



# THE WAVERLY SCHOOL

Pasadena, California

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**HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Start Date: July 2022

[thewaverlyschool.org](http://thewaverlyschool.org)



Carney  
Sandoe  
& ASSOCIATES



## **Mission**

*The Waverly School cultivates curious, resourceful, confident learners who demonstrate intellectual engagement, critical and creative thinking, respect for individual differences, a strong awareness of personal responsibility, and an active commitment to social justice.*

## **OVERVIEW**

Every day, teachers at The Waverly School create experiences that challenge students to ponder, experiment, and problem-solve. Waverly is a nonsectarian, coeducational, progressive day school in Pasadena, California, that spans preschool through high school. The school opened in 1993 as a place where children from preschool through 8th grade could grow and explore the joys of learning. The high school was launched in 1997, offering an integrated curriculum designed to challenge curious adolescents while preparing them well for college and life beyond.

Through its well-structured education program — inspired by the philosophies of leading progressive educational thinkers and informed by the contemporary science on learning and brain development — Waverly fosters lifelong learning in a highly child-centered and intellectually challenging environment.

In November 2020, long-serving Head of School Heidi Johnson announced her intention to retire at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. John Huber will serve as Interim Head of School during the 2021-22 school year. The school now seeks a dynamic leader to serve as permanent Head of School starting July 2022. The successful candidate will be a highly experienced educational leader devoted to the school's progressive mission and program and to leading the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Head has oversight of all organizational activities and serves as the school's academic leader, fostering a climate of excellence and ethical growth among students, faculty, and staff. This is a compelling opportunity to lead an outstanding and aspirational independent school with an unwavering commitment to student success and community.





## Fast Facts

Founded: 1993

Grades: PreK-12

Total students: 347

Total faculty: 43

Faculty of color: 37%

Faculty with advanced degrees: 40%

Student/teacher ratio: 12:1

Students of color: 46%

Flexible tuition budget as % of tuition revenue: 29%

Students enrolled in flexible tuition: 42%

## THE SCHOOL

Waverly's educational philosophy asserts that students learn best when they are actively involved in their education, when they become responsible for their own growth as students, when they are encouraged to work to their highest level, and when their learning is based on life experiences. Children and adolescents develop in stages; Waverly respects and supports each child's journey through these stages. The educational program incorporates all aspects of human development—intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, and ethical—and strives to integrate learning by guiding students to be curious about all that the world has to offer.

Each day, students collaborate to study, problem solve, discuss, and make connections. Waverly teachers know students on a personal level, with a keen understanding of their cognitive and social-emotional needs. Waverly teachers also model intellectual curiosity, a commitment to a life of meaning with the highest integrity. From preschool through 12th grade, Waverly uses formative assessment to evaluate students. The result is a community in which highly engaged students, teachers, and families learn from one another.

Waverly believes that an equitable and diverse school community makes members better informed, more empathetic, and better prepared to effect positive change in the world. To that end, Waverly seeks out, supports, and celebrates a diverse staff, faculty, and student body. The school is also committed to social justice education and seeks to provide an environment where all members of the community can engage in dialogue, question, learn, and contribute fully. With the help of several internal committees and outside partners, the school is currently engaged in thorough work to dismantle racism, advance equity, and create a truly just school environment.



Waverly has three separate divisions each in their own facility — as well a one-acre organic farm within walking distance of the campuses. The school owns the contemporary elementary and high school buildings. The middle school is located in a leased building adjacent to the high school.

The Waverly School is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). It is also a member of The Alliance, People of Color in Independent Schools (POCIS), and A Better Chance.

## ACADEMICS

From preschool through high school, Waverly’s approach to education is guided by several common themes that center around a deep commitment to the work of thinking and learning.

### Lower Division

In preschool (ages 3.5-5), the focus is on experiential learning, play, and social-emotional growth, consistent with developmentally appropriate practice. Each school year, the preschool teaching team develops a theme that fosters a love of learning and adjusts their curriculum to allow the children to be co-constructors of their own knowledge. Waverly preschoolers spend about half of the day outside. The program is limited to 17 students and staffed by gifted and experienced early childhood educators, including a director/teacher and two full-time teachers. The preschool is located on the elementary school campus.

At the elementary level (kindergarten-grade 6), teachers develop a social studies theme for the school year and build an interdisciplinary curriculum around the theme. Science, math, the arts, and language arts are all integrated with that theme. Emphasis is placed on active learning experiences for the students. In each elementary classroom and throughout the elementary school, a sense of community is fostered using the Responsive Classroom approach that weaves skill building in conflict resolution,





teamwork, collaborative learning, and more. In the Wellness program, students learn about identity, human development, building community, and understanding systems through a social justice lens. “I appreciate the joyful relationships between students and teachers,” shared one faculty member. “We celebrate those dear and precious connections.”

### Upper Division

The middle school program (grades 7-8) is designed to meet students’ needs for social and emotional support while building and strengthening their academic skills. In alternating years of this multidisciplinary program, teachers integrate study of American and world themes in the English and history classes. Science classes follow an intensive, hands-on curriculum designed to prepare students for a demanding laboratory science program in high school. The math program offers classes suited to each student’s ability. Advanced students are able to take Algebra I and Geometry for high school credit in 8th grade. Spanish is a core subject at the middle school. Eighth grade students may earn high school credit and move on to Spanish II their freshman year. The academic experience is enhanced by annual two-night outdoor education trips to one of two experiences: Astrocamp in Idyllwild and California Island Marine Institute at Toyon Bay, on Catalina Island.

The high school (grades 9-12) offers a tightly knit community and a challenging, engaging college preparatory program.

## College Matriculation

Graduates of The Waverly School attend many of the top colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad. Graduates of the Class of 2020 are enrolled in the following:

Boston University  
California State University, Fresno  
California State University, Fullerton  
California State University, Long Beach  
Carleton College  
Eckerd College  
Georgetown University  
Loyola Marymount University  
New York University  
Norwich University  
Oberlin College  
Occidental College  
Olin College of Engineering  
Pasadena City College  
Pitzer College  
St. Olaf College  
Syracuse University  
The Art Institute of Chicago  
The New School  
University of California, Davis  
University of California, Riverside  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of La Verne  
University of Oregon  
University of San Francisco  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute



Students are taught in an environment that values inquiry, debate, and critical thinking, and teachers work closely with students to help them develop these skills in all subject areas. The school offers a wide range of courses, all approved by the University of California, including Advanced Placement and Honors courses. Most important, Waverly emphasizes essential academic and social-emotional skills that produce students well prepared for the demands of college and beyond. “The student body is impressive,” commented one faculty member, “they have an intrinsic interest in learning, they speak their truth, and they’re authentic and creative.” Outdoor education excursions typically occur in the spring, and have included rock climbing in Joshua Tree, exploring music and the recording industry in Nashville, and staying in Los Angeles to produce a music video. Every other academic year, juniors and seniors have a chance to go to Costa Rica to stay with local families and contribute to the local area by helping with a community service project.

## ARTS

Waverly’s visual and performing arts program aims to foster bold, inventive, and confident participants in the arts. Elementary students attend visual arts, vocal music, and instrumental classes with specialists each week. Middle and high school students may take art, music, and drama classes as an elective. Student artwork—ceramics, models, wirework, paintings, and drawings—is on display throughout the school.

The music program begins at the preschool level and progresses through high school with an overall focus on contemporary pop and rock styles. Students play a variety of string, keyboard, and percussion instruments. Classes are held weekly. As part of high school music ensembles, students study compositions, music theory, and notation and perform at lunchtime concerts and at the annual Waverly Rock Festival.





Theater and drama opportunities are available throughout the school year. Middle and high school students may take drama as an elective, and several performances are put on each year. In addition, the highly popular high school Bollywood Dance Club performs twice a year. The Holiday Show held each year at Occidental College is an opportunity for students, especially in the lower division, to showcase their burgeoning talents.

## ATHLETICS

Sports enrich student life and the school community. Waverly believes that participation in sports can contribute significantly to the physical, social, and emotional well-being of students. Athletes are encouraged to develop their skills and ability to work as a team. As a result, coaches focus on maximizing the participation of all team members.

The athletics program allows students to compete at the middle school level (grades 5-8) in fall, winter, and spring sports in the Foothill League. Sports include flag football, volleyball, basketball, tennis, and soccer. In the high school program, students to compete in cross-country, soccer, tennis, volleyball, basketball, and track in the International League, affiliated with the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF).

## SCHOOL LIFE

Waverly strives to build a school community that is rich in and supportive of multiple aspects of identity, and to establish institutional practices that foster equity so that all members of the community may fully participate and prosper. The result is a warm, inviting, and engaged community of adults and students.





A particular element in Waverly’s vision of progressive education is the Love and Justice program. Many of the curricular areas and approaches the school has always engaged with in wellness — healthy communication and consent, decision making, human development and sexuality, community building, healthy relationships, mindfulness, and more — seek to incorporate social justice within the Love and Justice program. The initiative, in its early stages and still evolving, addresses developmentally appropriate topics relevant and important to each age group and works to inspire a healthy, safe, and just community.

Another community-building element is the Waverly organic farm. “The farm is our gem!” enthused one faculty member. The farm exists to enable students, their families, their teachers, and the broader community to engage nature on multiple levels. The scope of participation in the life of the farm is broad, ranging from active cultivation and organic production to inventive play, hands-on learning, and simple appreciation of nature. The farm also creates opportunities for elementary, middle, and high school students to interact in ways that nurture cross-generational mentoring, leadership skills, and social harmony. The intent is that the farm be inspirational, experimental, educational, and sustainable.

Student life is vibrant at Waverly, and middle and high school students in particular have a variety of options to becoming involved in the school community. In middle school, each fall, students are selected by peers in their advisory groups to represent their advisory on the Student Advisory Leadership Team which offers ideas for enriching the school experience, plans events, and selects community service projects. Middle school students have also created various committees and clubs to address more specific school activities, including a social group for planning dances, and many kinds of clubs for gathering like-minded students (past clubs have focused on politics, popular novels, and the study of ninjas).





High school students serve their community and learn leadership skills by joining the Ravens. The Ravens is a student-initiated peer advocacy group who works to center student voices in matters of reporting and resolving community conflict. Student interest also determines extracurricular clubs (past clubs have included a ukulele club, a Jewish Student Union, a gay-straight alliance, and an environmental activists club). Service to the greater community is encouraged through a curriculum that inspires involvement and action. High school students are required to participate in a total of 60 hours prior to graduation, some of which is organized during school hours.

## PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Pasadena is located 11 miles north of downtown Los Angeles. As a city in its own right, it is home to around 140,000 residents. Pasadena may be best known as the home to the Rose Bowl and the site of the annual Tournament of Roses Parade, but it's also home to numerous scientific and cultural institutions, including the Jet Propulsion Lab, the Pacific Asian Museum, the Art Center College of Design, the Norton Simon Museum, the Huntington Library, and Caltech. The city is also chock-full of interesting, walkable neighborhoods and sits close to both the San Rafael Hills and the San Gabriel Mountains. In all, Pasadena is considered one of the best places to live in California and offers residents a combination of a suburban and urban feel. Efforts at environmental sustainability and historic preservation put the city high on the livability index.



## PRIORITIES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

School communities commonly struggle when they transition from a very long serving founding Head to new leadership; this is particularly true for small schools with a strong family feel like Waverly. The Board wisely decided to hire an Interim Head for the 2021-22 school year who will skillfully help the community manage the inevitable adjustments that accompany a leadership transition.

Waverly went through CAIS/WASC accreditation in 2018-19 from which five major recommendations emerged. The third recommendation involved finalizing the school's purchase of its elementary building, which was accomplished in the Spring of 2019. The four remaining recommendations have been incorporated into the following priorities, opportunities, and challenges for the next Head of School:

### **Attend to the health and wellness of both the student and adult community.**

By 2022, we hope the pandemic is behind us; however, all community members will still be navigating the aftereffects. The next Head will need to be attuned to and supportive of the wellness of the community to ensure that teaching and learning continue successfully and to enable the continued growth and evolution of the school.

### **Advance the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).**

The next Head must advance and support the important work that is underway to help Waverly live more fully its commitment to equity and social justice. The work of DEI is listed as the second major recommendation in the recent CAIS/WASC Self Study, and the Black Lives Matter movement more urgently revealed to the Waverly community the importance of broadening and deepening the school's DEI work. The next Head will be asked to ensure that the various DEI efforts underway, including attention to further healing the community, receive the attention and resources required and to lead change to ensure all community members feel a sense of belonging.



### **Celebrate, connect, and build community.**

At its core, Waverly is a strong community that possesses a deep commitment to its progressive and student-centered values. Parents describe with delight how the school meets the unique needs of each child in their family. Between the pandemic and racial reckoning, the community has literally and figuratively been separated. “We need to find our place with each other again,” said a faculty member. The next Head should be a highly visible and accessible presence who will bring the community together and will facilitate connection.

### **Develop frameworks to better support and sustain the community.**

The sense of extended family is part of what makes Waverly so very special. Still, several faculty cited the need for more consistency in “how we learn about what is happening.” To ensure accountability, and that everyone feels connected and included, a priority for the next Head will be providing transparency about systems for clear and consistent communication and a responsive feedback procedure. Related is CAIS Major Recommendation 5: “review the school’s employee evaluation process.” An evaluation program for staff and associate teachers needs to be established, and the faculty evaluation process needs to be revisited to provide more frequent feedback.

### **Attend to the K-12 scope.**

“Oftentimes, Waverly functions as three separate schools,” observed one employee and others echoed the same sentiment. Parents commented that the differences in culture and teaching practices between divisions have been surprising and, sometimes, challenging for their children to navigate. The next Head will need to partner with faculty and administrators to intentionally balance the distinctive and developmental needs of students in each division with alignment across divisions. Related is CAIS Major Recommendation 1, which noted “review course offers and further define and strengthen school-wide skills and content scope and sequence in order to support curricular articulation, design and delivery, and continuity over time.”

### **Strategize to strengthen Waverly’s financial well-being.**

To support Waverly’s compelling aspirations to fully own and maintain its facilities, to sustain and expand the Flexible tuition program, to best support its employees and to expand the staff, the next Head must partner with, lead, engage, and inspire the internal and external communities to financially support the school. The next Head will also need to be a resourceful and responsible steward of Waverly’s financial resources. Related is CAIS Major Recommendation 4, which advocates hiring an employee to lead alumni relations.

### **Share Waverly’s stories and value proposition.**

The Pasadena area is home to many excellent public schools and well-regarded religious and independent schools, making for a very competitive marketplace. The Head, working with the Director of Admissions, will be asked to begin identifying ways to increase Waverly’s visibility, appeal, and reputation in Pasadena and the adjacent communities. In a region with increasing competition from other progressive schools and traditional schools incorporating progressive elements, the Head will need to help Waverly more thoroughly articulate the value and benefits of Waverly’s distinctive approach to education.

# DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

## Personal Characteristics

The next Head will be someone who exudes optimism and a growth mindset, and who is also outgoing, approachable, down to earth, empathetic, energetic, resourceful, and confident, with strong emotional intelligence, integrity, humility, and excellent listening and communication skills.

Waverly is looking for a Head who possesses the following professional qualities and experiences:

- A deep understanding of important trends in progressive education and the ability to combine that understanding with an appreciation for Waverly's values and traditions, in order to articulate a compelling vision for the school's future.
- A palpable enjoyment at being an active and visible presence in the life of the school as a foundation for strong, supportive relationships with faculty, staff, students, and parents, thereby supporting the school's strong sense of community.
- Prior experience living and leading diversity and inclusion initiatives, skill in building inclusive communities, and the ability to respectfully navigate diverse cultural and social situations.
- Comfort in serving as a public figure and as the chief ambassador and spokesperson of the school.
- A leadership style that is collaborative and genuinely invites and respects the perspectives and views of others, yet is decisive when necessary.
- An ability to connect and communicate effectively with faculty members, administration, parents, students, community members, and the Board, so that these groups are appropriately informed of school events, potential issues, and needs.
- An ability to collaboratively create systems and processes that support the community and help the organization to run effectively.
- Understanding of and commitment to strategic external affairs, including admissions, fundraising, marketing, and broader community involvement with the ability to inspire engagement.
- A strong record of fiscal management and understanding of finance and budgeting.
- Significant teaching and administrative experience.
- Bachelor's degree required; graduate degree preferred.

## TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- Three writing samples which may include articles you wrote, memos on an important topic, newsletters, or letters introducing or describing an important topic to your current or previous school community to:

### **Jennifer Wong Christensen**

Search Consultant

[jennifer.christensen@carneysandoe.com](mailto:jennifer.christensen@carneysandoe.com)

### **Bob Fricker**

Senior Consultant, Practice Group Leader

[bob.fricker@carneysandoe.com](mailto:bob.fricker@carneysandoe.com)