

POSITION STATEMENT

Wooster School

DANBURY, CONNECTICUT



LEADERSHIP SEARCH

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 1, 2027 or July 1, 2028



A Leadership Search conducted by
RG175 Search Consultants Bob Henderson & Tony Featherston

Overview

Wooster School is a remarkable, inclusive, close-knit community shaped by purpose, relationships, and an enduring belief in the power of education to shape lives. Founded in 1926 in Danbury, Connecticut, Wooster is a co-educational, college-preparatory day school serving approximately 310 students in grades 5-12. The school is known as a regional leader in student-centered education and serves a diverse student body drawn primarily from Fairfield (CT) and Westchester (NY) Counties, and beyond, including an international cohort.

Wooster School's core purpose is to guide young people toward fulfillment, happiness, and success through the balanced development of intellect, conscience, and spirit. For many members of the school community the core values of being gentle, generous, truthful, kind, and brave are more than just words. They are guiding principles that shape how students learn throughout their time at Wooster and how they progress after.



After 14 years of thoughtful, successful leadership under current Head of School Matt Byrnes, Wooster now seeks its next head to begin July 1, 2027 or 2028. The school enters this search with notable strengths: a compelling mission, a loyal and engaged community, an increasingly differentiated academic program, and a commitment to access and inclusion that is visible in both policy and practice.

Wooster's identity has long been shaped by the idea that students should be known well and challenged appropriately. The school is intentionally small enough to be personal but large enough to offer a meaningful range of opportunities in academics, arts, athletics, and student life. Wooster has thrived by embracing change and being on the forefront of true learner-centeredness in its approach to developing programs and delivering on its mission. Wooster's next Head of School will inherit a strong school that is strong in its pedagogical priorities, deeply relational in its culture, scrappy and innovative in its approach to problem-solving, clear in its commitment to developing young people of character, confidence, and conscience, and poised for continued evolution.



Location

Wooster's campus provides a setting that is both expansive and grounding. Its 127 acres creates room for community, play, reflection, and growth, while its location in southwestern Connecticut—about 90 minutes north of New York City—places the school within reach of families from the surrounding area. The campus is set on a stunning, forested hillside, and feels like a small village, with the academic buildings surrounding a campus green. In addition, Wooster has separate spaces for visual and performing arts, a state-of-the-art Maker Space, and athletic facilities—including three gyms, newly renovated tennis courts, and a turf field.

Danbury, known as "Hat City" for its history as the center of hat making in the US, is a thriving city of 85,000, blending quintessential New England charm with a lively city vibe, offering a diverse mix of

culture, recreation, and history. The city and school are within easy reach of all that Fairfield and Westchester Counties have to offer. The area boasts a vibrant visual and performing arts scene with numerous galleries and performance spaces. Outdoor enthusiasts can explore over 1,600 acres of open space, including the scenic Tarrywile Park's 20 miles of trails and the expansive Candlewood Lake for boating, fishing, and swimming. Shoppers flock to the massive Danbury Fair Mall and locally iconic Stew Leonard's grocery store, and diners enjoy diverse downtown restaurants. Danbury's location provides easy access to New York City to the south, Hartford to the east, to great outdoor recreation to the north, and to the shoreline to the southeast, as well as to the many vibrant small towns of Fairfield County, Connecticut, and Westchester County, New York.

History and Founding Ideals

In the fall of 1926, Rev. Aaron C. Coburn opened the doors of Wooster School with just ten students and a conviction that education could be different. An education could be more purposeful, more personal, more rooted in character. What began as a modest boys' school on the grounds of a Connecticut church became something far greater. The school became a community defined by four enduring principles: simplicity, hard work, intellectual excellence, and service to others.

Those principles were not abstract ideals. They were lived. Students maintained the campus with their own hands, worshipped together, and were held to an Honor Code that made integrity as central as academics. The school named for a Revolutionary War general carried his spirit into every generation. It is a spirit not of conquest, but of conscience.

Over the decades, Wooster School grew and changed. Girls joined the community in 1970. The school transitioned from boarding to a day school in 1990. The campus expanded to 127 acres and over 300 students drawn from across Fairfield and Westchester Counties. And yet, through every chapter, the founding mission held: to educate the whole person—mind, character, and community.

In 2026, as the school celebrates its centennial, it does not simply look back. It focuses on who their students are becoming—curious, compassionate, generous, gentle, truthful, kind, brave and ready to lead—and recognizes that the work Rev. Coburn began will never be fully finished.

Purpose, Promise and Beliefs

Our purpose is to prepare young people for fulfillment, happiness, and success in life through the rigorous and healthy development of intellect, conscience, body, and spirit.

The Wooster School community fosters a culture rich in thinking, learning, relationships, and Self-Help. Our students develop the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary to confidently and resiliently engage the world as people of conscience, compassion, and action.

At Wooster School we believe that:

1. In order to think, learn, and teach well, all members of our community must feel physically, emotionally and intellectually safe.
2. Community members must be empathetic and communicate clearly, while taking responsibility for themselves, their actions, and the physical environment. The community, in turn, supports all of its members with reason and compassion. We call this Self-Help.



3. In order to develop core skills, dispositions, and knowledge our curriculum must combine high expectations, hard work, creativity, problem identification and solving, metacognition, reflection, deep thinking, and the frequent application of learning in authentic contexts.
4. Thinking, learning and feedback should be visible and individualized, so that over time, students can become more independent, and take greater ownership of their learning.
5. Having fun, playing, and developing a sense of humor, including the ability to laugh at oneself, are fundamental to learning—and to a life well-lived.
6. Strong and positive relationships, particularly between teacher and learner, are essential to education and human development.
7. All teachers must be both independent and collaborative learners who look to apply new skills, dispositions, and knowledge within an ever-evolving inclusive educational landscape.
8. Building confidence through team sports and physical activity, as well as frequent opportunities for engagement with new experiences both inside and outside the classroom—including those that produce risk-taking and discomfort—is integral to learning.
9. Students must learn to appreciate and create art, music, theater and literature—which often express the best thinking and wisdom of human culture—so that they can tell their own stories, and understand the stories of others.
10. The development of a personal, moral and ethical framework, and the exploration of faith and the inner spirit, are essential elements of thoughtful human development.
11. Our community members must have the curiosity and courage to champion diversity, equity, justice, respect and inclusion for all. We strive to create a community where the identities and ideas of all members are valued and respected, and where it is safe to speak up when this ideal is not met. Further, we can best pursue equity, social justice, human rights, and global citizenship by engaging in personal conduct that exhibits the inclusivity, kindness, and generosity such a community demands.
12. As humans we must think and act in ways which acknowledge that we live on a planet in space with limited and precious resources. We have nowhere else to go.

Program

Wooster's academic program is distinguished by its attention to depth, rigor, relevance, flexibility, student agency, and commitment to developing transferable skills and core competencies. The school's trimester system provides students with focused, intensive engagement with course material, while its unique course offerings ensure that students are challenged according to their abilities and interests. Faculty know students well, as learners and people, teach responsively, and foster the habits of independence and ownership that young people need to thrive in college and beyond.

Grades 5-8 are organized into Early Middle School (5-6) and Upper Middle School (7-8). This cohort approach along with a strong advisory program supports a personalized approach to skill-building, project-based learning, and the development of student voice.

Wooster's Upper School provides increased academic expectations as well as student ownership of their learning, with a focus on inquiry, independence, and curiosity. The goal is to develop engaged, lifelong learners with the temperament, skills, and competencies for the next steps in their education and the future. Knowing the students as well as they do at Wooster, the college guidance process is tailored to provide individualized, student-focused support to students to enroll in great-fit colleges.



Signature programs at Wooster include:

Humanities Program: Required of all ninth and tenth graders, the Humanities Program integrates English and History in a team-taught, project-based curriculum that develops students' thinking, creating, reading, writing, and speaking skills. This foundational program prepares students for advanced work across disciplines and cultivates the analytical and expressive capacities essential for college and life.

Deep Learning Initiative (DLI) and Advanced Courses: The most rigorous courses at Wooster are offered through the Deep Learning Initiative (DLI) and Advanced course framework. DLI courses are designed around tutorial experiences akin to college seminars, where students practice agency, independence, and curiosity in pursuit of inquiry, research, and original thinking. Advanced courses, modeled after college-level survey classes, emphasize breadth of content and rigorous engagement with challenging material in a more traditional learning environment.

Senior Independent Study (SIS): The Senior Independent Study program is Wooster's most extensive experiential learning opportunity. During the final six weeks of senior year, each student engages in an independent project of personal interest off campus, culminating in a day of formal presentations and reflection. SIS helps students explore potential career paths, pursue individual passions, and apply what they have learned about themselves in a new environment outside the classroom.

Leadership and Management Skills

Program: All seniors at Wooster take on authentic leadership and management responsibilities as Prefects, overseeing a specific area of school life. This program provides students with practical leadership and followership tools that serve them well in school and beyond, reinforcing Wooster's conviction that leadership is a learned discipline and a form of service.

The Bridge Program and Pathways

Program: Wooster offers two distinctive support programs designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. The Bridge Program provides comprehensive, integrated support services for high-achieving neurodivergent learners who are mainstreamed in all core classes, with the goal of reducing support over time and promoting individual agency and independence. The Pathways Program, a one- or two-year experience, helps students develop the skills to become independent, lifelong learners.

Equity and Justice Center (EJC): The EJC serves as the central hub for the school's social impact and equity and inclusion efforts. With the goal to foster a respectful, inclusive community where all members feel valued and constructive, the EJC leads the effort to integrate equity and ideals like "hours for others" into the curriculum. It offers cultural competency training, creates student-led initiatives, and hosts community events that bring together diverse groups from the wider community.

To learn more about Wooster School's program, visit www.woosterschool.org.

Wooster School At-A-Glance

Founded: 1926

Campus: 127 acres in Danbury, Connecticut

Distance from New York City: 60 miles

Grades Served: 5-12

Enrollment: Approximately 310 students

Religious Affiliation: Episcopal Heritage, although Wooster serves students from many faiths and religious traditions.

Average Class Size: 10-11 students

Faculty: 100 members, 65% with advanced degrees

Tuition (2026-27): \$44,680-\$52,810 (Grades 5-12). Some signature programs, most notably the Bridge Program, entail additional charges.

Financial Aid: More than \$3.4 million awarded annually to 50% of students





Challenges and Opportunities

The next Head of School at Wooster School should be prepared to collaborate effectively with a dedicated board of trustees and a devoted school community to fulfill the school's mission and to lead the school wisely and confidently into the future by embracing current challenges and seizing new opportunities. These challenges and opportunities include but are not limited to the following:

- Wooster School has proudly and effectively developed a program, curricula, and philosophy that serve a wide range of learners. Clarifying and communicating the identity of the school, internally and externally, will be a significant opportunity for the next Head of School.
- While Wooster has managed its budget and finances quite well over the last decade, it remains a school that is overwhelmingly enrollment and tuition financed. The next Head of School must be committed to leading, expanding, and improving the advancement and fundraising systems and operations of the school, both for annual and capital purposes, shaping a healthy culture of collaborative philanthropy with current families and alumni.
- A great strength and appeal of working at Wooster School for the faculty is the degree of autonomy and the consequent creativity they are afforded. This does serve students well in most respects. The next Head of School will need to continue to examine the consistency and structure of the pedagogy and curriculum and to determine the degree to which greater alignment may be advisable.
- Wooster has been adroit in the adoption of new ideas and trends throughout their curriculum and program. That vision has served the school well and underpinned enrollment gains and the sense of innovation and momentum in the community. The next Head of School will need to have a vision for excellence in the future of secondary education that will sustain this culture at Wooster.

- Independent school education is rising in cost and price faster than the rate of inflation and Wooster School is no exception to this trend. Families at Wooster have been supportive because they feel the product is excellent and their children are thriving. As costs and tuition continue to rise, the next Head of School will need to be a transparent and effective communicator about the school's value proposition.
- Enrollment and marketing are likely to be ongoing challenges for Wooster School. This is due to the adverse pressure of demographics and competition among the numerous strong school options in the region. This represents a leadership challenge for the next Head of School. Wooster needs to rise to all the aforementioned challenges and opportunities to meet ambitious and essential enrollment objectives.
- Faculty work hard at Wooster and "wear many hats" to support students and the institution. This is part of the joy and invigorating spirit of being in this wonderful community. The next Head of School must model and live the ethos and culture of the school to inspire the trust and confidence of its varied constituents. The next Head of School, as part of this endeavor, must keep a close eye on balanced and fair, yet necessarily high, expectations for faculty.
- Strategic leadership that honors tradition while guiding the school forward will be critical. The next Head of School must be a unifying presence across the extended Wooster community and serve as a visionary leader capable of addressing competing priorities and perspectives with integrity and empathy, all while strengthening Wooster's identity as a unique, community-centered independent school.
- Wooster School enjoys passionate alumni who care deeply about the school but haven't always felt connected as the school has evolved. The next Head of School must work to reengage a sentimental and fragmented alumni network.



Qualities and Qualifications

The successful candidate to be Head of School at Wooster School will be a mission and values driven leader who will embody and demonstrate most, if not all, of the following skills, qualities, characteristics and experiences:

- Demonstrated success as an inspirational, visionary, caring, wise and collaborative leader and educator.
- Ability to serve as a visible, energetic, active, and engaged presence in the extended Wooster School community.
- Breadth of experience and perspective relevant to school leadership, and familiarity with school life, academics, and programming in a complex grades 5-12 day school.
- Personal integrity, high emotional intelligence and inspirational spirit, along with warmth, enthusiasm, and a sense of humor.
- Demonstrated experience as a strategic thinker and implementer of strategic vision.
- Capacity to serve as an ethical, decisive and transparent role model for administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and serve as an effective steward of the warm school culture and deep sense of community.
- Financial acumen and a record of ambitious, data-driven innovation and progress.
- Fundraising insight, talent, and skill.
- Demonstrated success as a systems thinker, while demonstrating genuine concern for the welfare of a community.
- Significant experience with building and supporting inclusive, equitable, and broadly diverse communities.
- Talent and success in identifying, selecting, retaining, developing and inspiring outstanding teachers, staff, and administrators.
- Approachability and ability to forge authentic relationships with a wide range of people both within the constituencies of the school and externally, including students, parents, alumni, and wider community members.
- Sophisticated understanding of independent school enrollment management, marketing, and effective communications.
- Superb written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills.
- An advanced degree.
- Willingness to lead in alignment with the mission, values, and strategic vision for the future of the school.





Application Process

To be considered, a candidate must submit the following:

- A cover letter detailing your interest and the qualifications that make you a compelling candidate
- A resume or c.v.
- A statement of educational or leadership philosophy;
- An additional writing sample, submitted in a single pdf with the philosophy statement (optional)
- At least three confidential references with contact information as specified on the RG175 website.

Candidates should upload their application materials on the RG175 website:

www.rg175.com/login

The **deadline** for receipt of full application materials is **January 11, 2027**. Candidates are encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible. The school anticipates making a final decision by the end of March 2027. For more information, please contact RG175 consultants:

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Wooster School Employment Statement

Founded in 1926, Wooster School is a co-educational, grades 5-12, college preparatory day school with an enrollment of approximately 310 students, and a regional leader in student-centered education. The school is located in Danbury, Connecticut. By design and mission, it educates a student population diverse in academic ability, socioeconomic background, religious affinity, and race and ethnicity. Wooster is a member of the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools and the National Association of Independent Schools.

While Wooster's traditions of Self-Help and relationship-building have long been recognized as strengths, our more recent commitment to innovative approaches to teaching and learning are making us a leader in the independent school world. We are committed to a learner-centered environment for our students, and to exploring the full potential of competency-based and personalized teaching and learning.

Wooster School is an Equal Opportunity Employer and we provide a work environment that welcomes diversity. In addition to a competitive salary, the Head of School receives retirement, health insurance, tuition remission, short-and long-term disability and life insurance benefits, plus an on-campus residence.

All employees are subject to a criminal background check before any contractual offer is final.

