The Athenian School
Danville, California
Assistant Head and Head of Upper School
Start Date: July 1, 2021
athenian.org

Overview
The Athenian School is a coeducational day and boarding school located on a gorgeous 75-acre campus 30 miles east of San Francisco. The vibrant and highly diverse community draws 539 students in grades 6-12 from the East Bay area and around the world.

The school, founded in 1965, offers an integrated and experiential curriculum based on the Round Square schools’ philosophy. As a founding member of Round Square, an international network of more than 200 schools on six continents, Athenian embraces the philosophy that binds the schools and is rooted in six main pillars: International and Multicultural Understanding, Democracy in Action, Environmental Awareness, Adventure, Leadership, and Service. These values are embedded in everything that Athenian does. Students have countless opportunities to experience and explore these themes. Through the Round Square membership, students go on exchanges, service trips, and international conferences through sister Round Square schools.

An Athenian education equips students for lives of intellectual exploration. By cultivating an understanding of self, society, and the natural world, Athenian compels graduates to apply their skills and knowledge to advance their own learning and make meaningful contributions throughout the world. The school is also known for its signature experiential programs, including the Athenian Wilderness Experience (AWE), a required 26-day wilderness backpacking program designed to promote personal growth, a deeper connection to the natural environment, and a sense of community.

The Athenian School seeks a dynamic leader as its next Assistant Head/Head of Upper School starting July 1, 2021. The successful candidate will be a highly experienced educational leader devoted to the school’s mission and program. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School has oversight of all Upper School activities and works in concert with the Head of School to foster a climate of excellence and ethical growth among students, faculty, and staff. This is an exceptional opportunity to lead a singular and highly regarded independent school with an unwavering commitment to student success.

Additional information is available here.

Opportunities and Challenges
The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will focus on the Upper School operationally and culturally while thinking strategically across grades 6-12 in partnership with the Head of School and the Assistant Head/Head of Middle School. Specific opportunities and challenges include:

Integrate the Round Square Pillars More Fully into the Upper School Program
A mission-driven school, Athenian distinguishes itself through its commitment to the pillars of the Round Square Consortium. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will center the pillars in decision making around program, curriculum, and innovation, using them as an organizing construct. The School is in the process of hiring for a new position — Dean of Experiential Learning (known internally as a “Pillar Dean”).
This position will report to the Assistant Head/Head of Middle School and will work closely with the Assistant Head/Head of Upper School.

**Embed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice Across the Curriculum**
As is true in many schools, there is work ahead at Athenian in equity and inclusion, including curricular review, training on facilitating difficult conversations, hiring a more diverse faculty, and collaboration between division directors and the E&I team. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will partner with the incoming Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice and the new Director of People and Culture to achieve these goals.

**Continue to Align Program and Mission**
As Athenian has grown and evolved, it has sought to distinguish itself as a school that emphasizes experiential education while preparing its students for college. It’s a both/and proposition that requires clear and confident communication to constituents about the value of a program that includes essential experiences — like the Athenian Wilderness Experience, international exchange, and March Term — that can’t be quantified by a test score. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will leverage opportunities to celebrate and advocate for Athenian’s vision of education.

**Improve Cohesion across Core Programs**
Athenian teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy, which can sometimes result in a lack of consistency in the student experience. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will work with the faculty, the Upper School leadership team, and the Middle School leader to ensure greater consistency across the student academic experience.

**Integrate Recent Program Changes into Upper School Culture**
Changes that have been implemented in the last few years include the March Term two-week intensive through which students earn a semester of credit; a new schedule with longer blocks and fewer transitions; and an expanded overseas exchange program with high levels of student participation. The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will continue the conversation about delivering the best versions of these programs.

**Clarify Roles and Build Leadership Capacity**
Because several roles at Athenian are changing, the next Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will work closely with the leadership team to assess and clarify roles and responsibilities. The Director of Teaching and Learning position will be folded into other positions, which will require clarification of responsibilities for the Upper School leadership team, which includes the Academic Dean, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Students, the College Counseling team, and Counseling. The abilities to clarify the reporting structure, delegate, skillfully manage, and deploy this team are essential.

**Strengthen Faculty Culture**
The Upper School will benefit from greater cohesion between the faculty and the administrative team. The teachers will appreciate a leader who will acknowledge and honor their work, balance process and collaboration with clear and transparent decision making, and inspire the team to work toward a shared vision. Breaking down department silos, collaborating, compromising in light of shared goals, and acknowledging the contributions of each to the health of the whole are essential. Finding the time and creating the capacity for the team to understand and appreciate one another’s roles and contributions
would be helpful. This will be especially critical in the coming year as the school emerges from COVID-19, re-establishes the in-person relationships that have been a bedrock of Athenian, and comes to understand the lessons learned from the COVID crisis.

Enhance Sense of 6-12 Cohesion
The Assistant Head/Head of Upper School will work closely with the Assistant Head/Head of Middle School to clarify and communicate a coherent 6-12 program and identity.

Desired Qualities and Qualifications
The ideal candidate will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

- Demonstrated alignment with Athenian’s mission and pillars.
- A strong knowledge base and experience with best practices in Upper School pedagogy and curriculum planning and an educational philosophy that privileges active, student-centered learning and significant choice and flexibility.
- A commitment to support the experiential cornerstones of the school including AWE, international exchanges, boarding, and March Term. At the same time, engage in the ongoing risk-management that these programs require.
- An understanding of the unique and compelling aspects of a residential community and an education rooted in experiential learning.
- Knowledge of best practices in diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice work and the requisite skillfulness to support student and faculty growth in this area and to facilitate critical conversations in the design of more inclusive curriculum and programs.
- Knowledge of best and innovative practices regarding student and adult wellness.
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback, engaging in challenging conversations with grace.
- Willingness to engage fully in the life of the school, including living on-campus (periodic dorm duty), prioritizing visibility in the midst of professional responsibilities, and building meaningful connections with students and faculty.
- A collaborative, consensus-building style built on active solicitation of input and excellent listening skills; warm, supportive, and relational.

To Apply
Interested candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current resumé.

Selected candidates will also be asked to provide the following:

- Responses to writing prompts, in lieu of a traditional statement of educational philosophy;
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission).
Candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence and to submit a resume and cover letter to:

Karen Whitaker  
Search Consultant  
Karen.whitaker@carneysandoe.com

Marsha Little  
Search Consultant  
marsha.little@carneysandoe.com

The Athenian School does not discriminate against its applicants, students, and employees and no one shall be treated differently, separately, or have any action directly affecting them on the basis of cultural or personal identifiers. The School applies all non-discrimination standards to its educational policies, admissions and financial aid policies, and other school-administered programs. Athenian welcomes people of all backgrounds in our community.