



The
COOPER
School

Position Statement
Head of School Search
The Cooper School

Charleston, South Carolina
Start Date: July 1, 2025

RG 175

Change as Opportunity

HEAD OF SCHOOL

POSITION STATEMENT



OVERVIEW

Located on a quaint, intimate campus in the beautiful, relaxed city of Charleston South Carolina, The Cooper School is an independent progressive K-8 learning environment where project-based academic excellence is balanced with social and emotional skills. Everything at the school is intentional and the curriculum and programs represent best practices for students in these grades. Learning is vibrant, engaging, meaningful, and rich. In a culture where more parents find that children are growing up too fast and confronted too soon with mature concerns, The Cooper School's environment provides an oasis. With no older teen influence at school, the students remain more ingenuous, more likely to engage in healthy, age-appropriate activities, and more comfortable being kids a few years longer than peers at many other schools.

MISSION

At The Cooper School, learning is driven by a deep respect for children as innovators and explorers, curious scientists and mathematicians, imaginative authors and artists, and engaged change makers who have important ideas and theories that they express with purpose, meaning, and joy.



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BELIEFS

- Children are able and willing to be active participants in their own education.
- Children should be motivated and challenged to use their individual skills and talents.
- Children flourish when they have the support and opportunity to grow and learn at a pace and in a way that respects individual development.
- Children learn best when learning is driven by their own academic and social inquiry, and within a cultural context instead of in isolation.
- Children develop creativity in an environment rich in resources and materials and when they are encouraged to use all their senses.
- Children are capable and intrinsically motivated to act towards others with respect, kindness, concern and open-mindedness.
- Children achieve authentic learning success when they work, think, and collaborate within a diverse community of learners.
- Children learn best when they have daily opportunities to make important choices and reflect on the results.
- Children develop crucial critical thinking skills when they experience, create, explore, discover and problem solve.
- Children need ample time and space for open ended discovery and exploration.
- Children become self-motivated, enthusiastic learners through real-world experiences that make learning relevant to them.
- Children need to develop the skills of creativity, flexibility, resilience, social consciousness, and self-reliance in order to be successful in the 21st century.
- Children deserve to be taught by passionate experts in their fields, who value the relationship of respectful teaching and learning.



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HISTORY

The Cooper School was founded in 2007 by Dr. Kate Shorter. Dr. Shorter developed the visionary seed for The Cooper School after twenty years of working with thousands of students and teachers. A native of South Carolina, Dr. Shorter completed her B.A at Harvard University, her Masters in Curriculum and Teaching at Columbia University, Teachers College, and her Ph.D. in Instruction and Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Shorter worked with Lucy Calkins and The Writing Project of Columbia University as a consultant to New York City Public Schools. Before starting The Cooper School, she was a teacher supervisor and instructor for The Department of Education at The College of Charleston, The University of South Carolina and The University of Pittsburgh.

Inspired by the work of John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, and drawing on her extensive knowledge of the theory and research that informs

the best practices in education, Dr. Shorter developed The Cooper School and its curriculum, creating a unique community. The Cooper School was designed to be a school for students to engage in a curriculum of academic excellence that responds to the developmental needs of the whole child; for educators who care deeply about children, their own learning, creativity, and service; and for families seeking a nurturing environment that challenges, delights and engages young children.

The Cooper School opened in September of 2007 at 723 St. Andrews Boulevard with 13 students. The Middle School opened in 2020 and the school now encompasses three buildings and serves 155 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The Cooper School continues to serve as a forward-thinking, educational environment where students' social, emotional, physical and academic development are fostered using an integrated, challenging, and meaningful curriculum.

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FINANCES AND ENROLLMENT

The Cooper School (TCS) takes pride in its track record of financial stewardship, particularly as a relatively young but continuously growing educational institution. As of January 2023, TCS attends to the educational needs of 155 students from 124 unique families across K-8. Primary funding is tuition, and TCS works hard to manage operations efficiently to uphold tuition levels that remain competitive in the Charleston market.

In 2020, TCS achieved a significant financial milestone by concluding a capital campaign to establish a middle school in a newly acquired and renovated building. After securing substantial donations and favorable construction financing, the doors of our middle school opened in the Fall of 2020.

The effectiveness of TCS's financial management exemplifies the school's adherence to progressive education. TCS is steadfast in its commitment to sustained growth, both in enrollment and educational offerings, while remaining financially stable. The school looks ahead to further expansion, building upon the foundation of recent achievements. This dedication aligns with TCS's commitment to delivering exceptional education and fostering a thriving community.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The next Head of School of The Cooper School should be a dedicated educator familiar with and a supporter of progressive education. The school will need to be led wisely and confidently into the future by embracing the school's current challenges. There will be an opportunity for the next Head of School to:



- Lead a strategic plan that addresses physical plant and space issues.
- Review and assess the school's administrative structure to enhance efficiency and best use of administrators' time and talents.
- Enrich the diversity of the student body and the faculty to better reflect the Charleston community.
- Recruit and retain talented faculty who embrace the tenets of progressive education.
- Guide the growth and development of an evolving Middle School.
- Secure the school's future financial sustainability.

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KEY QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to be Head of School of The Cooper School will be the school's chief executive officer, responsible for implementing the vision, mission, and strategic objectives of the school. The school seeks a kind, gregarious, decisive leader who is a relationship builder with a sense of humor. Specific responsibilities include:

- Serving as the "face of the school" to all its constituents, including students, parents, teachers, staff, neighbors, and the local business community.
- Developing and managing relationships with current and prospective parents, current and prospective donors, and other relevant constituencies throughout the surrounding area.
- Working with the faculty leaders to ensure that the school's progressive academic programs are being implemented at consistently high levels of quality and leading the evolution of the progressive curriculum over time.

- Overseeing the financial operations of the school.
- Leading fundraising efforts and increasing the reputation of the school in the Charleston community.

TO APPLY

The Cooper School retained the firm Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support its search for a new Head of School. If you wish to submit your application, please do so at: <https://rg175.com/candidates/signup>

Application includes:

- Letter of interest (cover letter)
- Resume or CV
- A personal, leadership or educational philosophy Statement
- Names of four current references and contact information

The deadline for receipt of full application materials is **January 30, 2024**. For any questions or further information about the position, please contact: Marcia Prewitt Spiller at: marcia.spiller@rg175.com

