



# LESLEY ELLIS SCHOOL

THE JOURNEY IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE DESTINATION

*Preschool - Grade 8*



## HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Arlington, Massachusetts  
**Position starts July 1, 2025**



EDUCATORS COLLABORATIVE

EXPERTS IN SEARCH, TRANSITION & STRATEGY



## A JOYFUL PS-8 SCHOOL BUILT ON KINDNESS

Walking the halls of Lesley Ellis School, one is immediately struck by a palpable sense of happiness that exudes from every corner of the building. Families recognize that their school has a very special ethos. In the words of one parent, when describing the faculty, “These people are incredible. They are fantastic!”

Another important—and related—aspect of the “Lesley Ellis way” is the conscious creation of a supportive, loving community. Families choose to enroll their children because of the caring teachers, the school’s clear values and mission, and the welcoming atmosphere that is the spirit of the school. Family volunteerism is strong and it is clear that there is a close bond between parents, teachers, and the school’s leadership. Families appreciate how Lesley Ellis employs an “old school” approach to their communication with them, which starts with the hand delivery to their home of the school’s offer of admission, accompanied by balloons. The combination of traditional forms of interaction (such as handwritten notes from the Head) with a decidedly progressive curriculum is one of the defining features of Lesley Ellis.

It is readily apparent that all Lesley Ellis constituents—parents, faculty, staff, and students—understand and appreciate the school’s distinct culture. A pioneer in the application of anti-bias teaching, Lesley Ellis continues to be at the forefront of creating a community in which anti-racism is infused in every aspect of school life—from the books students read, to the perspectives students study in history class, and to the projects students undertake, beginning with children in preschool. All members of the community are united in their embrace of this important work. As a middle school student noted with pride, “This is a school that is accepting of everyone. You can be who you are.”

The opportunity to lead Lesley Ellis School is a chance to be at one of the Boston area’s most distinctive schools that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the children it serves.



## MISSION

*Lesley Ellis School fosters an environment of self-discovery, kindness, and belonging through our engaging and challenging curriculum, as well as our anti-bias approach. Our students are inquisitive and inspired learners, prepared for every step of their educational journey.*

## VISION

To inspire and prepare students to positively contribute to their local and global communities.

## CORE VALUES

### We Learn About Ourselves

We guide each student to increase their self-awareness. We encourage our students to examine themselves openly and honestly so they become aware of and value their own unique characteristics.

### We Are Kind

We care about the well-being of our community. We treat everyone with respect, consideration, and compassion.

### We Include One Another

We promote an anti-bias perspective throughout our community. We teach the guiding principles of social justice that encourage us to act against inequity and prejudice, as well as embrace diversity.

### We Love Learning

We help students reach their academic potential through creative teaching and a shared joy of learning. We collaborate to create challenging programs aimed to provoke thought, build skills, and foster intellectual curiosity.

## LESLEY ELLIS AT A GLANCE

Established in 1949

Total enrollment: 211

Employees: 63, including part-time and after school program

Average class size: 16 in preschool, 14 in elementary school, 20 in middle school

Student to teacher ratio: 7:1 in preschool, 10:1 in elementary school, 10:1 in middle school

Annual Fund: Approximately \$100,000 raised through annual fund and auction in each of the last four years

Financial aid budget for the current year. \$1,070,399

Students receiving tuition assistance: 20%

Students who identify as students of color: 28%

Faculty and staff who identify as people of color: 14%

Annual budget: \$8,500,000





## AN INNOVATIVE SCHOOL WITH A STORIED HISTORY

### Early History

Lesley Ellis School has a rich history of innovation in the study and practice of early childhood and elementary education. Its roots trace back to the founding of the Cambridge School for Girls in 1886 by Arthur Gilman, who also founded Radcliffe College. By the late 1920s, the school had added a program designed exclusively for younger children, and it was subsequently purchased by Lesley College (now Lesley University). In 1949, this “Lower School,” which had been used to demonstrate new methods of teaching and learning, became Lesley Ellis School, named after its longtime Headmistress, Harriet Ames Ellis.

### Demonstration School

LES was first used as a demonstration school by Lesley College, where student-teachers were trained to write and practice curriculum within a creative and developmental construct. The school was distinguished by small, diverse classes—much as it is today.

In 1981, Lesley College divested itself of its demonstration schools and Lesley Ellis School became part of an independent, nonprofit organization called Schools for Children. The transition reinforced Lesley Ellis School’s mission to educate children in an individualized and engaging environment, in which each child’s education is approached within a developmental framework, and where providing educational opportunities to a wide range of families is a core value.



## The Growth of Lesley Ellis

Lesley Ellis relocated to 41 Foster Street in Arlington, Massachusetts in 1989, where the school continued to grow—both programmatically and through enrollment. At the urging of parents in the school, Lesley Ellis introduced an elementary program in 1994, followed by a middle school program. In September 2017, the school moved to its new permanent home at 34 Winter Street in Arlington. Student enrollment continued to rise as the grades and program opportunities have expanded, all while keeping the classroom experience distinctly relational and honoring each student's individuality. In its earliest days as a preschool, Lesley Ellis served 40 children. Today, the school welcomes more than 210 students into preschool through eighth grade classes. Lesley Ellis has taken full advantage of the support and resources provided by Schools for Children, while creating its own identity as an independent preschool, elementary, and middle school. In 2003, Lesley Ellis became fully accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE). It is soon to have a re-accreditation visit from AISNE and has written a thorough and thoughtful Self-Study Report. Lesley Ellis School is also a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).



### A SMALL SCHOOL INTENTIONALLY

At Lesley Ellis School (LES), the small size of the school is intentional so that each child is known, heard, and valued. The school states, "Everyone belongs. Everyone has something to contribute. Everyone makes a difference." Faculty, parents, staff, and administration work hard to make the school a welcoming, warm, inclusive community. Again and again, constituents underscore how Lesley Ellis is a "family."

Lesley Ellis School is in the enviable position of having full and robust enrollment in its well-regarded Early Childhood program. The middle school, only added in recent years, also has strong enrollment. After having two beloved faculty members pass away a few years ago, the elementary program suffered some setbacks in enrollment, but with some staffing changes, the school is optimistic that it will realize stronger K-4 enrollment soon.

As noted above, Lesley Ellis is part of a larger consortium of schools and programs: [Schools for Children](#) (SFC). This makes the governance structure of the school unique. The Head of School at Lesley Ellis reports to the Executive Director of Schools for Children and SFC provides Lesley Ellis with ongoing leadership mentoring as well as the administration of school finances, human resources, and technology.





Lesley Ellis has its own dedicated Advisory Board that is one of the SFC Board's committees. It consists of anywhere from 13 to 19 members, who serve two-year terms (up to three consecutive terms) appointed by the SFC Board of Trustees. The majority of Advisory Board members are current parents. Currently, there is one alumni parent and one outside educator. The Head of School and the SFC Executive Director serve as *ex-officio*, non-voting members. All Advisory Board members are on at least one standing committee: Executive, Development, Finance, Governance, and Marketing. *Ad hoc* committees are occasionally formed as well.

LES is located in Arlington, Massachusetts, an historic suburb about six miles northwest of Boston, bordering on Cambridge, Mass. Parents in the school are professionals and entrepreneurs, often with degrees or affiliations with nearby Harvard, MIT, Tufts, or Apple and Google. The school is housed in a well-maintained historic building, owned by Schools for Children, that features many quaint features including exposed brick and rock. The school has initiated a building project (currently in the construction phase) for a new library/learning hub that is hoped to be completed this spring and a performing arts space to be completed later as a second phase of the project. This will add much-needed community and performance space to a school that truly values the arts. Dance, drama, and music are embedded and vibrant in the life of this dynamic school. The new capital improvement project is also intended "to provide the space that is needed for the community to share joy in larger group gatherings and allow the whole community to participate in meaningful learning opportunities, traditions, and events."







## A DISTINCTIVE CURRICULUM THAT VALUES REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS

At LES, “the journey is as important as the destination,” and this philosophy is embedded in all of the school’s progressive curriculum. The school notes that its teaching goes well beyond the acquisition of knowledge. Its emphasis is on the development of skills that are transferable to any situation—in the classroom or in life outside of school. To this end, LES emphasizes intellectual curiosity, problem solving, and critical thinking in all of its teaching. The school values experiential learning and is proud of how it designs its academic program to the particular interests of its students.

This individualized approach is reflected in teachers’ recognition that no two students are at the same point in their academic journey at the same time. While the curriculum includes benchmarks for every student to meet, the faculty tailors its work with students to meet them where they are. Families comment that the LES curriculum is appropriately rigorous but fair, ever mindful of the academic and emotional needs of children.

One of the hallmarks of the LES curriculum is its approach to science education. Students are encouraged to explore, experiment, manipulate, question, and discover in order to deepen their conceptual understanding of the world around them. Classroom activities stimulate students’ curiosity, encourage the use of all five senses, and increase vocabulary and patience. In doing so, they increase their capacity to question the world around them, think critically, and defend their ideas and conclusions.

The school has an especially innovative arts curriculum, and many families are drawn to LES because of its strength. Students benefit from teaching artists from the Boston area who share their talents at the school during six-week residencies. Past sessions with these professional practicing artists have included songwriting, African drumming, puppetry, ceramics, animation, painting, and dance. Elementary and middle school students also participate in an annual Evening of the Arts, showcasing visual arts, choirs, and wind ensembles.

You can learn more about Lesley Ellis’ robust curriculum [here](#).



## AN UNEQUIVOCAL COMMITMENT TO ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

As a fundamental and central component of the school, the anti-bias curriculum is woven into all subjects and integrated throughout the grades. Moreover, the school's anti-bias approach is central to the mission and is highlighted in every admission interview and every job interview. This core value encourages community members to act against inequity and prejudice, as well as embrace diversity.

Community members reflected the importance of the new Head of School being able to clearly articulate the significance of the anti-bias curriculum. The successful candidate will have done work personally and professionally to understand systems of oppression and advantage so that they can know the "why" of this aspect of LES.

You can learn more about Lesley Ellis' anti-bias curriculum and initiatives [here](#).

## FUTURE LEADERSHIP PROFILE

The Lesley Ellis School seeks a leader who enthusiastically embraces and champions the school's mission, anti-bias curriculum, and support of social justice.

The successful candidate will be warm, welcoming, and have an inclusive personal manner. The LES Head of School must have exceptional verbal and written communication skills, and a love for young children and adolescents. They will also bring the skills, initiative, and drive to help further realize a compelling and sustainable vision for the future of the school.

The Board of Trustees of Schools for Children is conducting a national search to identify its next Head of School. Search consultants Carole Everett and George Sanderson of Educators Collaborative solicited input from all stakeholders during an on-campus visit, and gathered additional input from stakeholders through an online survey and virtual listening sessions. Based on this input, impressions of the consultants, and feedback from the Head of School Search Committee, the following represents a summary of the school's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, and the skills and attributes desired in the next Head of School of the Lesley Ellis School.





## Strengths of The School

- The Lesley Ellis School is unequivocally clear about its moral compass and its desire to focus on students who are kind, empathetic, and compassionate.
- The arts are strongly supported and include both visual and performing arts for students throughout the grades.
- Unlike many schools, LES is in the enviable position of enjoying full, steady enrollment in its early childhood program and draws a diverse group of students from throughout the suburban Boston area.
- The LES commitment to anti-bias teaching, social justice, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging has remained a core value. Anti-bias and socio-emotional learning is consistently at the forefront in teaching and learning at LES.
- The LES community is impressively engaged in, and supportive of, the school. Parent volunteerism is remarkably strong and families regularly express their satisfaction with the school's programs and culture.
- The LES Advisory Board is deeply committed and appropriate in its approach to governance.
- LES and SFC nurture a collaborative and mission-focused partnership.
- A solid culture of philanthropy exists at LES, both in terms of overall participation and dollars raised.
- Graduates are confident and self-aware young adults. Popular choices for high school include Boston University Academy, Cambridge School of Weston, Concord Academy, Beaver Country Day, Brimmer and May, Lexington Christian, as well as local public schools.

## Opportunities and Challenges for the next Head of School

### Regain full enrollment, especially at the elementary school level.

While LES has grown considerably over the past 20 years, enrollment must continue to be managed carefully. While the school enjoys full enrollment in most grades, a recent dip in the number of students at the elementary school level suggests that attrition and new enrollment will be a priority for the next Head of School.



### Nurture the relationship with Schools for Children.

The distinct governance structure of LES requires the next Head of School to continue to have a strong partnership with the Executive Director of Schools for Children, while communicating the value of this relationship to the Lesley Ellis community.

### Work closely with the LES Advisory Board.

The LES Advisory Board plays a role that is similar to the Board of Trustees at an independent school with a more traditional governance structure. It will be important for the Head of School to work closely with this committed and hard-working group.

### Complete the capital campaign and building project.

It is anticipated that the first phase of the capital campaign and building project will be completed before the new Head of School assumes responsibilities. A high priority of the next Head of School will be to raise additional funds and complete the second phase of the building project.

### Recruit and retain mission-aligned, passionate faculty, supporting their wellness and professional growth.

LES families consistently note that the school's biggest asset is its outstanding faculty. Supporting current teachers, maximizing retention, and continuing to attract strong faculty members to the school is an important goal for the next Head of School.

### Continue to cultivate the school's commitment to its anti-bias curriculum.

LES is justifiably proud of its anti-bias curriculum, to which it has a long-standing and deep allegiance. Continuing this commitment and further developing the curriculum is an important opportunity for the next Head of School.

### Continue to seek greater diversity among the students and faculty.

While the dedication of LES to diversity and inclusion is unequivocal, the diversity of its student body and faculty does not quite match the depth of this commitment. The next Head of School will prioritize initiatives that further develop the diversity of both the faculty and enrollment at LES.



### Carry on the regular review of curriculum guidelines.

LES is committed to the individualized nature of its progressive curriculum. The school undertakes regular assessment and updates of its curriculum. The next Head will ensure state-of-the-art teaching and learning in keeping with its dedication to aligning with educational goals and maintaining high standards across all subjects by continuing the ongoing development of a curriculum that provides a structured roadmap for educational progression, enhances accessibility and inclusivity, and incorporates diverse learning resources.

## Skills and Attributes of the Next Head of School

The Lesley Ellis School seeks a visionary leader and passionate educator to step into the challenging role of Head of School. The school takes great pride in nurturing an environment that is compassionate, joyful, and intentionally develops kind, confident, self-aware graduates. An individual who brings energy, integrity, and intellect will thrive and experience success in the Lesley Ellis community.

The ideal candidates will possess many of the following skills and attributes:

- An inspiring communicator who is warm, visible, personable, transparent, collaborative, and approachable and who listens deeply to all community members while taking the time to understand the culture of LES.
- A commitment to leadership that includes empowering and inspiring others, working in partnership, and holding people accountable in ways that support continued professional and personal growth.
- Demonstrated success in the classroom in elementary and/or PS-8 settings.
- Leadership experience in a PS-8 school environment; independent school experience is a plus.
- A personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and a clear understanding of the significance of the school's anti-bias curriculum.
- A background in progressive education is also a benefit, as is knowledge of different learning styles and profiles.
- The capacity to facilitate inclusive dialogue, make difficult decisions, have courageous conversations, and build trust.
- Thoughtful, respectful words and actions that reflect a depth of self-knowledge, warmth, humility, and commitment to the culture of the school.
- Proficient understanding of strategic financial sustainability, budget development, fundraising, faculty recruitment and retention, and enrollment management.
- A deep love for children and adolescents, an earnest belief in joyful learning, and unbridled enthusiasm for the school's compelling mission of guiding young children to do and be their best.
- A visionary builder who can think strategically in partnership with the SFC leadership, and capably execute plans to bring initiatives to fruition, while managing community expectations and the impact of change.
- Charismatic and skilled in building relationships within and beyond the LES community, generating excitement about the school's mission.

**If you have a strong sense of self, a good sense of humor, and the qualifications to match, submit your application.**

## SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials by **November 15, 2024**:

- EC Summary Sheet and Disclosure Statement (contact Carole Everett or George Sanderson for these documents)
- Cover Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Current résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy
- A list of five or more references with contact information (name, relationship to candidate, phone number, and email address)

**Application materials are to be sent in a single merged pdf file electronically via email to:**

Carole Everett, Partner, Educators Collaborative  
Email: [ceverett@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:ceverett@educatorscollaborative.com)

George Sanderson, Partner, Educators Collaborative  
Email: [gsanderson@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:gsanderson@educatorscollaborative.com)

### The Search Schedule

The Search Committee plans to identify a preliminary group of candidates to interview (virtually) in early December. From this group the Search Committee will select finalists for two days of interviews on campus in early 2025. The Trustees expect to reach a decision and appoint a Head-Elect shortly after finalist visits with the term of office to commence on July 1, 2025.

### Non-Discrimination Statement

The Lesley Ellis School is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, disability, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender, medical condition, or any other characteristic protected under federal, state, or local discrimination laws.

