



Aaron School opened its doors in 2003 as a nursery and early elementary school for children not ready for mainstream education because of learning, language, attention, social skills, and/or sensory challenges. Located on 45th Street on the East Side of Manhattan, Aaron School now provides integrated academic, enrichment, and therapeutic services to nearly 120 children in grades K-6, with the goal of enabling each student to become a confident and successful learner.

In the years since its opening, Aaron has expanded to meet the needs of middle and high school students with similar learning challenges. Aaron Academy, located in a building on 30th Street, this year is serving nearly 50 students in grades 7-10.

Offering an academically rigorous curriculum based on New York State Standards, Aaron employs a strengths-based methodology that builds upon students' individual skills and interests while preparing them for successful post-secondary educational experiences and professional careers.

Both schools are owned and operated by MetSchools, a Manhattan-based family of nine proprietary schools collectively serving nearly 2,000 students.

With the founding Head of Aaron School set to retire at the end of this school year, MetSchools is moving forward with its plan to establish a cohesive K-12 program under the Aaron School name. To execute that plan, MetSchools intends to appoint a visionary and talented Head of School to lead the entire Aaron enterprise.

Head of School AARON SCHOOL

(encompassing Aaron Academy)

New York, NY

For a position to begin in July 2012, MetSchools is seeking a dynamic leader with a strong background in special education to oversee the creation and continued development of a unified K-12 institution that builds upon the myriad strengths of the Aaron School and Aaron Academy programs.

Aaron's new Head of School should be a skilled administrator and an insightful manager of people and programs. This is an excellent career opportunity for a confident, collaborative, warm, and sensitive educational leader who genuinely appreciates the rewards of serving students with learning challenges.

On the web: www.aaronschool.org

Application deadline: December 7, 2011

MISSION STATEMENT

Aaron is a private K-12 special education school whose mission is to educate children in a meaningful learning environment so they can maximize their potential and become confident, successful citizens of their school and community. Aaron serves children with language, learning, attention, and social challenges.

The Aaron community values:

- A safe and supportive school climate that fosters healthy social relationships.
- Student learning that is ambitious, goal oriented, and fosters the development of individual strengths and effective communications skills.
- Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, and coherent and combines rich and varied content with individual skill development.
- A learning environment that fosters self-advocacy and mutual respect for the community.
- Parents as partners.



THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Aaron Elementary School's mission is to educate the whole child, encouraging cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and artistic growth to maximize a sense of mastery and well-being. We encourage students to become independent, curious, and confident thinkers and problem solvers.

We believe that:

- Students thrive in nurturing, stimulating, language based classrooms.
- Students need a structured classroom environment with an organized framework and clear expectations.
- Students who are active participants in their learning better understand, retain, and enjoy what they learn.
- Students succeed when their academic program is integrated with a variety of therapeutic and supportive services.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Aaron Middle School's mission is to help each student embrace learning with enthusiasm, confidence, and competence as they approach adolescence and begin to prepare for high school.

We believe that:

- Students are more engaged and take ownership of their learning in a strengths-based program.
- Students benefit from direct instruction in order to build a strong foundation of organizational and study skills.
- Students must learn specific skills and strategies necessary to be effective self-advocates.
- Students need learning opportunities that will foster greater independence and a better understanding of their learning styles.
- Students require support and guidance as they develop more complex and mature social relationships.

THE HIGH SCHOOL

The Aaron High School's mission is to prepare graduates to make successful life choices and become responsible citizens of the 21st century as evidenced by their ability to self-advocate, think critically, and act responsibly as they move from adolescence through adulthood.

We believe that:

- Students need support to navigate the dynamic social world of adolescence.
- Parents are important partners in the education of responsible 21st century citizens.
- Staff collaboration positively impacts student learning.
- Technology is integral in the 21st century learning environment
- Engagement in learning is key to success.
- Students should have opportunities to explore the arts.
- Students who are valued for their unique strengths, gifts, and talents will be more confident and capable young adults.

AARON'S DEFINING STRENGTHS AND UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Aaron School provides a structured, supportive, and engaging learning environment designed to support students who face challenges in learning, language, attention, and/or social skills. Highly individualized and offered in an atmosphere of warmth and encouragement, Aaron's approach emphasizes students' strengths as it develops their skills and self-confidence. Aaron families particularly appreciate the school's commitment to high expectations and a challenging academic program for all students.

Aaron School is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools and the National Council for Private School Accreditation. In October 2011, Aaron Academy celebrated the news that it, too, had earned a recommendation from the Excellence by Design Validation Team for a seven-year accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools. To earn that recommendation, the Academy administration and faculty completed a rigorous self-study process and accreditation visit last year.

AARON'S HISTORY AND ITS PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Founded in 2003 to serve young children with special needs, Aaron has evolved steadily over the past nine years. First, the school dropped its nursery program, focusing on the elementary grades. In 2008, it enrolled its first sixth-grade class of 10 students, creating a fledgling middle school that eventually became Aaron Academy. In September of 2009, Aaron Academy acquired its own dedicated space at 42 East 30th Street, opening the new site to 23 students in grades 6-8. In 2010, a 9th-grade class was added, the first step toward the creation of a full high school program. Seven students are enrolled this year in the new 10th grade. Despite the challenges of starting a new private school during the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, Aaron Academy was able to more than double its student population during each of its first three years of operation.

In the spring of 2010, the decision was made to begin shifting grades 6-8 back to the Aaron School campus, enabling the Academy to focus on the creation of a dedicated high school program. With both sites now functioning well, MetSchools Founder and CEO Michael Koffler, along with his sons, Daniel Koffler and Brian Koffler, are moving to unify the two schools under the leadership of a single Head of School.

THE STUDENTS

Aaron serves a diverse group of students from all five boroughs of New York City, as well as Westchester, Long Island, and New Jersey. The school seeks able students who bring significant strengths and interests to enhance the community of learners. Although all have distinct learning challenges, most are high functioning, with parents whose aspirations for their children include college and professional careers.

At the Aaron School campus (grades K-6 this year), 83 percent of the 115 students this year are boys. Students of color constitute 17 percent of the student body. At Aaron Academy (grades 7-10 this year), 76 percent of the 47 students are boys, with students of color constituting 24 percent of the student body.



Enrollment by grade this year is as follows:

Kindergarten:	7	Grade 5 (2 classes):	23
Combined K/1:	7	Grade 6:	14
Grade 1:	9	Grade 7:	16
Grade 2 (2 classes):	21	Grade 8:	13
Grade 3 (2 classes):	22	Grade 9:	10
Grade 4:	12	Grade 10:	8

Tuition for the 2011-12 school year is \$47,950 at Aaron School and \$49,750 at the Academy. Most families seek assistance with some or all of the tuition expenses through their local school districts under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In a procedurally complicated process, New York families may seek reimbursement after the fact (known as Carter funding) or, less commonly, through direct funding by the school district (Connors funding).

THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Aaron's comprehensive program is delivered by a dedicated, 79-member, full-time faculty and staff. The faculty includes Head Teachers, all with master's degrees; Assistant Teachers, many of whom are first-year special education teachers or individuals seeking certification; Specialist Teachers in the arts, including fine arts, music, and performance/theater; and Specialists in Computer, Library, and Adaptive Physical Education. Related service providers, all of whom are licensed and/or certified in their fields, include Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Social Workers, School Psychologists, and Learning Specialists.

All of these professionals work closely together to provide students with an individualized, flexible program targeted to both their strengths and their specific challenges.

The administrative team at Aaron School includes the retiring Head of School, the Assistant Head/Director of Clinical Services, the Lower School Educational Supervisor, the Grade 4-6 Coordinator, the Admissions Director, a School Psychologist, an Occupational Therapy Coordinator, a Speech Pathology Coordinator, the Business Manager, and the Building Manager. At the Academy, the Director is supported by the Curriculum & Instruction Coordinator, an Integrated Services Coordinator, an Admissions Coordinator, and the Business Manager.

By September of 2012, it is envisioned that the merger of the two programs under the Aaron School name will be complete. In addition to the new Head of School, the administrative structure will include administrative oversight at each campus. The school's new leader will report to a Board consisting of the Kofflers and Aaron's Chief Financial Officer.

CAMPUS AND FACILITIES

Aaron's two urban midtown locations – each occupying 25,000 square feet – provide easy access to the resources of New York City, promoting field learning and community partnerships.

Specialized spaces for the arts are provided at both locations, with dedicated rooms for art and music at the school and facilities for arts and dance at the Academy. Both sites also feature integrated technology in all classes and subjects; at the Academy campus, SmartBoards have also been installed in every classroom.

The Aaron School offers an appealing learning environment with a welcoming reception area, intimate classrooms, and a well-used sensory gym and recreational space.

In preparation for its expansion into a full high school program, the Academy has been renovated over the past few years to provide an exclusive entrance as well as new science/math/technology and culinary labs; an enhanced library; a combined physical education space and theater; and a rock-climbing wall.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Aaron School offers a well-defined academic curriculum based on New York State Standards and adapted to meet the needs of each class. Aaron's collaborative educational team consists of a head teacher, assistant teacher, school psychologist, social worker, speech therapist, occupational therapist, and specialists who meet regularly to discuss each student's progress and review classroom dynamics.

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

For students in grades K-5, the program incorporates a language-based, multi-sensory, and interdisciplinary approach to the presentation of material. Instructional programs used include Orton-Gillingham based methodology, Wilson Reading Program (Foundations), Handwriting Without Tears, Sounds in Motion, Lindamood-Bell, Stern Structural Arithmetic, Saxon Mathematics, and others. All classrooms are equipped with a Phonic Ear FM System that enhances the teacher's voice, thereby reducing the effects of background noise so that students can better concentrate.

The Specialty Department provides enrichment activities in computer, art, music, library, and adaptive physical education. Students' individual strengths and innate talents are encouraged and supported.

Developing social skills is an integral part of everyday life at Aaron School. In grades K-2, a speech and language therapist conducts weekly classes. Through modeling, role-playing, problem-solving, and discussion, students learn

the verbal and nonverbal behaviors to interact effectively and appropriately with the people around them. In grades 3-5, a social worker and/or psychologist conduct weekly classes to address more advanced social dynamics of friendships, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and self-reflection. A fifth-grade Life Skills curriculum includes such topics as Strategies for School Success, Hygiene/Appearance, Community/Mobility, Consumer Education/Money Management, and Daily Life Skills/Personal Safety.

All students receive five therapy services per week. Students in grades K-3 receive up to four sessions per week of Speech, OT, or Counseling, delivered both individually and in small groups. Students in the 4th and 5th grades receive up to three grouped sessions per week in Speech, OT, or Counseling. Services for students are provided using either a pull-out or push-in model, depending on the needs of the students and their schedules.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

In addition to the core academic curriculum and enrichment programs, the middle school program (grades 6-8) includes the following hallmarks:

- Connection Time, an individual 30-minute weekly conference between each student and a teacher/therapist who is selected based on the student's individual learning needs. The sessions help students to manage assignments, develop deeper awareness of their learning styles, develop strategies, and acquire skills and confidence.
- The Alliance Club, a weekly group learning experience that offers students an opportunity to work collaboratively on a community service project. The goals of the club are to; build students' group work skills, develop a sense of team building among peers, learn to manage long-term projects, foster a sense of connection and responsibility to one's community and help students begin to develop affinities. Alliance Club offers students an arena in which they can explore and begin to identify areas of specific interest that will begin to prepare them and lay the foundation for future academic pursuits in high school and beyond.
- The Health and Human Development Program offers accurate, supportive, and direct instruction in emotional, social, moral, physical, and mental health awareness.

All middle school students participate in three group-based clinical support services each week, including a Study Skills Group focused on executive functioning skills; a Writing Lab taught by the Speech and Language Therapist in conjunction with classroom teachers; and a Peer Group session facilitated by the middle school social worker to discuss age-related topics of concern.

THE HIGH SCHOOL

Aaron Academy's innovative and progressive high school curriculum is organized around the Universal Design for Learning, which provides students with flexible access to curriculum, knowledge, and skills through their unique areas of strength and interest. Through strong math, science, and writing programs, students build foundational skills in core academic subjects as well as 21st century skills such as technological fluency, global literacy, research skills, and foreign language. The highly individualized curriculum features project-based and integrated learning approaches to heighten student engagement with their learning. Technology (including Smartboards, student Macbooks, Kurzweil text-to-speech software, iPod touch videos, and audio files) is integrated throughout the program.

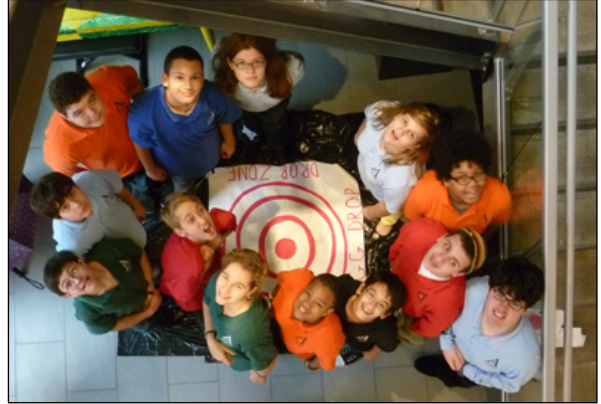
The Academy implements an integrated model in which licensed/certified clinicians (i.e. Social Workers, School Psychologists, Speech/Language Pathologists, and Occupational Therapists) are housed in the classroom settings with the Head and Assistant Teachers. This model allows the clinicians to regularly collaborate with teachers to develop goals and objectives related to the curricular areas, and also focus on addressing additional social/emotional, language and/or sensory needs within the context of the student's natural environment. Clinicians also provide transitional services to students who need more intensive support.

Aaron Academy also has begun to offer programs designed to help students develop an awareness of postsecondary opportunities. Students participate in college visits, group discussions about life after high school, and College and Career Week activities in which they interact with professionals and college students. The Academy has also formed partnerships in the community to enhance student exposure to everyday life experiences.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AWAITING THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

The headship of Aaron School offers a challenging and professionally rewarding career opportunity for a wise and talented leader. Less than a decade old, Aaron has experienced a great deal of growth and change while building an extraordinarily strong educational program.

In this coming period of unification and transition – with the middle school program shifting back to Aaron School and the Academy program evolving to focus on grades 9-12 – Aaron needs a leader exceptionally skilled in change management. S/he must possess both superb organizational skills and a keen understanding of the importance of managing people thoughtfully.



The successful candidate, working closely with the MetSchools leadership, will be able to build upon the very solid foundation already in place at the two schools. Among the specific opportunities and challenges awaiting the new Head are the following:

MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

With an eventual goal of serving up to 285 students overall, Aaron will need a polished recruitment effort. In an increasingly competitive special education marketplace, the school must be able to distinguish itself, positioning Aaron as a model school for special-needs students in the metropolitan area. As part of that process, Aaron might need to more clearly articulate the type and range of students it can serve well.

Because of the complicated issues surrounding tuition reimbursement from the public schools, the Head of School must also be willing and able to serve as an advocate for families and for Aaron's programs in a variety of administrative and legal settings. Faced with increased funding constraints, many public schools have stepped up their efforts to resist private placements of their students, making it more important than ever to ensure that Aaron presents a compelling case for the unique quality and value of its program.

The uncertain and tortuous process that many families must navigate each year in order to seek tuition reimbursement also means that Aaron's leadership must be acutely aware of the importance of offering an educational experience that is demonstrably superior to public school alternatives. Parents will be watching closely to ensure that the upcoming merger of the two schools does not diminish the atmosphere of warmth, caring, and individual attention they value so highly.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Operating under the direction of separate Heads and in separate locations, the two Aaron programs have developed quite independently with respect to the curricula of the School and Academy. With the merger now at hand, parents and faculty are eager to preserve the educational philosophy and strengths of their respective institutions. In particular, families who have seen their children flourish in the academically oriented, traditional environment of Aaron School are seeking assurances that the emphasis on high expectations and preparation for postsecondary education will continue. The Academy's innovative Universal Design for Learning is not necessarily well understood by parents who have not yet experienced that program, and there is some confusion as to whether the progressive high school curriculum is more vocationally oriented than college preparatory. Because the high school will not graduate its first class of 12th-graders for two more years, the Academy cannot yet point to a track record of success to reassure parents.

As a result, the new Head of School will need to be particularly attentive to the importance of communicating clearly the philosophy and goals of the unified institution.

Creating a common culture and compatible philosophy between the two programs will be a long-term effort requiring considerable attention from the Head of School. Situated between the lower and upper divisions, the middle school will be a key area of focus as a natural bridge between the two. Forging connections between the School and Academy faculties will be an important first step and a high priority.

Given the many unique challenges associated with educating Aaron students, it is also vitally important that the new Head be a warm, positive, supportive, and accessible presence in the life of the school. Faculty and staff members hope the Head will appreciate their skill and dedication, making them feel empowered and heard while acting as their advocate when appropriate. Parents will welcome a school leader who demonstrates that s/he genuinely enjoys their children and is sympathetic to the legitimate concerns of families in a complex educational environment.

WHO SHOULD APPLY: QUALITIES & QUALIFICATIONS

Ideally, the successful candidate will possess most or all of the following attributes:

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Excellent academic credentials, including an advanced degree.
- Significant knowledge of and experience in special education.
- A record of success in teaching and administration.
- Familiarity with child development across the K-12 spectrum
- Demonstrated ability to hire well; supervise and delegate effectively; and promote ongoing professional development.
- Superior communication and interpersonal skills.
- An interest in technology as an educational and administrative tool.



LEADERSHIP STYLE

- A leader with high standards and expectations for both students and adults – one who is both firm and fair.
- A unifying, inspirational, and collaborative leader who can communicate with and motivate all constituencies.
- A resourceful, adaptable, and flexible leader who can manage complexity.
- A leader who is comfortable identifying issues and proposing solutions to the Board, serving as an advocate for both program quality and the careful allocation of resources.
- A warm, engaged, approachable, accessible, and visible leader who listens well and responds effectively.



PERSONAL QUALITIES

- The ability to foster community and build consensus.
- Genuine interest in and enjoyment of children and young adults.
- Committed to – and willing to act in – the best interests of students.
- Kindness, compassion, and empathy.
- An appreciation for and understanding of the New York City culture.



ANTICIPATED SEARCH CALENDAR

Application deadline:	December 7, 2011
Selection of semifinalists:	December 12, 2011
Semifinalist interviews:	January 5-7, 2012
Finalist visits:	January 2012
Appointment:	February 2012
Start date:	July 1, 2012

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS

Applicants should submit, **as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday, December 7**, the following:

- A cover letter explaining why they are particularly interested in and qualified for this position.
- A current résumé.
- A statement of educational philosophy and/or other supporting material (e.g. articles or speeches) that would be useful to the Search Committee.
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three references. (We will obtain permission from candidates before contacting references.)



This information should be sent to James and Martha Wickenden via email to:

searches@wickenden.com

After an initial review of applicants, the Search Committee will select semifinalists, who will be interviewed January 5-7. Finalists (and their spouses, if applicable) will be invited to the school for a more comprehensive series of interviews in late January or early February. Ideally, a final selection will be made shortly thereafter. The successful candidate will become the Head of Aaron School on July 1, 2012.

Prospective candidates interested in learning more about this opportunity or the search process are invited to contact consultants Jim Wickenden (jwickenden@wickenden.com) or Martha Wickenden (mwickenden@wickenden.com) at 609-683-1355. Wickenden Associates will keep all applicants informed of their status throughout the process.