

THE HAMILTON SCHOOL

AT WHEELER

**POSITION
STATEMENT**

DIRECTOR

THE HAMILTON SCHOOL AT WHEELER

Providence, Rhode Island

July 1, 2022



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POSITION STATEMENT | START DATE: JULY 1, 2022

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THE POSITION

Imagine a school for students with learning differences that sees the strengths in every child, and that is committed to providing the individualized instruction in grades 1-8 that allows them to flourish in the context of a thriving and inclusive general education environment. The Hamilton School at Wheeler is just such a place. Small classes, excellent faculty, and an innovative approach to teaching LD students, all in the context of a larger independent school make for a positive, transformational experience for students that is a model for other schools around the country. Having built an outstanding reputation over 30 years with visionary leadership, Hamilton seeks an experienced, innovative, empathetic, and relationship-driven leader to serve as its next Director.

Founded in 1988, the Hamilton School at Wheeler serves elementary and middle school children who have great overall cognitive ability, but who struggle with reading, organizational, and study skills, due to dyslexia, ADHD, executive function deficits, or other learning differences. Hamilton offers a structured and coordinated program in a strengths-based climate. Student-teacher relationships are at the core of the learning process where students are taught about the nature of their differences and compensatory skills. Strategies are taught and reinforced across the curriculum so that students discover how to learn more independently and with less teacher support. As students experience increased academic success, they become more confident learners, willing to take academic risks and accomplish more challenging tasks. Many students and families say that Hamilton changes lives dramatically.

Language arts is at the heart of the curriculum. Students are helped to develop and expand their reading decoding, comprehension, and fluency, as well as handwriting, spelling, grammar, and written expression skills. At the center of the Hamilton program is its passionate, experienced, and skilled faculty who employ specialized methods (i.e. Orton-Gillingham, Teaching Basic Writing Skills, Read Live) to teach students reading, written expression, and math. Understanding that children usually learn best using multisensory techniques, instruction is largely hands-on and experience-based and is complemented with field trips, multimedia technology, music, and drama.

What sets Hamilton apart from most LD programs is the school-within-a-school model. This means

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that Hamilton students not only benefit from all that a dedicated LD school provides in terms of learning support, but also from full integration with Wheeler peers throughout the day for art, music, theater, physical education, electives, lunch, recess, field trips, after-school sports, and other non-academic programs. These integrated experiences account for more than 50% of a student's day. Hamilton students are supported to pursue passions, develop lasting friendships, and build the confidence necessary to be successful in high school and beyond. As a school-within-a-school, Hamilton reflects the mission, vision, and values of Wheeler School, enjoys extraordinary intimacy due to its size, and commits to individualizing each student's experience and to involving parents in their child's learning process. Hamilton is a place where everyone - student, faculty, staff, parent - is known and all are focused on one goal: student success. There is a palpable sense of community and purpose, and parents are deeply appreciative to have found a place that meets their child's needs and is understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by raising children with learning differences.

Hamilton enrolled 75 students for the 2021-2022 school year (largest enrollment ever) in grades 1-8 and has a faculty of 14 full-time and four part-time teachers. Reflecting the different needs for each age group, Lower School students benefit from self-contained classrooms in the Whitaker Building, while students in grades 6-8 take their courses alongside peers in the Wheeler Middle School located in the Hope Building.

A fixture on the independent school landscape for over 130 years, Wheeler School itself has a strong reputation in the area for its innovative academic programming and its unique mission, drawn from the precepts of the founder, Mary Colman Wheeler: *To learn our powers and be answerable for their use.* Wheeler is a dynamic place, never resting on its laurels and always seeking to evolve



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in support of the mission, as elucidated in the Vision statement:

Through exploration of Wheeler's transformative curriculum—which actively cultivates voice, social conscience, passion, and interest—students will unlock their powers of mind, body, heart, and spirit. While all our paths of discovery are unique, each of us will develop the empathy, knowledge, and skills needed to lead a life of joy, meaning, and impact as ethical, engaged, and creative citizens of our school, community, and world.

The current enrollment of 785 students, 37% of whom identify as people of color, and hail from more than 70 zip codes in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. Visit the [website](#) to learn more about Hamilton and Wheeler.

HAMILTON INSTITUTE

One of the truly unique features of Hamilton School is that it is not satisfied serving just the needs of its relatively small student population. In light of the demand for Hamilton's services and that its cost is simply beyond the means of many in the area, the Hamilton Institute was established in 2018 as a research, outreach and advocacy arm of the School. It focuses on three areas: serving students with undiagnosed learning differences by offering free reading screenings; educating families and classroom teachers about dyslexia and other language-based learning differences; and collaborating with schools interested in expanding their services for students with language-based learning differences.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

Wheeler's city campus sits on a single large block in the College Hill area on the East Side of Providence, very near Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. The bustling and tightly knit campus includes classroom buildings, a modern library, dedicated auditorium and fine arts spaces, and a gymnasium, surrounding a courtyard and playgrounds. Hamilton School Lower School is housed in its own building on the southwest corner of the campus.

The School owns a 120-acre facility in Seekonk, MA, about 12 minutes from the East Side campus. Known as The Farm, the facility has eight playing fields, eight tennis courts, a large field house, a ropes course and trails, woods, and pastures. It is also the home of the 6th Grade Farm Program (where Hamilton

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students often shine), and Wheeler’s new Nest early childhood program. The academic program at all grade levels takes advantage of The Farm which complements the city campus and is used virtually every day of the school year for activities ranging from athletics to curricular projects and outdoor education.

Providence itself is an affordable city with superb amenities including a sophisticated food scene, artistic culture, and racial and ethnic diversity. It is home to many cultural facilities, and is home to the minor league Providence Bruins hockey team. Coastal recreation opportunities abound along Narragansett Bay and in the surrounding ocean communities. An hour’s drive from Boston, the city of Providence is near some of New England’s most attractive seaside resort areas, including historic Newport.

STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITES, AND CHALLENGES

Hamilton School in 2021 has many strengths—among them is a clear sense of purpose, an outstanding faculty and staff, eager students, dedicated families, an appealing facility, purpose-built for the needs of its students, and a strong base of support from which to build toward the future.

At the same time, Hamilton School at Wheeler faces unique challenges and opportunities given its distinctive structure and outstanding reputation. The new Director should be prepared to work with the Head of School, administration, faculty, and Board to:

- Ensure continued programmatic excellence, guiding the evolution of the Hamilton School program through innovation and research-

based best practice for students with learning differences;

- Effectively partner with Wheeler School division heads to ensure seamless integration in grades 1-12 for Hamilton students and graduates;
- Collaborate with Upper School leadership to ensure a full and high quality implementation of the Polaris program;
- Work to sustain cohesive and unified collaborations between Lower and Middle School faculty; 1-8;
- Expand racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity at Hamilton among faculty and students;
- Expand Hamilton School’s reach through the Hamilton Institute at Wheeler, which continues to gain traction in the Rhode Island community;
- Contribute actively to the strategic vision of the school and its strategic design.



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THE CANDIDATE

The Director of Hamilton School leads all aspects of the program. Reporting to Wheeler's Head of School, Allison Gaines Pell, the Director is responsible for all aspects of the program, including admissions, curriculum, hiring, and budget, and is empowered to make decisions that are in the best interest of the students and program. Of course collaboration with the Lower School and Middle School division heads is critical to maximizing the potential of Hamilton's unique integrated approach. The new Polaris Program in Upper School means that there is continued support for Hamilton graduates who choose to attend Wheeler for high school, and the Director works closely with the Upper School team to ensure a smooth transition and support that is appropriate to the students' needs. Similar to the ways in which Hamilton students benefit from the balance of specialized support within Hamilton and integration with the larger Wheeler community, the Director has the opportunity to exercise autonomy over most aspects of a small, specialized program while partnering with others to leverage the resources of a larger school.

A successful candidate will be able to demonstrate many of the following skills, values, and experiences:

- Grounding in language-based learning differences and pedagogy;
- Approachable, warm, and understanding of the unique challenges of LD students and their families;
- Student-focused approach to program design and decision making;
- Highly collaborative leadership style characterized by seeking input from others, willingness to delegate, and the ability to make difficult decisions;
- Innovative and entrepreneurial leader who is informed by best practice while being open to adapt to the needs of students;
- Demonstrated success recruiting, developing, evaluating, and retaining outstanding faculty and staff;
- Demonstrated success in sustaining a professional learning environment and culture
- Networked within the LD school community or interested in building a network to the benefit of Hamilton;
- Capacity to be a strong fundraiser in partnership with the Head of School and Head of Advancement;
- Effective communicator and active listener;
- Lead with vulnerability and humor.

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APPLICATION PROCESS

The Hamilton School at Wheeler has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support the search for its next Director. To apply, interested candidates should prepare a cover letter, a current resume, and a statement of educational philosophy. Candidates are requested to submit these materials online at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

For initial inquiry or to nominate a potential candidate for this exciting leadership position, please contact RG175 consultant, Tony Featherston, tfeatherston@RG175.com.

**Application Deadline:
November 1, 2021**

Start Date: July 1, 2022

The Wheeler School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or handicap in the administration of its educational, admissions, and financial aid policies, faculty and staff recruitment and hiring policies, athletics or other program or activities administered by the school.

