



**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
**July 1, 2011**

**ROHAN WOODS SCHOOL**  
**St. Louis, Missouri**

## **THE SCHOOL**

Rohan Woods School was founded 73 years ago by Helen Towles Rohan and Mary Woods. The school was owned by them until Mrs. Rohan retired in 1984 and it became a non-profit corporation. It was also in 1984 that the school moved to its third and present location in Warson Woods. It sits several blocks off a major thoroughfare, nestled in a quiet and very attractive residential neighborhood.

RWS enrolls students in pre-school (age two) through sixth grade. Its classes are singled-sectioned, resulting in a deliberately small school with values resembling those of a large family. It is an extremely close-knit and deeply nurturing community in which teachers know every student, the students all know each other, and faculty, administration, and even trustees participate in the duty rotation that finds every student warmly welcomed in the car pool line every morning. The curriculum supplements core subjects with strong and frequent specialists' instruction, teachers are able to nurture and individualize for students who have unique needs, and highly intentional programs promote the development of leadership, confidence, kindness, responsibility, and respect.

St. Louis is a city that offers parents an unusually wide array of non-public school alternatives, and RWS is certainly one of the smaller choices. In earlier years the school might have been apologetic about its size, but it is now proud of being small and sells its unique size as a distinguishing feature. While other schools may be larger and market their programs in a more competitive style, RWS describes itself as an abundant and welcoming setting whose size serves to sharpen its focus. It seeks to be as visionary, uniformly professional, and smart in its hiring as any other excellent school. Its success in doing so earned the school the US Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Award in 1997.

## THE SCHOOL'S MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

### **Mission**

"Our mission is to provide a challenging academic program that emphasizes personal responsibility and respect for all individuals in a community where every child is cherished, encouraged and prepared for continuing success."

### **Vision**

"The students of Rohan Woods School will achieve at an exceptional level of academic proficiency within a nurturing environment. Our curriculum will be responsive to emerging academic trends and foster the development of social responsibility."

## THE SCHOOL'S PRIORITIES AS IT SEEKS NEW LEADERSHIP

### **Growing Enrollment**

While ideal enrollment is 130, current enrollment is 110. Challenges are stable demographics, an economy still in recession, and broad competition. The school markets well, but still wishes to increase its profile and continue to "unwrap St. Louis' best-kept secret." Making the sale once families visit is easy; getting them to the door is the challenge.

### **Managing the Budget**

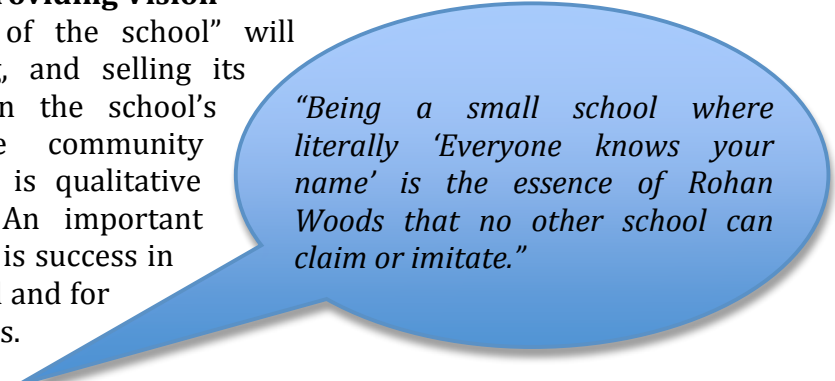
A challenge under the best of circumstances, this is even more difficult when enrollment is down. Tuition is driven as much by the competition as by the school's needs and parents' capacities, and non-tuition revenues are limited by the school's size, grade range, and relative youth. Expense control is excellent, though it has required salary freezes for two years and, this year, a temporary suspension of the school's customary pension contribution.

### **Retaining Excellent Faculty and Staff**

The school hires well and retains well, and seeks to continue this success despite tight times and budgets. Looking ahead, salaries, benefits, and professional development must be preserved and enhanced.

### **Ensuring Sustainability and Providing Vision**

"Remaining true to DNA of the school" will require keeping, nurturing, and selling its small school values. Given the school's physical constraints, the community thrives on leadership that is qualitative rather than quantitative. An important component of sustainability is success in fund-raising, both for annual and for capital/endowment purposes.



*"Being a small school where literally 'Everyone knows your name' is the essence of Rohan Woods that no other school can claim or imitate."*

## SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

Founded	1937
Enrollment '09-'10	110
Full Time Teaching Faculty	13
Part Time Teaching Faculty	6
Hold Advanced Degrees	8
Student to Teacher Ratio	6:1
Campus	37,000 square foot building on 4 acres
Op Budget FY '11 Projected	\$1.6 million
Aid in FY '11 Projected	\$320,000
Average Aid Award	\$7,500
Tuition Remission in FY '11	\$35,000
Annual Giving in '10	\$92,000
Tuition Range (full day)	Grades JK – 2: \$15,600 Grades 3-6: \$15,900
Endowment	\$1,800,000
Memberships	NAIS, ISACS, ERB, CSEE
Website	<a href="http://www.rohanwoods.org">www.rohanwoods.org</a>
Salary Levels	Commensurate with St. Louis IS medians
Health Insurance	\$3,000 toward cost of school or other plan
Tuition Remission	50% of each child for full time faculty



## COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

### Parents

The school's parent body consists of approximately 77 families, some of whom travel a considerable distance to enroll at RWS. Parents tend to know each other well, and often know each others' children, also. They applaud their school for being a place where status matters little, if at all, and diversity is evident throughout. Some parents are affluent, some are not, and everyone is equally valued. A reported trend over the last decade is from dual parent families with one parent working, to dual parent families with both parents working. The focus of the Parents



Association is to build community as much as it to raise money, and most of the PA's work is achieved by a small core group with the time to devote to it.

### Students and Enrollment

The school considers 130 as its ideal enrollment and it has been reasonably successful in holding that level except in these last few years of economic turmoil. Enrollment in grades 4, 5, and 6 has been soft, but the school's recent addition of pre-school has been successful in filling the pipeline early, fueling the expectation of a return to higher total enrollments as these students move through the school.

Parents and teachers alike report that RWS students are especially "sweet and nice." Because caring for one another is an important school value, they "don't have attitude." The sixth graders are eager and articulate fans of their school, citing their appreciation of the many opportunities they have to learn from teachers who care about them as students but who also know and care about them outside of class. They are expected to work hard and give their best effort; they appreciate that their textbook work is balanced by lots of hands-on learning. The buddy system that formally matches them with younger students provides real opportunities to learn about leadership and modeling, as do the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class trips to Colorado and St. Andrew's in New Brunswick, Canada.

### Faculty

The RWS faculty are highly dedicated and experienced teachers. While a few are recent hires, a large number have been at the school for many years and are deeply loyal to the school, its community, and its mission. They report that institutional morale is positive, despite the current economic stresses. Administration and faculty work together and invest a lot of time in hiring carefully, and then the school supports professional development as generously as it can. Faculty cite their appreciation of their head and his commitment to supporting them as professionals in the classroom. He both trusts and empowers them to do their job, and he supports them appropriately when there arises an occasional but almost inevitable disagreement with parents over some instructional matter.

## Administration

RWS is small and its administration, lean. Everyone wears many hats. Admissions and development are one-person shops. The admissions director is broadly praised for her intimate knowledge of the school and its students and families, and the energy and thoughtfulness she puts into promoting the school at every opportunity. The development director is new to her position and while experienced in development, she is still learning the myriad ins and outs of development work and volunteer management in a school setting. The school employs a part-time bookkeeper to manage accounts payable and receivable, but business oversight of the school is provided by the head, who also coordinates the school's IT program. Faculty and parents joke warmly about the head as handyman, but the reality is that he fills that role, also, since the school employs a cleaning service and does not have a true buildings & grounds presence that can always respond to a systems emergency with the perfect quick solution.

*"That value of 'cherishing' must be preserved."*

One faculty member praised the school's administration for being "structured without being hierarchical," and there is a general feeling that there is not a lot of second-guessing going on because the administration is seen as very effective. One faculty member even commented, "The Head green lights everything."

## Governance

The Board of Trustees consists of ten members, including the head as an ex officio member. The Board meets six times per year. Committees include: Executive, Development & Marketing, Committee on Trustees, and Finance. It is a challenge to maintain an active committee structure with a board of this size.

## Alumni and Alumnae

Rather typical for a small elementary school with a lean staff, RWS has not historically concentrated significant resources on tracking and cultivating its alumni and alumnae. In the



last several years, however, it has sponsored a summer gathering of recent alums, and it is now making a regular effort to track alums as they matriculate in both secondary schools and colleges. Alums can maintain contact with the school and each other through the website as well as through the school's Facebook page, where most of the communication with alums occurs.

## PROGRAM

At the heart of its program and culture, RWS is about able students in small classes taught by dedicated and effective teachers who meet their students' varied academic, social, and emotional needs. The school is at the same time traditional, innovative, creative, and challenging. In addition to the homeroom instruction by each grade's lead teacher, exceptional specialists are fully integrated into the curriculum, and students travel to the specialists' spacious and well-equipped classrooms. Specialists' instruction includes: PE 5 days per week, art 2 days per week, French or Spanish 2 days per week, music 2 or 3 days per week, science 2 or 3 days per week depending on grade level, and library 1 day per week.

The school's many programs and offerings are fully described on the school's website: [www.rohanwoods.org](http://www.rohanwoods.org). Elementary schools sometimes do not commit resources to a full and robust website, but RWS does. Candidates are encouraged to peruse the site in full for it provides a great deal of detail about every aspect of the school and all its offerings.

*"They don't try to mold kids into nice neat forms that are easy for them to handle. They genuinely enjoy their vocation."*

## TECHNOLOGY

Over the last three years, the school has implemented an aggressive technology plan. Each faculty member receives a school issued laptop. There are mini hubs in most of the classrooms. Though mostly PC, the school does support a small number of Mac desktops. Students enjoy access to this technology as an integrated part of the classroom experience. In the older grades, students have laptop access in the form of a remote laptop lab that moves where needed. There is also a "cyber café" in the school's library that can offer workstations to 15 more students. Overall, there are nearly 50 student workstations throughout the school.

All classrooms have interactive white boards and teachers employ the interactive technology as a primary mode of instruction. The school does not provide regular technology classes to students. Rather, it sees technology as a methodology for instruction and for student learning activities. Though never using technology for "technology's sake," RWS finds many different ways to infuse technology into the daily life of the school.



## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The RWS building is a 50's era public elementary school that was purchased from the public school system when the school moved there in 1984. While many cinderblock facilities of that era present as tired and out of date, the building has been beautifully and proudly maintained. It is clean, attractive, functional, and inviting. A full size high school gymnasium, featuring a beautiful wooden floor, was added several years ago and provides the school with a first-class athletic facility that doubles as a multi-purpose space for large gatherings and functions.



The school is using virtually every square foot in the building, which does present several challenges. The school is landlocked by roads and neighbors, so there is no available land on which to expand. Going vertical and adding another story is the only way to add functional space were a realistic need to develop. Facilities improvements might include library shelving and playground enhancements, and while HVAC systems are all functional, key components are near the end of their normal life and provisions might be made for their replacement.

## FINANCES

Historically the school has been well and tightly managed, with no debt until a few years ago. The school has borrowed modestly to offset recent operating deficits, choosing to take advantage of low rates and preserve an endowment of approximately \$1.8 million. Approximately \$1.3 million of this amount is permanently restricted, and the balance temporarily restricted by the board.

Tuition revenue is driven by enrollment, and by the rate the school can realistically charge for its services. Both are highly influenced by the extraordinary non-public school competition in the greater St. Louis area. Not only are there many alternatives for parents, but many of them are also less expensive. The school has kept its tuition increases low in an effort to promote affordability and increase – or at least stabilize – total enrollment.

Non-tuition revenue comes primarily from the Annual Fund and special event fund-raising. Remarkably, the school expects – and gets – 100% parent participation in its Annual Fund. This is the result of insistent hard work, and not payments made on behalf of non-givers. The major special event is an auction held every third year and raising approximately \$125,000. A golf tournament and “Trivia Night” are held annually, typically raising \$30,000 and \$25,000, respectively.

Expense control is difficult to achieve when faculty and staff compensation, coupled with provisions for financial aid, will leave less than 20% of the budget for the routine running of the school. In the last two years, the school has had to freeze salaries, and in this year, it has temporarily suspended TIAA-CREF pension payments.

## ST. LOUIS AND ITS ENVIRONS

Rohan Woods School enjoys a quiet and peaceful setting in suburban St. Louis. Known as the “West County” area of St. Louis, the school is located in the municipality of Warson Woods ([www.warsonwoods.com](http://www.warsonwoods.com)), home to about 3000 residents. As with many of the smaller St. Louis municipalities (nearly 100 in St. Louis County alone), there is a very provincial and welcoming feel to the neighborhoods and parks. The school enjoys strong relationships with the local government and its departments, as well as with the residents of the idyllic Warson Woods neighborhoods.



The quiet and safe setting of the school draws many families into the admissions process.

Students come to Rohan Woods from over 20 different zip codes, though the majority of the school’s population resides in the municipalities within a five-mile radius of the school. These areas include the towns of Kirkwood ([www.ci.kirkwood.mo.us](http://www.ci.kirkwood.mo.us)), Des Peres ([www.desperesmo.org](http://www.desperesmo.org)), Webster Groves ([www.webstergroves.com](http://www.webstergroves.com)), and Glendale ([www.glendalemo.org](http://www.glendalemo.org)), to name a few. The West County suburbs of St. Louis County enjoy a strong network of both public and parochial schools which help to attract families to the area. The economic and demographic data for these areas is quite strong, even suggesting growth in the school age population over the next decade.



The greater St. Louis area promotes an affordable yet enjoyable quality of life. From its quaint restaurants, museums and community activities, to the amenities of professional athletics, a world class symphony and one of the country’s most recognized zoos, St. Louis offers all the best of a large city. However, with the very livable neighborhoods that flank the entire area, families always feel as if they are part of a small-town atmosphere.

## THE CANDIDATE

### Professional Qualities

*Rohan Woods School has enjoyed excellent leadership from its current Head of School. The Board hopes to continue this tradition and attract someone who will come to love the school as a special place. The next head should possess excellent professional experience and credentials that include the following:*

Relevant academic qualifications in education and/or management  
Relevant teaching and leadership experience in independent school settings  
Ability to communicate effectively with all constituencies  
Commitment to supporting teachers as they strive to better meet their students' needs  
Commitment to professional development  
Familiarity and comfort with the marketing, PR, and fund-raising demands of the job  
Ability to be a jack-of-all-trades as needed in a small school

### Personal Qualities

*The next head of school should possess the following personal qualities, as articulated by a variety of teachers, parents, and students:*

Be motivating and inspiring  
Be attentive to community morale; unite students, staff, and parents  
Be able to acknowledge and support teachers in all that they do  
Balance parent and teacher expectations  
Be able to nurture everyone; as leader and guide, both  
Be firm and fair - tough backbone with the willingness to do what is necessary  
Be caring, kind, and nurturing, but still hold high expectations  
Be willing to be "boastful" on behalf of the school  
Be approachable and personable  
Be respectful and without pretense  
Be willing to do it all; have a handyman's can-fix-it attitude  
Be boss, but feel like colleague  
Have a sense of humor

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Candidates should send a cover letter, resume, statement of educational philosophy, and a list of five references to:

Thomas M. Evans  
President, Resource Group 175  
90 Great Western Road  
Harwich, MA 02645  
774-237-0349  
[tmevanscca@comcast.net](mailto:tmevanscca@comcast.net)

For additional information about the school, visit its website: [www.rohanwoods.org](http://www.rohanwoods.org)

Rohan Woods School does not discriminate in its policies based on race, religion, national origin, sexual preference, or age.