

MKA | MONTCLAIR
KIMBERLEY
ACADEMY

HEAD OF PRIMARY SCHOOL
GRADES PRE-KINDERGARTEN TO THREE



MKA's challenging, engaging, and innovative academic program provides a vibrant and transformative education. Our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of our students as individuals and as learners fosters their ethical development, intellectual growth, and personal success. MKA's diverse, collaborative, and inclusive community inspires students to lead lives of noble character, purpose, and distinction.

As guided by its Strategic Plan, MKA is committed to promoting multicultural education, grounded in ideas of equity, anti-bias education, anti-racism, and social justice. We see multicultural education as a process of inquiry, reflection, and engagement that honors students' narratives, provides a safe environment in which to explore and discuss multiple perspectives, and helps transform students and faculty, school culture and curriculum, community and society. We seek candidates who share our commitment to this process.





Montclair Kimberley Academy (MKA), one of the largest, co-educational, independent day schools in New Jersey, is committed to providing every student in grades Pre-K through 12 with opportunities to develop their infinite potential, in terms of both their intellect and their character. Guided by its motto—Knowledge, Vision, Integrity—the school encourages active participation in the arts, athletics, and service learning to enhance the growth fostered by the challenging academic curriculum. Three age-appropriate campuses, commitments to diversity and inclusion, and faculty professional growth, and development are hallmarks of the MKA community experience.

The school delivers an innovative education that combines excellence in teaching, creativity in curriculum, and a highly personal, technology-enriched environment. As a result, students have the capacity to think critically, the confidence to stretch their limits, and the preparation required to meet today's and tomorrow's real-world challenges.

Dedicated to their own learning as well as their students', MKA faculty are committed to a continuous process of inquiry. The school allocates significant funding to support faculty members' professional growth. The Professional Growth Process (PGP) engages every faculty member in an ongoing process of inquiry, reflection, and adjustment of practice. On-site professional development workshops provide opportunities for faculty to inquire, explore, collaborate, and experiment with new ideas. Faculty members also travel locally and globally to attend conferences and workshops with renowned experts.

With 85 towns represented in the student body, 18% faculty of color, and 42% students of color, MKA provides an excellent education that includes diversity and inclusion work centered on two foundational values: that MKA has a responsibility to prepare students for a society that is growing more complex and global, and that all students work best when they—and their families—are seen, known, and truly accepted for who they are. The school continues to build cultural competency, relying on its ability to empower students, families, faculty, and staff to create a more inclusive community. A team of faculty serve as diversity and inclusion practitioners; they help lead the faculty in the development of multicultural curriculum as well as the policies and procedures that shape everyday life. The Primary School has recently included a greater focus on identity in its social studies curriculum across all grades. Additionally, Black student affinity groups for Primary School students of varying ages and genders provide opportunities for students to connect, uplift one another, and talk about their experiences. A Diversity and Inclusion Parents Committee serves as a source of guidance and feedback to the leadership of the school and was instrumental in developing the school's Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Purpose and establishing parent affinity groups.



PRIMARY SCHOOL (PRE-KINDERGARTEN - THIRD GRADE)

The Primary School's 43 faculty and staff members support a curriculum that fosters a joyful learning environment for its 223 students. This curriculum both encourages and challenges them to develop not only their academic skills, but also their curiosity, ability to problem-solve, and love of learning. Always responsive to the continually growing body of research on how students learn best, faculty consciously craft the curriculum to promote students' academic growth and to ensure that students are able to take increasing responsibility for their learning as they grow. Students learn to understand themselves and one another to build caring, supportive, and cooperative relationships. Following the Reggio-Emilia philosophy of early childhood education, students' creativity and teachers' guidance make anything possible.

A strong focus on social-emotional learning, rooted in the Responsive Classroom approach, sets the stage for academic success. Primary School students begin the day with a four-part Morning Meeting, which sets a positive tone for learning and is one of the most important times of the school day for creating a sense of community. Students engage in literacy learning through Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshops and the Teachers College phonics program. The Primary School is the only independent school in New Jersey to have a partnership with staff developers at Teachers College, Columbia University, and teachers and students benefit from this partnership's ongoing research, inspiration, and innovation. The Everyday Math 4 curriculum encourages students to understand not only the mechanics of mathematics but, most importantly, the concepts that inform mathematical computation, thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. "Math Challenge Fridays" at lunch add additional opportunities for open-ended problem solving and celebrate students' efforts and engagement. Social Studies additionally encourages students' inquiry, supported by the MKA Research Cycle, to wonder, ask questions, and find answers, and synthesize, interpret, and present information for an audience.

All students travel throughout the school for their "Encore" classes with professionals who are subject-area specialists in world languages (French or Spanish), visual art, music, dance/drama, physical education, and information literacy (library). Students in kindergarten through grade three travel to the science lab for classes with the science teacher. These opportunities for students to work with experts across their Primary School years provide them with targeted, developmentally appropriate immersion in areas that foster self-expression as well as intellectual and physical growth.

In keeping with current research on the importance of play to children's learning, all Primary School students have two recesses each day. Recess activities are varied and provide students with nearly limitless choice in how they will move and explore—as part of a team, a group, or individually. The Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom, located adjacent to the PE field and playground, provides a host of opportunities for students to explore and play in a natural surrounding; it is a place to imagine, construct, create, uncover, share, and ramble both with their classes and during recess.



MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY





STUDENT LIFE

In addition to its strong academic program, MKA ensures its youngest students are active members of the school and greater community. The Primary School introduces children to the joys of giving and the responsibility in helping members of both the immediate and global community. Curricular engagement ranges from reading appropriate literature to build empathy to participation in classroom activities designed to empower students to affect caring actions and change. For example, the Primary School has a partnership with Toni's Kitchen, a soup kitchen in the neighborhood. Students walk to Toni's Kitchen to support the local community on multiple occasions during their Primary School years, whether through donating farm produce to Toni's or creating placemats for guests.

The sustainability movement at MKA leads by example to foster students' ethical development. As students move through MKA, they are encouraged to be leaders in the responsible use of their resources and stewards of their community. Even MKA's youngest students take an active role in sustainability as they learn to reuse everyday materials for projects and recycle in triple bins.

Throughout their Primary School years, students develop their personal voices and the understanding that they have important things to share. They develop great poise and confidence in working with groups, speaking to audiences, and listening with empathy, including by participating actively in community gatherings and assemblies; sharing their work in writing celebrations in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms; singing in concerts; and collaborating to create a dance/drama class performance in grades K-2 and a culminating third grade, capstone experience.

The Primary School builds a strong sense of community and belonging in many ways. One way is through special traditions, including the Pre-K and Third Grade Buddy program, "Cougar of the Week" in Kindergarten, the whole-school Gathering at the Upper School, the Halloween Parade, Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day, the second grade Maypole Dance (a tradition from the Kimberley School), the Primary School Art Show, the Third Grade Egg Drop, Field Day, and the Moving Up Ceremony. The Book Fair, Scholastic's largest in the country, attracts current children's authors and illustrators, who speak with MKA students about how they approach their craft. One of the most heralded events of the year, the Book Fair is a whole-school celebration for MKA's student authors and readers.

Lastly, field trips are an important part of students' experiences. Class trips are planned both to promote students' learning and to enhance their appreciation for the diverse world around them. Some trips allow students to explore and document their local neighborhood surroundings on foot. Others explore the world beyond the local community.

THE OPPORTUNITY

For a creative and innovative educator, the Head of Primary School position is as unique as it is appealing. Within the last few years, the campus has experienced the retirement of its long-serving leader, Ginger Kriegel, a major renovation to the campus, and ongoing successful negotiation of the COVID-19 context. As a result, the Primary School at MKA is on the cusp of a new chapter that will require visionary leadership, strategic thinking, and the ability to communicate effectively with all constituencies connected to the Primary School.

The current Co-Directors, Maureen Bates and Margaret Gonzales, have cultivated a faculty that constitutes a positive and mutually supportive teaching community and who follow a constructivist approach to educating students. The next Primary School Head will be a lifelong learner and a leader of learning who will build upon this aspirational foundation.

Located on a separate campus from the Middle and Upper Schools, Brookside (as the Primary School is also known) offers exciting opportunities to foster students' independence and growth. There is a high level of collaboration among all three MKA campuses, though particularly between the Primary and Middle Schools, as the two must work together to coordinate aspects of its Pre-K–5 curriculum that span the two campuses. The opportunity to lead a division among three requires the next Primary School Head to consider what is necessary for the faculty, staff, and students to grow in a joyful learning environment, while at the same time representing the Primary School's needs within the greater MKA community.





RESPONSIBILITIES, QUALITIES, AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Head of Primary School is responsible for all day-to-day, campus-wide operations, supported by the Primary School Administrative Team (Assistant Head of Primary School, Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction, and Educational Technology Coordinator), faculty, and staff. Brookside continually looks to improve its program and curriculum with carefully considered, researched-based best practices. At its core, the division focuses on the whole child, where the development of the social-emotional life of the child is the gateway to intellectual growth and academic success. The Primary School is known within the larger MKA community for its student-centered approach, its balance of nurture and age-appropriate challenge, and its commitment to professional development.

Montclair Kimberley seeks a Head of Primary School who:

- Leads and serves as an ambassador, articulator, and steward of the school's mission and vision;
- Embodies the school's values connected to ensuring diversity and inclusion in an environment that centers academic excellence and a vision for developing students who demonstrate personal engagement with the world and take responsibility as citizens and leaders;
- Maintains a visible presence in the Primary School;
- Is an empathetic, inspiring educational leader who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Primary School;
- Maintains oversight of and develops a vision for the design and development of the Primary School's instructional and co-curricular program;
- Understands and articulates data-informed trends in pedagogy and education, particularly as they pertain to Responsive Classroom-informed, Constructivist-framed, and Reggio-inspired educational practices;
- Demonstrates commitment to and awareness of educational, physical, social, and psychological needs of the school community and develops plans for meeting those needs with a student-centered approach;
- Makes recommendations to the Head of School regarding the hiring, retention, and assignment of all faculty;
- In conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer, maintains oversight of the non-instructional employees in the performance of their duties;
- Maintains oversight of the budget for the Primary School;
- Fosters dynamic, collaborative relationships;
- Serves as a bridge-builder between the school and parents in the Primary School and can deftly navigate sensitive parent and colleague conversations;
- Demonstrates exemplary communication skills in writing, listening, public speaking, and building interpersonal relationships;
- Holds prior teaching experience at the Pre-K–3 level;
- Possesses calm confidence that comes from prior leadership experience;
- Manages and leads effectively in a complex organization through innovation, change, and moments of crisis;
- Serves as a collaborative thought partner to the Head of School and the Administrative Council and is decisive at key moments when needed in the Primary School.



TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit the following materials as separate PDF attachments in one email to:

Cristina Junquera, Executive Assistant to the Head of School
cjunquera@mka.org

Submissions must include the following:

- Cover letter expressing interest in this leadership position
- Current résumé
- Statement of educational philosophy and practice
- List of five references, including name, phone number, and email address of each (references will be contacted only with the candidate's permission)

It is MKA's policy to provide equal employment opportunities to all qualified persons regardless of age, race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or disability not related to the requirements for being a successful employee at MKA.