

Since its founding in 1878, the Ethical Culture Fieldston School (ECFS) has been a beacon of progressive education in America. Known as one of New York City's most progressive independent schools, ECFS emphasizes academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, ethics, and community service. Educating approximately 1,700 students in Pre-K–12th Grade on two campuses, ECFS seeks a Principal for the Fieldston Upper School division, which enrolls 600 students (9th–12th Grade) at the school's Riverdale campus in the Bronx.

### About our School

Founded by philosopher and humanist Felix Adler as a free kindergarten for the children of the working class, ECFS has been coeducational and integrated from its inception. Compelled by idealism and an interest in early childhood pedagogy, Adler emphasized moral education, psychological development, and the integration of the creative and manual arts with academics. To this day, the School is committed to ethical education. At ECFS, we don't teach students what to think and what to question — but how to think and how to question.

Heavily influenced as well by the ideas of John Dewey and other pioneers of experiential education in the late 19th century, ECFS is notable for its democratic approach to teaching and learning. Relationships among faculty, parents, and students are open and strong, and the School is renowned for its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The School boasts the largest financial aid budget of any independent school in New York City. Fieldston Upper School offers a challenging and innovative academic program that features robust arts offerings, an emphasis on community service and service learning, and opportunities for students to take social and intellectual risks.

### The opportunity: Principal of Fieldston Upper School

Fieldston Upper School is looking for a mission-driven leader who will honor the diverse voices in the ECFS community. This is an exciting opportunity for a committed progressive upper school teacher and administrator — someone excited by the School's ethos and culture and eager to work with talented students and a seasoned faculty.

The Principal of Fieldston Upper School leads the division and reports directly to the Head of School. Among the Principal's direct reports are the Assistant Principal for Academic Life, the Assistant Principal for Student Life, four Form Deans, the Academic Department Chairs, and the Director of College Counseling. To manage the dozens of crossover faculty and staff, as well as ongoing curricular alignment initiatives, the Principal of Fieldston Upper School also works exceptionally closely with the Principal of Fieldston Middle School.

The Principal of Fieldston Upper School sits on the Administrative Council of ECFS, which is chaired by the Head of School and composed of the other three Principals and eight other senior administrators, including two Assistant Heads of School, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Philanthropy Officer, the Director of Admissions & Financial Aid, the Director of Athletics, the Director of Communications, and the Director of Technology.

### The educational program

The next Principal will join an active and engaged community with the resources, enthusiasm, intellect, and creativity to generate nearly unlimited ideas about ways to further enhance the Fieldston Upper School experience for all students. As a result, the community is particularly eager to find a Principal who can continue the curricular conversations and move the division from planning to concrete action on several fronts, including the newly established Adler Requirement, the development of Indigenous Peoples electives, a robust Ethnic Studies curriculum, a commitment to restorative justice work, and the creation of a more interdisciplinary curriculum and a schedule that prioritizes student health and wellness.

In recent years, the faculty has expressed a desire to explore more interdisciplinary work that challenges the traditional academic structure, and the Head of School has affirmed this priority as a distinguishing feature of an ECFS education. At the same time, the division has been examining the Fieldston Upper School schedule, which is often cited as a stressor for both



teachers and students. Teachers are asking for more time for vital planning and collaboration, while students report feeling forced to choose between preparedness and sleep. In recent years, questions about student health and wellness — both mental and physical — have been raised more frequently than ever. The new Principal will have the opportunity to implement a new schedule that will effectively support both the expansion of interdisciplinary coursework and improved attention to student wellness.

Fieldston Upper School's rich and varied curriculum encourages students to pursue areas of interest and take ownership of their learning. In their junior and senior years, students pursue courses of study that resemble undergraduate work at a liberal arts college. This is a hallmark of an ECFS education, but it also requires the division to continually assess the balance between respecting students as independent young adults and supporting them as young people who are growing and learning in developmentally different ways. Cultivating students' ability to make wise decisions for themselves and their community is vital to a whole-child education, and allowing students to make mistakes is essential to that process.

As students set high bars for their own success and internalize the stress and pressure of the college application process, ECFS must support a vital and robust advising program that acknowledges the differences across students' lived experiences.

### **School community and culture**

Students at Fieldston Upper School are confident, self-possessed, and comfortable challenging norms that they view as harmful or outdated. The Principal will need to be comfortable stepping into a community that does not shy away from candid, nuanced, and sometimes divisive conversations about a wide range of socially and politically charged topics — race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality and sexual identity, religion, wealth and privilege, etc. — with both adults and young people. The division's next leader will also have the chance to work with faculty to ensure that they receive the resources and training they need to support their students as they mutually face the issues that surround them and permeate the culture.

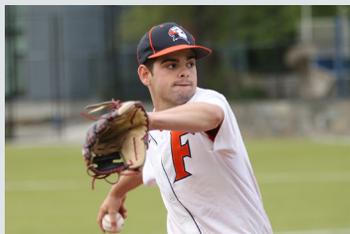
Although many schools wrestle with the tensions inherent to any collective, long-term educational project — community vs. individual, autonomy vs. cohesion, organic vs. structured — the progressive guiding ideals of ECFS invite spirited ongoing discussion about these issues. The School's Faculty Interest Committee (a teachers' union) and the divisional Faculty Councils, along with the Parents + Teachers Association, are vocal advocates for their constituents across a broad range of issues. While serving as a key liaison among these important groups, the Principal of Fieldston Upper School must also ensure that the academic needs and well-being of students are always prioritized and placed at the center of decision-making.

A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion informs Fieldston Upper School's programming, often with a focus on the intersection of the three. The School actively examines the systemic power structures that create inequity, focusing on disbanding them both on an institutional level and in the wider world. In the school setting, efforts toward equity include a reporting system for all student complaints relating to bias, bigotry, or racism on campus; transparent attrition and bias data; and anti-bias training for faculty, staff, administrators, and parents. The next Principal will have the opportunity and the obligation to further this ongoing work.

### **Who should apply?**

The incoming Principal should be an experienced educator and compassionate leader who will celebrate the division's remarkable accomplishments while empowering the community to grow and change to better meet the needs of all of its members. The next Principal must support the School's enduring commitment to pursuing justice within a democratic framework while focusing the division's energy and advancing institutional priorities.

The next Principal should be a dynamic and confident teacher and administrator who is well-versed in emergent curricula, interdisciplinary learning, and other progressive pedagogies.



# Principal of Fieldston Upper School Opportunity Statement

## Application Deadline: January 14, 2021

The new Principal must recognize that ethics and diverse perspectives are key components of the curricular experience at ECFS, not separate or solely co-curricular experiences. The community needs a leader who listens carefully and works collaboratively, but who also acts decisively when necessary.

ECFS is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic community and strongly encourages applications from people of color, LGBTQ+ candidates, and women. The ideal candidate will offer most or all of the following attributes:

### Professional qualifications

- Outstanding academic credentials, including an advanced degree
- Substantial teaching experience
- Administrative experience at the upper school level
- A deep understanding of progressive pedagogy and current innovations in the field, coupled with knowledge of the implementation of progressive programs at a systems level
- A record of success promoting the health and wellness of students and faculty

### Leadership style

- A warm and curious collaborator who values teamwork
- A flexible and confident leader able to advocate for students and faculty
- A clear communicator who is able to relate to a variety of constituencies
- A caring and inspiring mentor for teachers and students
- A supportive and responsive manager
- A believer in process and inclusion
- A leader with a proven commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion work

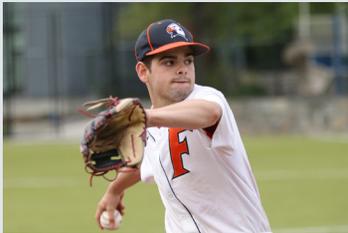
### Personal qualities

- Deliberate and independent
- Empathetic and open to hearing all voices
- Committed to social justice and equity
- Comfortable working within large and complex systems
- Dedicated to transparency and collaboration
- Trustworthy and engaging
- Willing to explore challenging ideas and embrace difficult conversations

### ECFS in brief

*The ideal of the School is not the adaptation of the individual to the existing social environment; it is to develop individuals who are competent to change their environment to greater conformity with moral ideals. — Felix Adler, ECFS founder*

For nearly 140 years, ECFS has shown a commitment to developing the intellectual and ethical potential of its students. With a rigorous curriculum that spans all disciplines, ECFS prepares students for success in a variety of fields and cultivates a lifelong passion for learning. ECFS's educational philosophy is rooted in experiential, hands-on learning; the classroom serves as



a laboratory, and New York City as a classroom. The School has four divisions: Ethical Culture is located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and serves 450 students in Pre-K–5th Grade. Fieldston Lower School, Fieldston Middle School, and Fieldston Upper School share an 18-acre campus in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, a 15-minute drive from the Upper West Side, with Fieldston Lower School serving 260 students, Fieldston Middle School serving 390 students, and Fieldston Upper School serving 600 students.

**ECFS ideals**

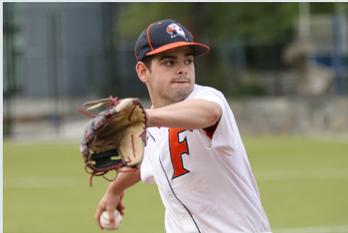
- **Ethical learning:** The exploration of what it means to be an ethical and responsible member of society forms the core of our curriculum and our school community. We value inclusion as well as economic and racial diversity. We honor all of our students for their unique contributions, cultural backgrounds, and beliefs. As we consider service to be critical to the development of character, we incorporate community service into students' school experience from the earliest grades.
- **Academic excellence:** Our School achieves academic excellence by challenging students to reach their highest potential in body, mind, and spirit through the humanities, the sciences, the arts, and physical education. Students become active learners and engage in vital discourse in a community of dedicated teachers and an atmosphere of intellectual discipline and creativity.
- **Progressive education:** Through a curriculum rooted in the tenets of progressive education, students become independent thinkers as they learn that asking their own questions and seeking their own answers provide the key to the deepest kind of understanding. Cooperative, student-centered, discussion-based learning and the freedom to make mistakes are part of our students' everyday lives.

**Enrollment and financial aid**

- Schoolwide enrollment (Pre-K–12th Grade): 1,700
- Fieldston Upper School enrollment (9th–12th Grade): 600
- Percentage of students identifying as students of color at Fieldston Upper School: 36%
- Student/faculty ratio: 10:1
- Pre-K–12th Grade tuition, 2020–2021: \$55,510
- Financial aid, schoolwide: Over \$16 million
- Percentage of Fieldston Upper School students receiving assistance: 22%

**Faculty and staff, Fieldston Upper School**

- Total employees: 129, plus 95 crossover with Fieldston Middle School
- Total faculty: 77, plus 45 crossover with Fieldston Middle School
- Percentage of faculty who hold advanced degrees: 68%
- Average faculty tenure: 11 years



**Location and facilities**

- **Location:** ECFS includes four divisions spread across two historic campuses in Manhattan and the Bronx. With 16 buildings and over 407,000 gross square feet of space, including abundant green space, the School has some of the most impressive facilities of any independent school in New York City. Fieldston Upper School shares its 18-acre campus in the Riverdale section of the Bronx with Fieldston Lower School and Fieldston Middle School. Students are drawn from all five boroughs of the city, Westchester County, Connecticut, and New Jersey.
- **Tate Library:** This epicenter of Fieldston Middle and Fieldston Upper School life has been given new energy as a 21st-century learning hub. The Tate Library binds the Fieldston campus together through collaborative learning, student art, and abundant resources for academic growth and exploration.
- **Fieldston Middle and Fieldston Upper School Design Studios:** Our new Design Studios facilitate cutting-edge opportunities for Fieldston Middle and Fieldston Upper School students in design, robotics, and computer science. Here, students can create, test, dissect, and reassemble and experience the camaraderie of tackling new challenges as a team.
- **Fieldston Middle and Fieldston Upper School Student Commons:** We have preserved the architectural beauty of the Student Commons and outfitted it with flexible furniture, state-of-the-art AV capabilities, and an all-gender restroom. The space now accommodates presentations, panel discussions, and exhibitions better than ever.
- **Supporting the arts, athletics, and physical education:** ECFS's large physical footprint allows for extensive dedicated spaces to support the arts, athletics, and physical education programs. The campus is home to two recently renovated athletics fields, a newly renovated fitness center, a full-size pool, two gyms, robust performing arts spaces, two performance theaters, dedicated practice rooms for the Music Department, a film lab that supports our annual student film festival, and a full building dedicated to the arts that includes a clay studio, two painting studios, and an architecture classroom.

**Affiliations**

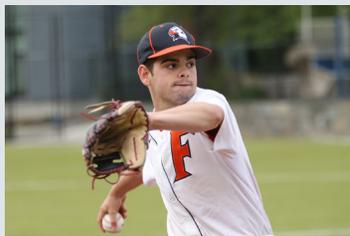
- Accreditation: New York State Association of Independent Schools
- Member: National Association of Independent Schools

**Anticipated search calendar**

Application deadline:	January 14, 2021
Semifinalist interviews:	January 30–31, 2021
Finalist visits:	February 2021
Appointment:	February 2021
Starting date:	July 2021

**Application requirements and search process**

Wickenden Associates, an affiliate of DRG Talent Advisory Group, is conducting this search on behalf of Ethical Culture Fieldston School. To discuss this opportunity in more detail, potential candidates may contact Senior Search Consultant Laura Hansen at [lhansen@drgsearch.com](mailto:lhansen@drgsearch.com) or DRG Principal Jim Wickenden at [jwickenden@wickenden.com](mailto:jwickenden@wickenden.com).



## Principal of Fieldston Upper School Opportunity Statement

**Application Deadline: January 14, 2021**

Candidates should submit **as soon as possible and no later than Thursday, January 14, 2021**, 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.
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three references. (We will obtain permission from candidates before contacting references.)
- Optional: other supporting material (e.g., articles, speeches, or letters of recommendation) that would be informative.
- Application materials should be uploaded directly on the DRG website by visiting the ECFS listing at <https://drgsearch.com/current-searches>.

After an initial review of applicants, the Search Committee will interview semifinalist candidates via Zoom over the weekend of January 30–31, 2021. Finalists will be invited to the School in February for a more comprehensive series of interviews. An appointment is anticipated by the end of February.

