

**RG 175**

Change as Opportunity

## HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

# MOTHER CAROLINE ACADEMY

Dorchester, Massachusetts

July 1, 2018



## APPLICATION PROCESS

Those interested in being considered for the Head of School position should email a cover letter, resume, and statement of educational philosophy—in ONE single PDF file—to both:

Robert P. Henderson, Jr.  
[rhenderson@rg175.com](mailto:rhenderson@rg175.com)

and

Jerrold I. Katz  
[jkatz@rg175.com](mailto:jkatz@rg175.com)

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**  
**January 3, 2018**



## OVERVIEW

Imagine yourself leading a school where the unofficial motto is that “your attitude determines your altitude” and where hard work and positive energy are the core elements to a formula that provides a path of promise and achievement for young women from limited financial means. Now nearly 25 years old, Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center (MCAEC, commonly referred to simply as MCA) is a dynamic and important institution in Boston that has altered the life trajectory of hundreds of alumnae. The only school in the city focused entirely on elementary and middle school age girls, MCAEC provides a vital opportunity for approximately 80 students in grades 4-8 to receive a tuition-free independent school education and superb preparation to enter outstanding high schools, both private and public in Greater Boston, New England and around the country. Intimate and supportive, while also setting high expectations for scholarship and behavior, Mother Caroline Academy is a home away from home for its students, and a community that inspires hope, confidence and kindness. Housed in a single building in the core of a neighborhood challenged by limited resources yet full of vibrant energy, MCAEC stimulates talent and ambition with its dedicated corps of staff, teachers, graduates, trustees, parents and volunteers. While honoring its roots in the Catholic tradition, the School is not religiously affiliated and actively encourages and fosters the individual identity of each girl in its care. MCAEC has a significant endowment, provided by remarkable philanthropic generosity over the last generation, to fulfill its mission of providing excellence of program and support. Nevertheless, it faces ongoing significant financial challenges. Mother Caroline Academy represents a marvelous opportunity for an experienced school leader dedicated to providing inspiration and innovation in both urban and girls education.

To learn more about  
 Mother Caroline Academy:  
[www.mcaec.org](http://www.mcaec.org)



## HISTORY

Mother Caroline Academy is named after Mother Caroline Friess, a German-born member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). Mother Caroline came to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century with the responsibility of running hundreds of schools particularly for girls and boys living in poverty. All children were welcome in SSND schools, regardless of country of origin, religious beliefs or race. In 1993, led by Sister Rita Brereton, SSND, Reverend Gerald Osterman, and Reverend William Francis, Mother Caroline Academy, originally a middle school for girls in grades 5-8, opened its doors in Dorchester in a converted convent. In 1996 the School found its permanent home with the purchase of a vacated welfare building from the City of Boston for one dollar, on Blue Hill Avenue in Dorchester,

but closely adjacent to Roxbury. A group of dedicated volunteers undertook a successful capital campaign, the first of several, and transformed that space from a symbol of dependence to a center of hope and opportunity. The new facility, Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center, has provided a range of educational programs for parents and adult family members of Academy students. Grade 4 was also subsequently added to the program. Through an excellent education in a safe environment, MCA students develop the academic skills, resiliency, self-confidence and strength of character needed to prepare themselves for lives of purpose. With no public or other tuition-free options exclusively for girls in the City of Boston, MCA opens doors to lifelong opportunity for girls and their families.

## MISSION

Mother Caroline Academy is a private, tuition-free school for girls in grades 4-8 from limited financial means. It serves girls of all faiths, races and cultures from Boston neighborhoods. The mission of the School is to provide a high-quality education that develops the individual gifts of each student to support her success in secondary schools and colleges. Rooted in the Catholic tradition that recognizes the dignity of each person, the Academy emphasizes the importance of scholarship, leadership, spiritual, social and character development. The Mother Caroline community continues to support and nourish its graduates through their secondary and college educations.

## CORE VALUES

Mother Caroline Academy asserts eight Core Values that guide the community and provide the philosophical guidelines for its expectations and rules. They are the basis for reflections in morning all-school “chapel” gatherings and for the behavioral structures and tone of interaction that are established in classrooms and in all school activities. The Core Values are:

- Leadership
- Compassion
- Faith
- Communication
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Love of Learning
- Hope Filled Future

## BASIC FACTS

Established:	1993
Graduation Rate:	100%
Enrollment of Graduates in College:	96%
Tuition:	Free
Mandatory Activities Fee:	\$750
Value of College Scholarships Awarded to MCA Graduates over the Last 4 Years:	\$1.2M
Enrollment:	Approx. 80
Grades:	4-8
Gender:	All Girls
Average Class Size:	14
Student/Teacher Ratio:	6:1
Endowment:	\$10M
Annual Budget:	\$2.5M
Number of volunteer mentors for MCA girls:	46





## CAMPUS AND FACULTY

Mother Caroline Academy wholly owns the building in which it is located. The space on Blue Hill Avenue is fully adequate to support the program and mission of the School, and includes a gymnasium and dining hall. Classrooms are large for the average class size of 14, colorfully decorated, and appropriately equipped. Technology is present and utilized in the curriculum, although it has not assumed a central place in the pedagogy. Three floors of the building are dedicated to the academic and administrative functions of the School. The fourth floor of the building is residential, housing two of the faculty and all five of the AmeriCorps Program Assistants.

There are eight full-time faculty members. All of them have multiple duties and responsibilities that make possible both the richness and the opportunities of the extended day and program. There are five Program Assistants who are AmeriCorps volunteers and serve as

teaching assistants and as supervisors and sponsors of many student activities and school functions. Indeed, the School could not operate successfully without the investment of care and labor by the Program Assistants as well as the many eager parental and outside volunteers.

## PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

The slogan "Girl Power" resonates in the hallways and classrooms of the School. The curriculum and program are designed with the intention to direct, inspire and support girls from limited financial means and neighborhoods that can be difficult to transcend toward hopeful, productive, ambitious futures that are also

characterized by concern for social justice and genuine care for others. With this ambitious objective in mind, the school day is extended with rich and mandatory after-school programs that engage the girls until late in the afternoons.

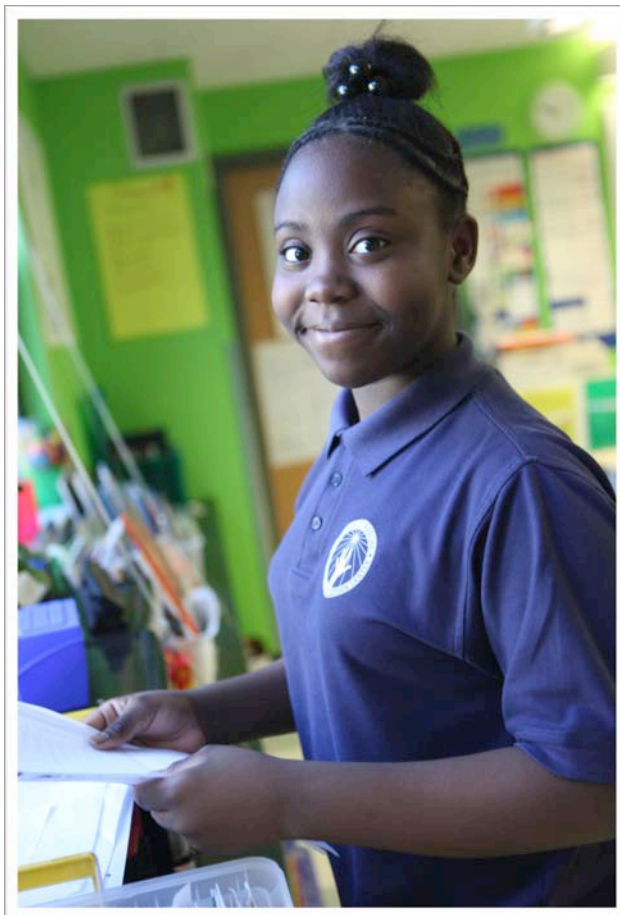
Students at Mother Caroline Academy experience an engaging and rigorous curriculum during their five years of study. Guided by the Common Core State Standards, the curriculum focuses heavily on literacy and math skills in the lower school (Grades 4-6). As students progress into the upper school (Grades 7-8), these skills build the foundation for higher level work in speech and writing, critical thinking and reasoning skills, and becoming engaged and respectful global citizens.

In addition to their core academic courses—English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies—students engage in courses that integrate art into their learning, through the art curriculum, as well as through outside partnerships with local organizations like Step Into Art with the Harvard University Museums and music with the Handel and Hayden Society.



Because learning takes place both inside the individual classrooms and across their subjects and grades, students also take part in programs that bring together multiple grade levels to share their learning. Annually, students participate in field trips that supplement the classroom curriculum in multiple subjects and develop projects for a whole school science fair, as well as an end-of-year art show and talent show.

STEAM at Mother Caroline Academy comes in many forms, happening in classrooms and after-school activities as well as at events with families and in the greater community. In a multi-disciplinary unit on pandemics, for instance, students can be found diving into the history of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 and determining what modern-day technology and knowledge they would bring back to Philadelphia to stem an outbreak. On a



Saturday afternoon, members of the afterschool STEAM program busily work in the art room to design a 9-hole miniature golf course from recycled materials for a school event honoring a longtime board member. Whatever the format or the environment, STEAM learning at Mother Caroline draws upon students' critical thinking skills and their ability to bridge art, history, and other subjects in the design and discovery processes.

The faculty works diligently to create meaningful connection to students' lives as they study the world around them. They strive to create cross-subject learning. Often a book in English Language Arts serves as the foundation for a science project, or a current event in the world of science, technology, or public policy becomes the content of a student debate. Students experience the interconnectedness of the material they are studying and use it to create a project that speaks to different subjects.

## HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT AND MENTORING

Mother Caroline Academy provides students and their families with the guidance and support needed to transition into secondary school and beyond. The Director of Student Advancement assists students and their families through every aspect of the high school application process, including the financial aid process, helping the student and her family to identify the student's strengths and goals in order to help her find the "best-fit" school.

MCA students graduate with strong academic skills and self-confidence. However, the transition to high school and college can present both academic and cultural challenges. MCA graduates often attend high schools that are private and much larger than MCA, and that frequently are located in communities distant from their homes. MCA's **Mentoring Program** supports current students as well as alumnae as they transition away from MCA, adapt to high school culture and rigor, and undertake the college application process. The commitment by both the mentor and student is from 7th grade through 12th grade. There are 46 mentors and 46 girls enrolled in the mentoring program.

The Mentoring Program's overarching goal is to help close the opportunity gap for current students and alumnae in high school by providing an additional female adult role model who is positive, caring, and willing to share professional and life experiences, encourage success, and explore educational and career options. The mentoring relationship is intended to promote self-efficacy skills in the student including relationship building, problem solving abilities, and self-advocacy. This in turn fosters feelings of competency, independence, and higher self-esteem in the students as they mature into young adults and productive members of society.



## ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The current Head of School, Ed Hudner, has served the School admirably for the last seven years. He has broad responsibility and, as with all small schools, energetically addresses issues large and small both in the internal and external school communities. He is ably supported by an Assistant Head of School, who generally oversees the student experience and daily life in the Academy, and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction. There is also a single administrator with responsibility for both admissions to the Academy and outplacement of graduating students to high schools. There is no Director of Development, although there is a development consultant, and the future organization of the development functions of the School will be high on the agenda for the next Head of School. The administration is supported by four support staff members who wear many hats, including helping with supervision of students as well as fulfilling their specific professional roles. The operation of MCAEC is lean, constrained both by financial realities and the desire to keep the School community intimate and efficiently operated.

There are currently 15 trustees. The Board is dedicated and cares deeply about the School community. Until recently, however, they had not for several years been as fully engaged as active volunteers on behalf of the School as they might have been. With the incipient change in headship, and with the necessity of engaging in critical strategic conversations about the future direction of the Academy, the Board has become more actively connected to the life and needs of the School community. The next Head of School will need to work closely with the leadership of the Board to enhance the governance culture and positive commitment of the Board, a task that the dedicated leadership of the Board is committed to embrace.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center is a dynamic and vital institution, yet there are significant challenges ahead. These challenges are also, however, the exciting leadership opportunities afforded by this position. Among those challenges and opportunities are the following, in no particular order of priority:

- Addressing boldly the financial hurdles the School faces and, most importantly, improving the School's fundraising capacity;
- Understanding and building upon the unique and compelling history and culture of success established by the School over the last quarter century;
- Grasping the particular hurdles faced by the girls who attend the School, as well as bringing sophisticated cultural competence to bear in the leadership of the community;
- Offering leadership to the ongoing process of refining, enhancing and mapping the curriculum;
- Fostering partnerships with other organizations in Greater Boston for the purpose of broadening the program and educational opportunities for MCA students;
- Developing creative and energetic means to market the School in the new and more competitive environment in which it now exists;
- Respecting and understanding the unique qualities of the School community and culture, while bringing management skill and experience to bear in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of school operations;
- Enhancing systems of professional evaluation at every level in the School, along with the mechanisms for accountability;
- Continuing to foster the programs provided to and for the parents of the School, helping families to serve as engaged partners with the School;
- Continuing the process of determining and building parameters of responsibility and expectations for performance for the AmeriCorps "Program Associates";
- Building upon and taking full advantage of the spirit of dedicated volunteerism that has been critical to the success of the School, and to the magic of its overall culture and experience, since its founding;
- Reducing faculty turnover and building on a core of passionately dedicated and talented teachers and administrators;
- Working with the leadership of the Board to enhance the governance culture of the School, and to engage the Board more actively in the broad fiduciary and volunteer responsibilities of trusteeship;
- Knowing the girls in the School well as individuals, as well as their families;
- Serving as a role model of successful adulthood and a life of commitment to the public good;
- Providing a clear vision for the future of MCAEC, as well as providing the communication skill and inspirational leadership necessary to direct the School toward that vision.



## THE CANDIDATE

A successful candidate in the search for the next Head of School for Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center must be able to demonstrate the following skills, values and experience:

- Commitment to and notable experience in urban education, as well as understanding of the neighborhoods that are served by MCAEC;
- At least a Masters degree;
- Demonstrated high cultural competence;
- Effective listening ability and high emotional intelligence;
- Courage of principle and conviction, and the will and skill to uphold clear systems of order and discipline;
- Experience in school marketing and communications;
- Some experience in and a high degree of aptitude to learn about effective fundraising, along with the energy and willingness to blend fundraising well with the other duties and demands of headship;
- Knowledge and understanding of curriculum development, as well as of the effective preparation of students for entry into competitive high schools;
- The ability to be decisive as appropriate and necessary, and to communicate well and transparently, while thriving in a small, close-knit community;
- Commitment to the education of girls generally and for the provision of educational opportunity to girls from limited financial means;
- Management skill and experience, including the ability to build effective leadership teams, the capacity to trust and inspire accountability from all employees, and financial acumen;
- Knowledge of and demonstrated experience in working with school governance bodies and structures;
- The interpersonal and social skills to know, engage with, understand and motivate the various constituencies of MCAEC;
- Inspirational leadership ability, and passionate commitment to see MCAEC thrive in the years ahead, upholding its position as one of the finest schools in the City of Boston.



## NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

*Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center has retained the search firm RG175 to support its search for its next Head of School. If you wish to submit your own application materials or nominate a candidate, please send an email message to Robert P. Henderson, Jr. [rhenderson@rg175.com](mailto:rhenderson@rg175.com) and Jerrold I. Katz [jkatz@rg175.com](mailto:jkatz@rg175.com). Applications and nominations will be treated with confidence.*

*Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center is an equal-opportunity employer and strongly encourages individuals of all backgrounds and cultures to consider this important leadership position. The School's policies rest on inclusivity including but not limited to, diversity in nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, ability and economic status.*