

Opportunity Statement

Head of School For July 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Located on a beautifully maintained 26-acre campus on a hill overlooking Fitchburg, Applewild combines progressive approaches with traditional concepts in a core K – 8 coeducational day school and also offers a preschool program on two campuses. The school has a genuine, unpretentious culture of having fun working hard in an environment where high standards are the norm.

Intentional and innovative in both program and operations, the school embraces Core Values (adopted in 1998) and Core Competencies (adopted in 2011). In 2018 it began a school-wide initiative to become a leader among elementary schools in metacognitive education in support of those Core Competencies. In 2014 Applewild opened a satellite preschool campus 25 minutes to the east, immediately off of Route 2 in Devens. Now fully subscribed, that campus is expanding, with kindergarten having launched this year. Applewild's next Head will lead these new initiatives while celebrating — both internally and in the broader community — the long-standing strengths of the school.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Applewild we believe that the ages of four to fifteen are the most important in a child's education, the foundation upon which all future success is built. We empower students to discover their passion for learning and pursue excellence in academics, arts, and athletics in our supportive environment. The Core Values and Competencies we promote and the relationships we foster among all members of our diverse community prepare our students to be confident learners and engaged citizens.

CORE VALUES

To provide this academic climate and achieve these goals, we promote the following values as the basis of our relationships with each other as adults and students:

To be

Respectful exhibit a courteous regard for oneself, others and property

Fair demonstrate impartial and thoughtful behavior and decision-making

Responsible be reliable, dependable, and accountable in word and deed

Compassionate act with kindness, empathy, and sympathy

Cooperative work together toward common goals

Honest be truthful in words and actions

Civic-Minded participate actively in promoting the well-being of the community

CORE COMPETENCIES

The magic at Applewild derives from a coherent, intentional plan in which our Core Values are interwoven with our Core Competencies.

These strengthen and guide our developmental approach and unite us as a community of learners who are actively involved in and responsible for healthy growth. Students graduate from Applewild as accomplished young people who know how they learn. They are poised to accept the challenge of rigorous academic work and are confident that they can make a difference in the world.

Throughout our Applewild curriculum, therefore, we are teaching our students to

Be Reflective to know oneself and one's strengths; to decide how to use that knowledge effectively in a learning environment and the world

Think Critically to independently consider, connect, and extend knowledge and understanding; to be open-minded, flexible problem solvers able to distinguish fact from opinion and identify bias

Communicate to express oneself effectively in a variety of modes, listen carefully to others, and be empathetic

Create to cultivate the innate sense of wonder and imagination by doing: design, develop, build, produce, generate, perform

Persevere to continue pursuits of value even in the face of adversity, and to know when to ask for help

Collaborate to participate actively, to share responsibility, and celebrate group accomplishments



Brief History

Applewild was founded in 1957 by a gift from the children of CT and Fay Crocker, who built the iconic "Applewild" estate from which the school took its name. They wanted to transform their family home into "a school full of voices, of happiness, of music - a place put to work," and this has become central to the school's ethos, just as the estate became the school's first building and remains in use today as the Crocker House, providing administrative offices, a meeting room, and classroom space. Originally for students grades four through seven, the school succeeded in its plan to incorporate an eighth and ninth grade and held its first graduation in 1960. At that time a local early elementary school, the Bond Street School, was assimilated into Applewild, and the school became a preprimary through grade nine program. In the late 1990's preprimary evolved into a more academic kindergarten and the four-year old element was discontinued.

Starting in the 1990's, the emphasis on attending boarding school diminished for the school's parent body, and local secondary schools began to emphasize their own ninth grade programs. As a result, the demand for Applewild's ninth grade program decreased, with its final year being 2011. When the ninth grade was discontinued, a formal English Language Learners (ELL) component was added to the program, relying on home stay or international family hosts for the international students. At the same time, the highly regarded Burbank Child Development Center was assimilated by the school in 2013 and now, as the Applewild Preschool, serves children ages 2.9 – 5. The Devens campus preschool started in 2014, and, having added a kindergarten section this year, this satellite campus will grow through grade five over the next five years.

In addition to the Crocker House, the school has eight buildings, including a Lower School classroom building that includes a 400-seat theater, which receives regular programmatic use and also houses the oldest community theater company in continuous operation in the country. Other buildings include an Upper School classroom and library building, a recently renovated Head's House, a six-apartment building for faculty housing, and a Dining Hall completed in 2011. There are three athletic fields and two gymnasiums. In addition, the school has a long term lease for renovated space in an office building also used by Mount Wachusett Community College. This Devens campus includes a five indoor classrooms and an expansive outdoor classroom.



The School Today

At the start of school in September, 2018, Applewild enjoys its highest enrollment in six years, with its highest number of new students in eleven years, and with its second best performance in terms of retention in the past 20 years. Teacher retention has been high during the past ten years, and a gifted, committed faculty assures that each student is known, valued, and appropriately challenged.

There is a palpable sense of community and a school-wide understanding of the core value of respect. The tradition of family-style lunch makes the Dining Hall a central part of each day. It provides additional time to celebrate the value of community and gathering together with jokes, announcements, and birthdays. The last two accreditation visiting teams have praised Applewild for its exemplary emphasis on living its values.

The entire faculty and staff have been working with Mike Anderson of “Leading Great Learning” to internalize an understanding of metacognition, student choice, and effective use of teacher language. Long known for embracing a deeply embedded community service program as a way of bringing to life its Core Values, the school is refining that approach with an emphasis on Service Learning. Having begun last year as seventh graders, this year’s eighth graders are leading a school-wide service learning project that is reinforcing the school’s metacognitive work.

After serving as Head from 2005 – 2015, Chris Williamson was asked by the Board to return to the school as Interim Head in February 2018 to provide stability in preparation for the school’s seventh head.

The People

Applewild students are easily recognized by secondary schools not simply for being well-prepared to succeed but for knowing how to engage with adults and for being articulate, caring, self-confident students who know themselves as learners and can advocate for themselves. The alumni questionnaire responses indicate that over two-thirds of graduates rise to leadership positions in their new schools. Area independent secondary schools are often the first choice for families as the next step, but as financial considerations have become increasingly significant in families’ weighing of choices, some choose local public options, with students usually testing into the honors track. Graduates in 2018 matriculated at Andover (Phillips Academy), Bancroft (3), Cambridge School of Weston, Concord Academy, Cushing Academy(3), Derryfield, Emma Willard, Fitchburg HS Honors Academy, Groton School, Groton-Dunstable RHS, Kimball Union Academy, Lawrence Academy (5), Middlesex School (2), Nashoba RHS, Putney, and Winchendon School.

Applewild has 65 full and part-time employees, including 26 teachers, 17 with advanced degrees. They average 23.9 years of experience and 13.6 years at Applewild. Twelve have 15 or more years of service to the school. This includes the two Division Heads, who each teach the equivalent of two class sections.

Several of the school’s other employees have similar levels of longevity. The 14 Preschool teachers, including the Director and two Assistant Directors, average 18.6 years of experience.

The Board is made up of 16 men and women who come from twelve towns and includes five alumni, twelve parents of alumni, and one current parent. The Board supports the school financially at 100% participation, and there are also five Honorary Trustees who remain active in support of the school.



AT A GLANCE

ENROLLMENT

168 Students, K-8
29 Local Communities Represented
2 Foreign Countries Represented
48 Preschoolers (Fitchburg)
47 Preschoolers (Devens)
6.5 Student-Faculty Ratio
30% Students of Color

FACULTY & STAFF

65 Employees
26 Teachers
23.9 Average Years of Experience
(13.6 years at Applewild)
65% with Advanced Degrees

CAMPUS & FACILITIES

26 Acre Campus - 10 Buildings
Bill & Donna Marshall Lower School
Alumni Center for the Performing Arts
The Ansin Upper School
Stone Family Dining Hall w/ solar array
2 Wood Shops, Art Studios and
Libraries
3 Athletic Fields
2 Gymnasiums
Main Campus Preschool Building
Devens Campus Preschool

FINANCIAL

Operating Budget: \$4.8m
Endowment: \$3.25m
Annual Fund (AF): \$281,778
AF Participation: 79-100% (faculty,
parents, Board); 13% alumni
Average Net Tuition: 53.7%

The Program

The school's solid and vigorous academic program intentionally spirals and deepens throughout its K – 8 continuum. Alumni, when responding to questionnaires about their preparation, uniformly highlight writing, science, and time management as particular strengths. The school participates in National History Day, with close to 70% of eighth graders qualifying for States and every year one or two continuing to Nationals. In addition, the school is known for its public speaking program and its arts program, including four choral groups, five bands (two Jazz Bands) and fourth grade recorder ensemble, several plays including the traditional fourth/fifth grade Radio Play and the sixth grade Shakespeare play, and a vibrant visual art and woodshop program. A visitor who heard our Symphonic Band play last spring said, "That's your value proposition. Almost all Applevild students are in a fantastic band!" The Marshall Fund for the Arts brings visiting artists to school two to three times a year for residencies.



The program includes as essential components a variety of "specials" in Lower School (grades K – 5) including wood shop, art, French, PE, chorus, science, library, and recorder in fourth and beginner band in fifth. Hands-on science classes begin in first grade. Core Values and public speaking are emphasized in weekly Lower School Common Time meetings, and Responsive Classroom is used to foster community within each classroom.

In Upper School (grades 6 – 8), science becomes a fully academic subject, though retaining the hands-on, project-based approach; language options are Latin and Spanish; study skills is an explicit part of the sixth grade advising curriculum; and interscholastic and non-travel sports are the PE choices, with art mentor and yearbook as options for older students. Each Upper School grade goes on an early fall overnight orientation trip. Secondary School counseling begins formally in April of seventh grade. A Buddy program connects Lower School and Upper School students several times a year and helps instill the sense of community, as do K – 8 Common Times and occasional Upper School meetings. All eighth graders deliver a "This I Believe" speech one evening to parents and a panel of judges, and the next morning at an all-school Common Time.

The school offers accelerated sections in Upper School, particularly in math and science, and both divisions advance the occasional student beyond grade level. In addition, Applevild for many years has offered student support services as part of its comprehensive, individualized program and has recently committed to being explicit about this in its outreach. English Language Learning (ELL/ESL) is also offered, with seven international students enrolled in 2018-19.





Philosophy

There are certain principles that guide the implementation of our mission:

Diversity

- We believe that a diverse community enhances and enriches our educational experience. We strive to create an inclusive culture of mutual responsibility where all people are valued and respected. Our goal is to recognize and acknowledge our shared humanity while understanding and respecting differences as we learn, live and grow together.
- To help assure this commitment, we offer a formal program for English Language Learners (ELL) and encourage a global perspective throughout our program.

Our Students

- Applewild prepares bright, motivated students for success in secondary school and in life. Because of our size, our commitment to know each child well, our years of experience, and our breadth and depth of program, we are ideally suited to challenge a range of capable, creative students, including those ready to move quickly through our curriculum and those who require support.

Our Teachers

- Our teachers are our greatest resource. They convey skills, knowledge, and values; and they encourage our students' own exploration of ideas and understanding.
- The tone of Applewild School, the values we promote, and the positive relationships between students and the teachers who know them well profoundly influence the academic climate and set the stage for all that we teach and learn.

Partnership

- The students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and trustees make up the Applewild School community. In order for us to carry out our mission, a strong partnership is essential.
- Assisting students and their families in the selection of their future school is an important extension of the school's program. The faculty's and administration's knowledge of each student and our familiarity with secondary schools inform our suggestions about "best match."

Curriculum

- Our curriculum is based on the inherent worth of a liberal arts education, an understanding of child and adolescent development, and an appreciation of the skills that will be required by students maturing in the global community of the 21st century.
- Our classrooms foster intellectual curiosity by encouraging students to take risks and discover new interests.
- Our curriculum is organized along departmental lines. At the same time, we recognize that learning and knowledge transcend any one discipline, and we integrate learning among disciplines whenever appropriate.
- A balance between content and process within a particular discipline is essential. Focusing on Core Competencies, our teachers encourage the integration of skills and knowledge.
- Technology is integrated into our curriculum at all levels as a vital part of the learning process. In addition to efficiently finding and using digital information, our students design, engage and problem solve using technology both individually and collaboratively.

Planning/Accreditation Information

Applewild was accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE) in July 2017 for a 10-year period, through 2027-2028. In 2021-2022, as a standard part of AISNE protocol, Applewild will submit a 5-Year Follow-Up Report, detailing progress that has been made on the recommendations, and will host a half-day visit from the AISNE Director of Accreditation and a member of the Membership Committee to confirm progress.

In 2017-18, a Program Task Force led by the two Division Heads engaged the school in a thorough examination of the academic program. The result was a comprehensive proposal to the Board (available to candidates). The focus of the approach was to intentionally incorporate metacognition into all facets of the school and to adopt Service Learning as a way for the entire community to practice metacognitive approaches. That was approved in April 2018 and led to a comprehensive Board strategic plan (Available to candidates). The work on that plan continues and includes a fundraising component that is already underway.



Opportunities for the New Head of School

Applewild's seventh Head will enter the school at an exciting time, in part because of positive momentum with enrollment, retention and fundraising, and in part because of enthusiasm for the school's vision for the future. Importantly, the school community is eager to welcome and work with its next Head.

- The genuine sense of community and dedication to children and to a learning culture is inspiring.
- The lack of bureaucracy provides the flexibility to innovate.
- The school is poised to be a leader in adapting metacognitive approaches to learning in elementary schools and, more specifically, in its approach to Service Learning. This work includes strengthening our success at effectively instilling our Core Competencies across our curricular and co-curricular program.
- The school's plan to expand a Lower School satellite campus is a unique opportunity.
- Access Applewild, the school's recently adopted approach to financial accessibility, continues to evolve and can be shaped by the Head.
- Applewild's size and relative youth enable the Head to engage with the community in many ways, focusing on students, the parent partnership, alumni, and on operations, all in meaningful ways.
- With the progress of current fundraising, shaping of Phase II goals is possible.
- There is an effective administrative team in place.

Challenges

• Enrollment

Applewild's Fitchburg location has presented enrollment challenges since the school's inception, particularly in economic downturns. Over the four years from 2005-6 to 2008-09, the then K - grade 9 enrollment averaged 280. The "Great Recession" resulted in precipitous enrollment decline. In the four years prior to this one, the school averaged 155 students in the K - 8 core enrollment, not including the additional 48 children in the main campus preschool and 44 preschoolers on the Devens campus.

• Affordability

The school has been a creative leader in its approach to affordability. It uses Access Applewild to evaluate family contribution and tracks "Average Net Tuition" (ANT). ANT for 2017-18 was 53.6%. Increasing ANT while maintaining the school's enviable diversity will be an important goal.

• Fundraising

Continuing into Phase II, with the possibility of enhancing goals, will be essential early in the next Head's tenure.

• Faculty/Staff

Sensitivity to recent leadership history and assuring a stable future will be important.

• Program

The continued development of the Learning Support and International components of the program will require attention.

Desired Qualities and Qualifications

The successful candidate will

- embrace the importance of Applewild's Core Values and Core Competencies and help drive the goal of leadership in integrating metacognition into teaching and learning.
- value an environment that supports children from ages 2.9 to 15 with a range of student abilities.
- be an effective spokesperson both for enrollment growth and fundraising and will be able to partner with the Board to manage the school's finances.
- Personal attributes
 - o able to assimilate quickly into a new setting ("reflection in action"),
 - o able to make use of the strengths of the people and programs in existence and identify opportunities for growth,
 - o self-confident enough to listen, yet able to be decisive,
 - o have a sense of humor, particularly about her/himself.



While leadership experience in schools and a Masters Degree will be valued credentials for candidates in this search, the Search Committee is also interested in considering leadership and innovation/start-up experience broadly, including marketing and/or development work.

The Search Process and Application Requirements with General Calendar

To express interest, please email headsearch@applewild.org with your resume, a letter of interest, and a philosophy statement. References can be submitted in this packet or later. Chris Williamson has been asked by the Board to organize the search, and he will be assisted by Paul Sheff, former President of Catholic Memorial, Vice President of Development and Alumni Affairs at Holy Cross, and Chair of the Board of Directors, CASE. To learn more about Applewild, visit the school's website: www.applewild.org. Applications will be accepted until October 20, 2018. The school expects to begin interviewing candidates in late October and invite finalists to campus after Thanksgiving or in early January (weather dependent). The next Head begins serving July 1, 2019.

Applewild School is an Equal Opportunity Employer and seeks a diverse set of qualified candidates. The compensation package will be within the expected range of comparable AISNE schools.

