in partnership with a talented Board. The next Head of School will be an individual who can identify needed change, develop the vision and supporting plan to achieve such change, and effectively lead and capably execute plans to bring initiatives to fruition, while managing community expectations and the impact of change
- Charismatic and skilled in building relationships within and beyond the Waterside School community, generating excitement about the School's mission to instill academic excellence and character development in its students





SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in a single merged pdf file to George Sanderson as soon as possible. The deadline for submission of materials is **July 15, 2025**. Dossiers will be reviewed upon receipt.

- EC Summary Sheet (Contact George Sanderson for this document)
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Current Résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- A list of five 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 George Sanderson for this document)

Send application materials in a single merged pdf file via email to:

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

The Search Schedule

The Search Committee plans to identify a preliminary group of candidates to interview (virtually) in late July and August of 2025. From this group the Search Committee will select finalists for two days of interviews on campus in the early fall. The Trustees expect to reach a decision and appoint a Head-Elect shortly after finalist visits with the term of office to commence on July 1, 2026.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Waterside School is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, disability, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender, medical condition, or any other characteristic protected under federal, state, or local discrimination laws.



WATERSIDE SCHOOL
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