



DIRECTOR OF UPPER SCHOOL

July 1, 2011 or sooner

WESTMARK SCHOOL

Encino, California

Westmark School provides a multisensory, whole-child approach to education in a nurturing and traditional school environment. The curriculum incorporates creative strategies and technology based on proven educational research, enabling students with learning differences to achieve their maximum potential in and out of the classroom. In addition, Westmark prepares its students for the future by focusing on the development of self-advocacy as well as the individual skills and talents of its diverse student population.

Westmark has been transforming the lives of students and their families since 1994. Hundreds of students have progressed through Westmark's program, gaining the confidence, skills, and knowledge their parents hoped they would achieve. Westmark alumni succeed in education, business, entertainment, and various highly skilled careers.

MISSION STATEMENT

Westmark School provides a caring environment where motivated students with learning differences discover their unique paths to personal and academic excellence in preparation for a successful college experience.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Westmark School is a unique independent school that provides a challenging academic program to students with learning differences in the elementary and secondary grades. The vast majority of students receive a college preparatory program; however, since the focus of the School is the individual student, Westmark teachers provide research-based methods and curriculum that meet the needs of a wide variety of students by leveraging strengths, celebrating diversity, and working collaboratively. Part of the School's mission is to help students understand their current levels of performance, embrace strategies to move forward, and make appropriate choices to enrich their lives. A dedicated, talented and creative staff is the hallmark of the Westmark program.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

The Westmark campus is located on 4.7 acres in Encino, California, an affluent residential area of Los Angeles County. The campus is composed of eight multi-purpose buildings including computer labs, a library, and a state-of-the-art production studio for filming and editing daily news shows. Five buildings are permanent; three are modular. The 101/Ventura Freeway runs immediately to the north of the campus. Families value the look and feel of the campus, which is large and well situated.



The Board of Trustees is finalizing a master plan for the campus. In 2004, enhancements were made to the performing arts spaces. In 2009 a new science and technology building was completed. The School has completed an athletic field and a new main entrance to the campus. A new arts and classroom facility opened in 2009.

PROGRAM

Westmark School offers comprehensive lower, middle and upper school programs. Within the content-rich, process-based curriculum, individualized courses are designed and diverse learning needs are addressed. Modifications and accommodations are provided according to each child's individual needs. Placement in classes is based on individual readiness. The Western Association of School and Colleges accredits Westmark School. Westmark has joined National Association of Independent Schools and California Association of Independent Schools.

Teachers work collaboratively to implement creative strategies to guide students. The students benefit from explicit content, study skills instruction, time management support, and social cognition awareness. Teachers value their academic freedom and the extensive professional development made available to them.

Westmark offers an intensive reading curriculum. Developmental reading classes consist of no more than five students using the Lindamood-Bell program as a means of academic intervention for reading needs. All middle school students are enrolled in daily reading classes focused on building basic language arts skills and applying these skills to content classes. High school students who are reading significantly below grade level are also offered daily Lindamood-Bell reading classes in addition to their English classes. The reading program is credited with bringing a great deal of success to Westmark students. Likewise, the Jane Shafer method is used to teach writing that has allowed Westmark students to be both effective and creative writers.

While the academic program is individualized for each student, study skills and organizational skills are stressed for all students and are embedded within the curriculum.

Student progress is closely monitored. Assessment includes observations and portfolios in addition to tests, class assignments, and standardized testing as appropriate. Communication occurs through family conferences, IEP meetings, and written reports. Success is measured differently for each student. For some it is acceptance to college. For others it may be a certificate program, maintaining solid friendships or securing meaningful employment.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Westmark School also serves its families by helping them support their children's academic, athletic and social experiences. Students learn to employ strategies to become successful learners more quickly when they receive the support and assistance of their family. Furthermore, the Parent Association and the School's parent-oriented functions create a social network and support system for the families as well.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- The next Director of Upper School will have a vision for the upper school so that the division provides a complete experience for students from grade 9 through college placement and graduation. This will include assuring a strong academic program that is differentiated for students with varied learning differences as well as providing a co-curricular program that will keep the students spirited and enthused about remaining at Westmark. Such programs as debate, science fair, and Model United Nations could be added. The goal is to create a sense of unity in the upper school so that the division will be seen as “a real upper school rather than an extension of middle school with taller students.”
- With the addition of the new arts building, the next division head will assure that the arts programs as well as the athletic program meet the needs of upper school students.
- The Director of Upper School will work with the Director of Curriculum and Faculty to assure that the curriculum, the assistive technologies and the pedagogy are appropriate and meet the need of upper school students. The goal is both to make the upper school more attractive and to make the students more competitive in terms of college placement.
- A service learning program will be created for Westmark. The division head will assist the Head of School in establishing service programs.
- The Director of Upper School will create a structure for communication that encourages inclusivity of many voices, that is clear and consistent, and that “closes the loop” by allowing those parents and faculty who make suggestions and comments to know what became of their ideas.
- Technology such as smart boards, computers, software and assistive technology could all be used more effectively at Westmark if faculty and staff were trained to use them. The division director will assure that such training takes place.
- As leadership of the school has changed, some members of the faculty have become weary and resistant to change. Yet parents and donors want changes to be made while their children are still in school. Sensitivity to this dichotomy will be important because it will affect the pace of future change. Resiliency and adaptability will be important.

- The Director of Upper School will be available to upper school students and their families throughout the school day, including before and after school. The director will attend upper school events. This presence will send a strong message that the director appreciates the uniqueness and achievements of Westmark students and supports their families.



- Sophisticated educational and psychological testing is often a part of the life of Westmark students. Special accommodations are often triggered by these assessments. The division director will be able to interpret these tests or will be willing to learn to do so in order to optimize each student's success.
- Westmark has become fully independent as of the 2009-10 school year, no longer accepting students funded by the school districts. This frees the School to develop a program that is best for each student without the constraints imposed by the district. The Director of Upper School will implement programs and opportunities so that Westmark will be seen as both a premier special education school and an amazing independent upper school. The school has joined NAIS and CAIS.
- The Director of Upper School will be able to work with anxious parents who are not necessarily good at managing their own emotions with their children or at times with teachers. The director will be able to understand the source of the anxiety and the resultant behavior, and will be able to guide and lead these anxious parents through processes rather than either giving into what may be unreasonable demands or making them feel even more anxious.

THE CANDIDATE

The Director of Upper School is a fairly new position at Westmark School. The Director of Upper School will report directly to the Head of School and be a key member of the Management Team. The Head of School would like someone who is capable of running the School when he is away from campus on school business. He also indicates that this person might well see this job as part of a career path to someday becoming the head of a school.

Professional Qualifications

The next Director of Upper School should possess excellent professional experience and credentials that include the following:

- MA or the equivalent
- Administrative experience
- Classroom experience, work with students who have special learning needs is preferred
- Excellent computer and technological skills
- Independent school experience is preferred
- Strong organizational skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Ability to stand up to demanding, yet well-intentioned, parents
- Knowledge of the college preparation process and requirements
- Independent school experience

Personal Qualities

The next Director of Upper School should possess the following personal qualities:

- Visionary
- Authentic
- Honest
- Warm; enjoys working with young people
- Sense of humor
- Team player
- Facilitator
- Forthright; Transparent
- Energetic
- Resilient
- Compassionate
- Capable of being a role model
- Ability to separate principles from personalities

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

CANDIDATES SHOULD SEND A COVER LETTER, RESUME, STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY, AND A LIST OF REFERENCES TO:

Roger J. Bass
Search Consultant
Resource Group 175
rbass@qwestoffice.net
TEL (206) 441- 4112

Additional information about the school may be learned from the website
www.westmarkschool.org