

# NEW ROADS SCHOOL



**Position Statement  
Head of School Search  
New Roads School  
Santa Monica, California  
Start Date: July 1, 2024**

# Head of School Position Statement

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## THE CAMPUS AND ITS LOCALE

Taking a right turn off busy Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica into the New Roads campus is entering a different world – one that is both vibrantly urban but oasis-like in its instant appeal. Classrooms buzz with curiosity, playgrounds resound with happy shouts beneath towering sycamores, studios and labs are ablaze with intensity. This is a school! Compressed into a relatively compact area, New Roads has everything it needs from an academic standpoint but also possesses amenities that make it a truly pleasant place to be. Courtyards, picnic tables, chess boards, a game court, turfed spaces for comfort and play – it is clearly a campus built to be used and enjoyed by students. From Lower Schoolers playing games outside to high schoolers playing chess board games with faculty members, there is a clear sense that this school is about its students, putting them at the center of both classroom pedagogy and experiential learning, both on-campus and off-.

Beyond the confines of the campus lies Los Angeles. A world capital in every sense, Los Angeles offers a life rich in opportunity. It may be unsurpassed in its easy access to cultural icons like the County Museum or Disney Hall; its offerings for sports fans that include recent championship teams in the Dodgers, Rams, Lakers, and Kings, as well as the L.A. Football Club, Chargers, Ducks, Clippers, Angels, and Angel City; world class higher education – UCLA, the Claremont Colleges, Caltech, USC, Occidental, and Loyola Marymount; amazing medical facilities like Cedars-Sinai and UCLA; opportunities for environmental activism with Heal the Bay or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; celebrated studios and the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Honestly, metropolitan Los Angeles offers a cornucopia of cultural and entertainment opportunities, and is likely the only world capital city where it is literally possible to ski and surf in the same day. New Roads is a creature of the city, reflecting its eclectic interests and innumerable opportunities.





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### THE VIBE

It seems as though everything at New Roads is geared toward the students, their growth, their learning, and their well-being. This is a school that is so intentional about its Mission, so committed to ensuring that students can be their true authentic selves, so mindful of the needs of each student – whether in the Spectrum Program, on the debate team, or pursuing an independent study in prosthetics – it's a place where students come first. Not surprisingly, students thrive in an atmosphere that is at once casual – first names, no dress code – yet highly ordered – a core academic program that is traditional in its roots but progressive in its practice. (As one Trustee says, “We’re progressive in how we teach, not what we teach.”) The campus is tidy; students clean up after themselves. And kindness is a way of life. Student after student volunteers that everyone is

kind, there is no bullying, and respect for all is a universal practice. The consultants helping with this search have never heard such rhapsodic testimonials from parents about what the school has done for their kids; New Roads truly comes across as a transformational place. Students seem genuinely to like each other and when queried, to a one they aver that homework is not oppressive and that teachers and students alike really are kind and thoughtful.

### MISSION AND VALUES

Few schools are as unrestrained in their Mission and Values as New Roads is. In most schools, people may have a vague notion of what the mission is, and in schools with values on banners throughout the buildings, many people can recite the values. But honestly, at New Roads everyone (parents, students, faculty alike) knows both the mission and the values and strives to embody them.



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## Mission

"In an authentically diverse community reflective of Los Angeles, New Roads prepares young people for life by developing in them a personal dedication to learning, a respect for independent thinking, an expanding curiosity about the world and its people, and a commitment to the common good."

A related statement spells this out: "We the people of New Roads liberate young individuals through the pursuit of justice, equity, and opportunity; raising generations of powerfully compassionate advocates in an intellectual habitat driven by authentic diversity – ultimately empowering them to disrupt systems that produce inequality and build a more just future."

Importantly, New Roads sees academic rigor as a key part of its mission—this is not a school where an emphasis on student-based learning means students are not held accountable to high standards; in fact, many expressed that to do so would be a *failure* of its mission. Because of the diversity of backgrounds and therefore the prior educational experiences of its students, there are several initiatives to support a "leveling up" so that all students can participate equally and meaningfully in the New Roads program. This is a school with its eyes wide open regarding the social and economic barriers to student excellence and has a community-wide commitment to overcome them.

## Survey Highlights Four Celebrated Values and Some Surprises

A recent community-wide survey revealed overwhelming, massive support for the school's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. All constituencies believe that New Roads must maintain its deep commitment to authentic diversity, its inclusive identity, and a strong financial aid program. A whopping 70% of the respondents highlighted DEIB. Close behind were the school's progressive approach to education, its commitment to Financial Aid, and the close relationships between students and their teachers.



The survey also revealed an uncommon awareness of the school's need to do a better job of fundraising, especially since it needs to improve its facilities. It's unusual in such a survey to see parents, teachers, and trustees all expressing the same opinion on what needs to be done. Most stakeholders acknowledge the tension between maintaining tuition support for financial aid and the need for New Roads to have solid financial underpinning. This need is heightened by the widening income gaps between various communities in Los Angeles.

Among the top priorities for the next Head is recruiting, retaining, and compensating a high-quality faculty. Academic excellence is a hallmark of the New Roads education and all the surveys reflected an understanding that it requires exceptional faculty. Stakeholders additionally are seeking a Head who will be focused on both the academic and the social-emotional growth of students. Faculty, staff and administrators are particularly interested in having a Head who will manage the budget and who possesses financial acumen. The administration and staff also believe the next Head should be a systems thinker since there is a perceived need for clearer structure in the administrative team.

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## THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### PROGRAM

New Roads has a dynamic academic program, one that responds to current students' needs, faculty interests, and to the school's mission and values. Whether in its K-12 traditional curriculum, the extensive elective program, Human Development, or in text selections, the school's commitment to authentic diversity and to its stated values is evident across the grades and throughout the curriculum.

Philosophically drawing from its Mission, New Roads provides a college preparatory program for the authentically diverse student body. At all ages, the goal is not a race for the accumulation of facts, but rather has the goal of developing habits of mind and character and an ever-expanding awareness of the human condition. New Roads' curriculum is intellectually rigorous, challenges young people without stressing them, encourages innovation, and allows for the teacher's voice.

This is not a static program, but rather there is fluidity to this rigorous curriculum nurtured by a

culture that respects the individual and encourages innovation. Differentiation is the key here - both for the faculty and their style of teaching and the students' interests and learning needs. In a school where Faculty develop courses and select materials that meet students' needs and their interests, it's not surprising that the curriculum guide is always in flux. For its CAIS/WASC accreditation, the New Roads faculty is reviewing and updating the printed curriculum guide and incorporating courses and programs that have been instituted since the guide was last published.

### Elementary (K-5)

With one class per grade and two teachers per classroom, the foundational work in reading, writing and social studies and that math is offered at ability, not grade level, sets the stage for the Middle School. Collaboration is central to the elementary. The teachers work with the Director to make changes in texts or approaches and when decisions are made, parents are invited in to explore the new program. After considerable discussion, the faculty adopted a new math program. And true to the school's inclusive nature, several sessions were held to introduce parents to the concepts and they were invited to a game night that illustrated the mathematical principles that undergird the program.

There are specialists for music, visual arts and Wellness and physical education. Signature programs include Human Development and the Common Good. On Fridays, there is a range of electives including Digital music, gardening, yoga and chess.

### Middle School (6-8)

In these middle years, students study a core curriculum recognizable by most adults as the stuff of traditional school: Humanities, Mathematics, Science and Modern Language. Students enroll in Spanish and math classes based on their mastery of





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skills, allowing them to advance into high school courses. What distinguishes the program is its innovation, the project-based instruction, the willingness to adopt and adapt and the commitment to social justice, a theme that runs through the curriculum. Capitalizing on the universal cry of middle schoolers for fairness and their desire to address a wrong, the school 7th and 8th graders take Passions and Activism courses that lead to a Call to Action project connected to an issue centered around the school's philosophy and mission statement that is presented before an audience of parents and their peers. As in the other divisions, there is a Human Development course and a weekly town hall.

## Upper School (9-12)

In its Upper School, New Roads strikes the right balance between a rigorous intellectual environment and an emphasis on kids enjoying their high school years. A commitment to excellence is blended with programs and activities that are lively and imaginative. In this relatively small school, faculty work within a framework to create courses that speak to their individual passions.

For example, English Department courses are aligned by theme and allow teachers choice in the content. Within this framework, faculty select their materials and meet students where they are. The same is true in the sciences, which include the usual college prep classes in chemistry, physics and biology, as well as advanced classes designed by faculty who long ago eschewed the AP program. The Modern Language department offers traditional language study in Spanish, French, and American Sign Language!

As in the other divisions, Human Development classes, titled "Mysteries," are a key component of the Upper School curriculum. Acknowledging the dynamic changes during this time and the transitions that occur, the program addresses themes of identity, empathy, relationships, and societal impact. In the senior year, the course acknowledges and celebrates the transition out of New Roads.

## THE SPECTRUM PROGRAM

New Roads' commitment to diversity led 20 years ago to the founding of Spectrum, a school within a school, a program geared for high-functioning autistic students in grades 6-12 that provides the support for them to be fully integrated in the New Roads college prep programs, to attend classes with their peers, and to participate in activities, sports and clubs.

In small cohorts, a team of seven faculty members help students develop executive-functioning skills, social skills, and self-advocacy, with the goals of helping them learn to work with others and have success in their classes. Spectrum students are accepted participants in every aspect of school life.

<https://www.newroads.org/curriculum/spectrum-program>

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## NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAM

New Roads' electives are wide-ranging, and regarded as just as important for student development as academics. One might expect in a school that treasures each student's individuality that there would be an abundance of options: From Debate to Social Justice, from film-making to costume design, from volleyball to chess, there is a niche for every student. Never sung? That's okay. There is a choral group for you! An accomplished jazz musician – there's a quartet or group for you, too. Elementary students at day's end have choices that include Jr. Great Books.

Without doubt, the most eye-catching activity at New Roads is the outstanding performing arts program. Many students come to the school for its opportunities in Dance, Music, and Drama. As one student happily puts it, "There's a music program for everybody." In a new, beautiful 355-seat theater, productions flourish and abound and are massively well attended. Current performances of "Beauty and the Beast" (Middle School) and "Our Town" (Upper) will be huge successes. There is also on campus a *couture* studio where students learn clothing design and costume production. Finally, as one would expect in the world's media capital, New Roads offers classes in Digital Media, Computer Science, and Film, in addition to screen-writing, hip-hop, and animation.

The list of clubs is long and ever-changing to meet the interests of the students and faculty. In any given year there is also a long list of clubs and activities, many of which reflect the students' diversity and commitment to social justice. A typical year would include many of the following, among others: The Multiracial Student Union - Animation Club - The Jaguardian - Human Rights Watch: Student Task Force - Black Student Union - Asian Student Union - Latinos Unidos - The PC

Computer Building Club - Afro Chick - Dungeons and Dragons - Art Club - Girls Who Code - Jags Cheer Squad.

Athletics are also a priority and there is a new focus on developing talent in the lower grades. Last year both Varsity Baseball and Girls Soccer had playoff bids. That New Roads has any interscholastic athletic program demonstrates the community's support for athletics, given that the school borrows or rents all its practice and game facilities away from campus, yet manages to field teams in volleyball, tennis, basketball, soccer, swimming, golf, and baseball.



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## FINANCE

The school has made a lot of progress in the last decade in understanding and addressing its financial position given its remarkable commitment to financial aid. It reorganized debt incurred by the construction of the theater building, purchased the middle school building so that almost all of the school operates in facilities it owns and made strides in increasing fundraising. However, software changes, personnel changes, and the pandemic all played a role in leading the school to an unbalanced budget that has resulted in a current operating loss. An immediate task this year for the Acting Head and the Board's Finance Committee is the restoration of a balanced budget and an increase in giving. An inherent challenge in budgeting at New Roads is that currently (and historically) 43% of the student body receive assistance that accounts for nearly one-third of the operating budget and there needs to be sufficient support to make that commitment viable. With that partly in mind, the annual fund goal for the current year has been increased from \$1.4 Million to \$2.0 Million.

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

**New Roads enjoys many strengths on which the next Head can capitalize:**

- Clarity of Mission
- Consensus on Mission and Values
- Authentic Diversity
- Total School-Wide Commitment to DEIB
- Solid enrollment with more applicants than spaces

- A Strong and challenging academic program, K-12
- Excellent college placement
- Celebration of students' selves
- Enthusiastic and supportive parents
- Spectrum Program

**While capitalizing on the strengths, the next Head will also have the opportunity to:**

- Help New Roads prepare for the WASC accreditation team visit in 2025
- Evaluate the sustainability of the school's commitment to Financial Aid (30% of budget)
- Accelerate Fundraising for Financial Aid, Program, Salaries, and Facilities
- Reverse the recent history of expenses exceeding revenues
- Work with the Board to manage the debt load
- Balance the need for higher enrollment and better facilities within the same campus footprint
- Enhance the school's commitment to interscholastic athletics

**New Roads' Next Head of School will have:**

- Experience in, and dedication to, progressive education and social justice
- An abiding love of working with young people
- The capacity to dream but the ability to get things done
- A high EQ
- Thorough understanding of school finance
- A track record of successful work in DEIB
- A high degree of integrity
- Enthusiasm for fundraising
- High-level administrative experience and know how to create structure
- Extensive understanding of K-12 curriculum and pedagogy
- Strong writing and public speaking skills



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## APPLICATION PROCESS

Yes, it's a school with challenges, but they can all be dealt with, and what's left is a school with limitless upside that's eager to move forward and get on with its next period of growth and development. The new Head will have the opportunity to make New Roads the leading K-12 progressive, socially activist school in the country.

Salary range: \$300,000 to \$400,000.

If you think you could be this candidate, please apply online at the RG175 website: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

The application includes:

- A cover letter explaining your interest in New Roads
- Your current resume, and
- A sample of something you have written

If you have any questions, please reach out to RG175 consultants Debbie Reed, [dereed14@gmail.com](mailto:dereed14@gmail.com) and Tom Hudnut, [tom@tomhudnut.com](mailto:tom@tomhudnut.com).

The deadline for applications is **January 14, 2024**.