



# Head of School

## Annunciation Orthodox School

*Houston, Texas*

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*Established as a ministry of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in 1970 and separately incorporated in 1990, Annunciation Orthodox School today ranks among Houston's leading independent schools, serving nearly 700 boys and girls from age three through grade eight. AOS provides a challenging, well-rounded academic curriculum within a nurturing Christian environment focused on family and community.*

Located in the heart of the nation's most diverse city, AOS welcomes families from a broad range of religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Guided by the tenets of the Greek Orthodox faith, the school offers a warm and supportive educational experience enlivened by beloved traditions and grounded in an emphasis on leadership, citizenship, and strong moral character.

Excitement is high on campus as construction continues on a three-story early childhood and lower school facility (*shown in the architect's rendering above*) that is slated to open for the 2017–18 school year. A capital

campaign launched in 2014 has raised nearly \$15 million to fund the project, which also features a new dining hall and enhanced green space.

Skillfully led since 1996 by Head of School Mark Kelly, AOS is extraordinarily well positioned for new leadership. For a position to begin in July of 2018, the Board of Trustees is seeking an experienced and energetic educational leader with high standards who will embrace the school's cherished culture while ensuring that AOS continues to thrive and evolve in response to the challenges of the 21st century.



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**APPLICATION DEADLINE: [SEPTEMBER 1, 2017](#)**



## MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS



*Annunciation Orthodox School, having grown from a ministry of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral, celebrates the diverse and individual qualities of all children and their families. AOS provides a superior education in a secure and stimulating Christian environment which encourages the individual child to achieve academic, spiritual, emotional, social and physical excellence, and to become a responsible member of our society.*

*Annunciation Orthodox School is committed to:*

- *High standards for academic achievement.*
- *A school culture that allows the whole child to develop and enjoy emotional health and well being.*
- *Spiritual and moral guidance from an Orthodox Christian perspective that focuses on values and instills a feeling of joy, respect and confidence.*
- *Professional and competent business operations.*
- *Contributing to the social, cultural and economic well being of the Houston community.*
- *Promoting physical health and education, athletics and the values of good sportsmanship and team spirit at all levels.*

*Annunciation Orthodox School believes that diversity enriches a school community. We respect racial, cultural, ethnic, physical, religious, socioeconomic, and philosophical differences in our students, faculty, administration and families. We celebrate our individuality and encourage a climate of mutual interest and respect, in accordance with our Christian values. Our commitment to diversity prepares our students to interact and communicate effectively with a spirit of understanding and compassion in an increasingly global society.*

## ANNUNCIATION ORTHODOX SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

<b>FOUNDED:</b>	1970	<b>FUNDS RAISED, CURRENT BUILDING CAMPAIGN:</b>	\$14.6 million
<b>LOCATION:</b>	4.7-acre campus near the Museum District in Houston	<b>ANNUAL FUND:</b>	\$786,000 with 83% parent participation
<b>ENROLLMENT, 2016-17:</b>	694	<b>FULL-DAY TUITION:</b>	\$19,400–\$23,010
<b>DELPHI &amp; PRE-K:</b>	84	<b>FINANCIAL AID:</b>	\$1.4 million to 12% of student body
<b>LOWER SCHOOL (K–4):</b>	302	<b>ACCREDITATION:</b>	Independent Schools Association of the Southwest
<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL (5–8):</b>	308	<b>MEMBER:</b>	National Association of Independent Schools, Orthodox Christian Schools Association, Houston Area Independent Schools, Houston Association for the Education of Young Children
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEES:</b>	157		
<b>FULL-TIME FACULTY:</b>	79, with an average tenure of 11 years; 39% with advanced degrees		
<b>OPERATING BUDGET:</b>	\$15.5 million		
<b>ENDOWMENT:</b>	\$4.4 million		
<b>LONG-TERM DEBT:</b>	\$2.6 million (estimated long-term debt after campaign pledges paid)	<b>ON THE WEB:</b>	<a href="http://WWW.AOSHOUSTON.ORG">WWW.AOSHOUSTON.ORG</a>

## DEFINING STRENGTHS OF ANNUNCIATION ORTHODOX SCHOOL

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The next Head of Annunciation Orthodox School will join an institution with myriad strengths: a clearly articulated mission, a well-balanced and challenging educational program, a strong reputation within the competitive Houston independent school marketplace, a supportive school family, and an impressive record of growth underpinned by careful financial stewardship.

AOS is the largest Orthodox Christian school in the nation, and the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral is among the largest Eastern Orthodox congregations in the country. Founded in 1970 as a ministry of the Cathedral, AOS became a separately incorporated entity in 1990, primarily for financial and governance reasons. Encapsulated in an eloquent document known as the Lutz Memorandum, the enduring bond between church and school remains at the core of the school's identity. The relationship is healthy and strong, largely free of the tensions often present in church-affiliated schools.



Whether Orthodox or not, AOS students and their families appreciate the core values and traditions that permeate school life. An understanding of the Orthodox Christian faith and its values are fostered through religion classes and weekly chapel services, some of which are held in the Cathedral located just across the street. All Christian holidays are celebrated. The study of Greek language, culture, and heritage starts with the Early Childhood Program and continues through fifth grade.



The end of each school year is marked by the AOS Olympics, a daylong celebration and competition between teams of children from all grade levels who participate in athletic events, traditional ceremonies, and artistic performances. Parents are encouraged to participate in these festivities and are actively engaged in the life of the school throughout the year. The emphasis on family and community is identified by most as a signature strength of the school.

The dedicated faculty and staff also contribute mightily to the close-knit culture, with many having served AOS for years. Remarkably, AOS has had only two Heads of School in its nearly 50-year history. When Mark Kelly joined the school in 1996, he succeeded founding Head Katherine E. Veletsos, who laid the groundwork for the school's success during a quarter-century of inspired leadership.

The next leader will inherit a tradition of excellence and a deep reservoir of love and support for the institution among its faculty and staff, trustees, parents, students, and alumni.

### THE STUDENT BODY

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AOS is experiencing peak enrollment and record admissions demand, resulting in a 25.9 percent admit rate and attrition of just 3.7percent. The school seeks out kind-spirited, motivated learners who have the potential to meet the challenge of a dynamic and vigorous academic program. Admissions preference is accorded to qualified students who are members of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral, other Orthodox, siblings, alumni, and children of faculty members. More than \$1 million in financial aid assists 12.4 percent of the student body.

While the Orthodox faith lies at the heart of AOS, the school celebrates diversity and enrolls students from many faith traditions, Christian and non-Christian. Approximately 16 percent of current families are Greek Orthodox or Orthodox; more than one-quarter of the families identify as Catholic, and Protestant denominations are also well represented.

With their solid academic preparation, well-developed values, and citizenship skills, AOS graduates are routinely welcomed at the city's top independent secondary schools.



## THE FACULTY, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATION

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The dedicated faculty and staff are a defining strength of the school. With an average tenure of 11 years, the faculty includes many veteran teachers who embody the school's values. Compensation and benefits are competitive, and professional development is encouraged and supported.

AOS operates under a relatively flat administrative structure. Thirteen positions report directly to the Head of School, including the Head's Assistant, the Director of Finance and Operations, the Director of Advancement, the Director of Admissions, the Head and Assistant Head of Middle School, the Head and Assistant Head of Early Childhood and Lower School, the Director of Technology, the Director of Extended Day, the Director of Curriculum and Instructional Support, and the Lower and Middle School Counselors.



## GOVERNANCE

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The school is governed by an active and self-perpetuating Board of Trustees that includes 21 voting members, five advisory members, and four ex officio members, including the Head of School, the President of the Parent-Teacher Club, the Cathedral Parish Council President, and the Head Parish Priest of the Cathedral. Eighteen of the 21 voting members are current parents, and one-third of the voting trustees are affiliated with the church.

Many parent activities are coordinated by the Parent-Teacher Club (PTC) and the Dads Club. Consisting of parent representatives from each grade as well as elected officers, the PTC sponsors awards ceremonies, teacher appreciation events, and parent education activities, as well as major fundraisers including an annual gala. The Dads Club stages an annual golf tournament and organizes social events including a BBQ Cook-off.

## LOCATION, CAMPUS, AND FACILITIES

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In 1988, AOS moved from its original home inside the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral complex to establish its own campus in a building across the street. As enrollment increased over the next two decades, AOS acquired adjacent properties and converted existing buildings into school facilities, creating an attractive 4.7-acre campus that encompasses three buildings, an activity center (gymnasium), an all-weather running track, and an athletic field.

The campus today occupies two city blocks in a lively Houston neighborhood on the edge of the Museum district, in close proximity to the world-renowned Texas Medical Center, Rice University, and the zoo.

Through a partnership with other members of the Greater West University Area Sports Association, AOS also shares ownership of home athletic fields at McGovern Park, located about five miles from the main campus.



In 2013, the Board of Trustees approved a two-phase Master Plan for future campus development and launched in 2014 the \$18.5 million *Carry the Torch* capital campaign. In 2016, with more than \$11 million raised, the Board voted to begin construction of the Phase I projects a full year ahead of schedule. The 59,000-square-foot early childhood and lower school facility will provide a 34 percent space increase for those programs. A new, larger dining hall and an expanded covered pavilion for physical education and play space are also included in the current construction, which will also serve to unify the campus buildings around a beautiful focal point.

Phase II, anticipated to occur within the next decade as finances permit, is slated to include an enrichment building for academic and extracurricular activities, a black box theater, a second courtyard with a Greek-style amphitheater, and a sky bridge that will connect the north and south sides of the campus.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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Annunciation Orthodox School describes itself as “the school for hearts *and* minds,” and that is surely the case. AOS teachers are committed to providing a challenging yet nurturing environment that encourages children to reach individual goals, take healthy risks, and abandon the fear of failure. Each student’s talents and strengths are celebrated. Low student–teacher ratios promote careful attention to each child’s development. In the Delphi (age 3) and Prekindergarten programs, two teachers oversee classes of 16 children. In Kindergarten and grade 1, the ratio is 18 to 20 students per two teachers. Teachers in grades 2–4 have 15 to 20 students, while the ratio in grades 5–8 is 15 or 16 students per teacher.



One unique characteristic of the AOS program is the study of Greek language, culture, and heritage starting with the Early Childhood Program and continuing through fifth grade. Students interact with the breadth of Greek mythology and learn the stories of the Greek pantheon. Students in grades 6–8 study Spanish, with many progressing to place in second-year Spanish classes upon entry into high school.

The Lower School program features integrated language arts (reading, vocabulary, word study, writing, spelling, and grammar), mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition to these core curriculum classes, students participate in music, physical education, art, technology, Greek, and religion. As they move into Middle School, students undertake the intensive study of core subjects taught at an advanced level. A signature feature of the Middle School program is the Agape assembly, held three times a week. During these assemblies, seventh- and eighth-grade students give required five-minute speeches. The Heading for High School Program begins in seventh grade and assists families with the task of finding the best high school for their child.

The AOS Library contains 30,000 volumes and ample database resources to support the instructional program. Lower School students are introduced to technology as a tool for learning, and older students employ technology in appropriate ways.

Beginning with a trip to the zoo in third grade, students venture out each year for overnight trips within Texas and beyond, culminating in the seventh-grade trip to historic Virginia and the eighth-grade trip to Washington, D.C. Community service activities at every level foster a love for the community and respect for others, while demonstrating to AOS students that they can make the world a better place.



An extended day care program opens at 7 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. A summer camp is also offered.

For a more detailed look at the curriculum school-wide, visit [www.aoshouston.org](http://www.aoshouston.org). Here are a few highlights:

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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The Christian tradition is vital component of an AOS education, providing a moral and spiritual foundation for students. The hallmark of the AOS religion program is the atmosphere of joy, respect, acceptance, love and understanding in which it is presented. While maintaining an Orthodox perspective, the curriculum’s presentation is sensitive to the diverse backgrounds within the student body. The Christ-centered program blends stories, songs, prayers, and teachings of the Bible with meaningful examples of positive living found in current events, daily experiences, and secular materials. Beginning with a warm and trusting atmosphere, students are encouraged to be caring, cooperative, and responsible individuals. Morning devotionals set a positive tone for the day while the “word of the month” gives a focus on a particular value such as joy, courage, or peace. Students are taught that each individual has talents or gifts and that with those gifts come the responsibilities to develop and share them.

Weekly participation in Chapel is an integral part of the program. The Chapel Buddy Program pairs seventh-graders with kindergarteners to establish relationships that extend into eighth grade. The buddy pairs attend Chapel and participate in a number of activities together.

## ART AND MUSIC

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Enrichment courses incorporated throughout the curriculum allow students to explore self-expression through art, digital photography, music, and drama. Students demonstrate their artistic talents at the end of each academic year in the Night of the Arts celebration. Art projects are prominently displayed, and students demonstrate their musical abilities in performances. Students may participate in the Lower or Middle School Chorus, Chamber Choir, or the Orffestra, a small percussion group that uses Orff instruments. Plays are staged each year, and AOS publishes its own student-led literary magazine featuring art and writing from students in grades 2–8.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

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Daily physical education is a popular feature of the AOS Lower and Middle School programs. Students in preschool and prekindergarten attend physical education classes three times a week. In addition, nearly all eligible students participate in the interscholastic athletic program. Beginning in grade 6, students may join the cross country and track and field teams. In grade 7 and 8, competition is also offered in lacrosse, field hockey, volleyball, soccer, softball, basketball, and football. A no-cut policy encourages all students to get involved, with an emphasis on the development of self-esteem, good sportsmanship, and teamwork.



AOS is a member of the Houston Junior Preparatory Conference, which includes The Village School, John Cooper, St. John's, Kinkaid, St. Francis Episcopal, River Oaks Baptist, Second Baptist, First Baptist Academy, St. Michael, Presbyterian, and Duchesne.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AWAITING THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

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The headship of Annunciation Orthodox School offers a first-rate career opportunity for an experienced and confident educational leader who can adroitly balance an appreciation for the school's core strengths with the willingness to institute the enhancements necessary to enable AOS to continue its tradition of excellence. The school's next leader will join a school community that is thriving across many dimensions, and so will have the luxury of taking his or her time to understand the school's unique culture before proposing significant initiatives. The self-study for reaccreditation with the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest is scheduled for the 2018-19 school year, and the Board of Trustees is in the midst of finalizing a strategic plan for the next phase of the school's development. As a result, the new Head will have the benefit of current and thoughtful examinations of the school's current condition and future needs.

In a school notable for its stability, the coming years will mark a period of significant change. In addition to the retirement of the 22-year Head of School in 2018, AOS will be welcoming a new Director of Advancement in 2017. The Head of Middle School, who has worked at AOS since 1998, is also departing this year to assume his own headship. Given the longevity of the AOS faculty, several retirements of senior teachers should also be anticipated. While the opening of the new Early Childhood/Lower School facility is a source of great excitement, it too will inevitably introduce disruptions in the school environment.

Among the specific opportunities and challenges awaiting the next Head of School are the following:

### THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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While the AOS educational program is fundamentally sound and demonstrably successful in producing students who are well prepared for secondary school, fresh perspectives from a leader familiar with current best practices in PK-8 education would be welcomed. The school is using the Atlas curriculum mapping system, but significant work remains to be done in integrating the curriculum vertically and horizontally. Technology integration is sporadic and often dependent upon the interests of individual faculty members. As is often the case in PK-8 schools, there is a continuing push and pull between the competing interests





of offering a rigorous program and nurturing young learners. The school does not yet offer a formal program of learning support services, a potential area of exploration.

## **THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION**

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AOS has been well served by its veteran faculty and staff, enabling the school to function well despite informal approaches to hiring, evaluation, and professional development. There is a widespread view, however, that the next Head of School would do well to institute more formal accountability measures. In addition, the flat administrative structure that has worked well for the longtime Head of School may need to be re-evaluated given the school's current size and complexity. In some cases, the roles of division and department directors could be expanded or reconfigured to free the next Head to focus on more strategic leadership.

## **FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Careful financial stewardship and the generous support of donors over the years has enabled AOS to accomplish great things, particularly with respect to the development of the campus and facilities. The school operates with a balanced budget, and annual fund receipts of more than \$700,000 have enabled surpluses most years. Working with the Board of Trustees and the new Director of Advancement, the Head of School will be asked to take an active role in fundraising. Key goals include the development of a more robust endowment to support the school's ambitions, long-range planning for the implementation of Phase II of the Master Plan, and the creation of a formal planned giving program.

The development of a more full-fledged advancement program will also necessitate the creation of a Director of Communications position. Despite the school's rapid growth and stellar reputation in the community, many members of the school family describe AOS as "a hidden gem" that would benefit from more aggressive marketing in Houston's competitive independent school marketplace.

## **WHO SHOULD APPLY: DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

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Ideally, the next Head of School will possess most or all of the following attributes:

### **PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

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- Solid academic credentials, including an advanced degree.
- Substantial experience in teaching and administration, ideally in a well-regarded independent school.
- An educational philosophy that is consistent with the mission and values of AOS, including its religious foundations.
- Familiarity with current best practices in PK-8 education.
- Financial acumen.
- A demonstrated ability to recruit, mentor, evaluate, and develop talented faculty and staff.
- The ability and willingness to participate actively in fundraising efforts as the face of the school.
- Exceptional communication and listening skills.

### **LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES**

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- A visionary, collaborative, and visible leader who is interested in making a long-term commitment to the school.
- A calm, decisive, and firm leader.
- A systems thinker with excellent change management skills, coupled with the ability to enforce accountability and delegate appropriately.
- A person of faith.
- A warm and approachable person who practices compassion, empathy, and humility.



## ANTICIPATED SEARCH CALENDAR

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<b>Application deadline:</b>	<b>September 1, 2017</b>
<b>Selection of semifinalists:</b>	<b>Week of September 11, 2017</b>
<b>Semifinalist interviews:</b>	<b>September 23–24, 2017</b>
<b>Finalist visits:</b>	<b>October 2017</b>
<b>Appointment:</b>	<b>October 2017</b>
<b>Starting date:</b>	<b>July 2018</b>

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND SEARCH PROCESS

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Acting on behalf of Annunciation Orthodox School, Wickenden Associates is actively seeking talented educational leaders for this highly attractive leadership opportunity. The lead consultants are Pete Gillin ([pgillin@wickenden.com](mailto:pgillin@wickenden.com)) and Jim Wickenden ([jwickenden@wickenden.com](mailto:jwickenden@wickenden.com)). Both may be reached at (609) 683-1355.



Candidates should submit **no later than Friday, September 1, 2017**, an application package including the following:

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

These materials should be transmitted via email attachment to [searches@wickenden.com](mailto:searches@wickenden.com). *Candidates who are new to Wickenden Associates are particularly encouraged to initiate the application process well before the deadline.*

After an initial review of applicants, the Search Committee will interview semifinalist candidates over the weekend of **September 23–24, 2017**. Shortly thereafter, finalists will be invited to AOS for a more comprehensive series of interviews with representatives of the school's constituencies. An October appointment is anticipated. Wickenden Associates will keep all applicants informed of their status throughout the process.

