



ALEXANDER DAWSON SCHOOL

Director of Teaching and Learning

SUMMARY

Location | Las Vegas, NV

Post Date | February 3, 2020

Application Deadline | February 28, 2020 at 5:00pm PST

Remote Semifinal Round | March 5 and 6, 2020

On-site Final Round | Week of March 16

Decision Announced | March 27, 2020

Start Date | July 1, 2020

Reports To | Head of School





SUMMARY

Not far from Red Rock Canyon in Southern Nevada sits a mature-for-its-years early childhood to grade 8 independent school with an amazing history behind it and an exciting trajectory in front of it. The Alexander Dawson School, located on 33-acres in the beautiful community of Summerlin—about fifteen minutes west of the Las Vegas airport—has had the financial and operational support of the Alexander Dawson Foundation since its doors opened in 2000. In the last twenty years, the school has embraced all aspects of student-centered education and modern learning as it continues to build and improve upon an exceptional core academic program.

With Dawson’s highly respected assistant head of school—who also serves as the current director of teaching and learning—set to become Dawson’s next head of school in July, the community is seeking a forward-thinking, collaborative educational leader capable of overseeing ongoing institutional change and designing transformative professional development to a dynamic faculty. The director of teaching and learning serves on the senior leadership team and reports to the head of school. The position starts July 1, 2020.

MISSION AND HISTORY

MISSION

The Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain is a nurturing learning community for boys and girls in preschool through grade eight that challenges students to achieve excellence in mind, body and character.

HISTORY

In 1996, the Alexander Dawson Foundation decided to open a school in the Las Vegas Valley, the Foundation's home for more than 30 years. The Foundation spent \$58 million for the land, facilities, the interest expenses on the construction bonds and budget support during the School's early years. Groundbreaking occurred in 1999, and the Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain opened in 2000, with over 150 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. As word spread and demand grew, so, too, did the school. From 2001-2003, the school added a middle school, and a three-year-old preschool was launched in 2009.





CORE BELIEFS

Graduates of The Alexander Dawson School will be ready to achieve their individual potential, savor life and meet the challenges of the world. To achieve this bold vision, the teaching and learning program comprises three core beliefs, around which all instruction is designed.

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Dawson graduates are complex problem solvers and collaborators; empathetic, flexible, and innovative; and critical thinkers who develop into resilient lifelong learners and leaders.
- Through choice and reflection, Dawson students are active agents and advocates for their learning experience.
- A Dawson education facilitates deeper learning because students approach tasks from multiple perspectives, and draw connections across disciplines and the outside world.
- Through collaboration and healthy competition, students find value in both successes and failures.
- Teachers best engage and motivate students through encouragement, nurturing, inspiration and inquiry.
- We recognize students learn at different paces and in different ways, and we differentiate instruction accordingly.
- We continually reevaluate the curriculum for relevance, current methodologies, quality of intellectual content and intrinsic interest.
- We are a true learning community. Dawson's faculty and administrators model lifelong learning by investing in educational best practices, advances in technology and relevant world development.





2. THE DAWSON COMMUNITY

- We choose to be part of the Dawson community because we share in the Vision and values of the Dawson educational experience.
- We find strength in our diversity and commit to learning from each other.
- Although families are the primary educators of their children, student achievement throughout life is increased when the School and families work together as partners.
- Each of us is a model for the rest of us; each of us interacts with integrity and cares for the rest of us.



3. THE WORLD

- With an appreciation of the sacrifices others have made for freedom and social justice, our students learn what it means to be engaged and contributing global citizens.
- Our students commit themselves to the responsibility of being agents of positive change.
- Global citizens investigate root causes, analyze solutions, connect with people in need and become empowered activists in the problem-solving process.
- As members of the desert environment, we strive to foster an awareness of and responsibility for the preservation and sustainability of our natural resources.



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The Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain provides equal employment opportunity to all individuals regardless of their race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by state, federal, or local law.



PORTRAIT OF A DAWSON GRADUATE

OVERVIEW

The Alexander Dawson School believes that:

- Student success should be defined on an individual basis beyond grades;
- An individual's emotional needs fuels their individual growth;
- Student voice must drive decision making;
- Research must influence the design of a well-balanced student experience; and,
- Schools cannot be afraid to adapt and must be willing to change.

As it designs a forward-thinking and dynamic teaching and learning program, Dawson has adopted a three-tiered learner profile of a graduate.

A DAWSON GRADUATE WILL...

Celebrate community, by:

- Living compassionately and respectfully with others
- Developing sense of service and citizenry
- Engaging actively in collaborative discussions and tasks
- Respecting opinions and beliefs of others
- Managing emotions and solves problems

Savor learning, by:

- Developing curiosity and love of learning
- Demonstrating a growth mindset and perseveres when challenged
- Taking risks in learning and seizes opportunities for growth
- Accepting mistakes as part of the learning process
- Engaging in classroom activities with confidence and enthusiasm

Strive for excellence, by

- Seeking to develop mind, body, and character
- Creating work that is reflective of best effort
- Adjusting behaviors and actions based on feedback
- Reflecting upon experiences and sets meaningful goals
- Managing time and materials to optimize learning





CHALLENGE SUCCESS AT DAWSON

A BEACON SCHOOL FOR STUDENT VOICE

The Alexander Dawson School is proud to be Nevada’s first Challenge Success school. Challenge Success is a nationally acclaimed nonprofit organization that provides schools and families with the information and strategies they need to create a more balanced and academically fulfilling life for their kids. Parents are given custom tools to help their children regain their balance, strengthen their sense of self, increase their motivation and critical thinking skills, and learn how to deal effectively with the inevitable challenges of life.

The Challenge Success program helps school communities lessen the focus on grades and test scores, while allowing kids to develop the necessary skills to become resilient, ethical, and motivated learners. Next year, Dawson will become one of the first schools in the country to introduce the Challenge Success framework into an early childhood program—allowing the benefits of this successful initiative to take root at the entry point of the academic program. Dawson will emerge as a beacon school for Challenge Success where student voice is the fabric of the entire school culture. Dawson’s goal is for the community to adopt a cohesive climate of care, in which the definition of success, engagement and life satisfaction is authentic to the individual experience.

THE CHALLENGE SUCCESS “SPACE” FRAMEWORK

S: Students schedule and use of time

Examples: Floating schedules, and coordinated homework loads

P: Project and problem-based learning

Example: A design thinking cultural mindset to solve problems

A: Alternative and authentic assessment

Examples: Rubrics instead of standardized grades, and student portfolios

C: Climate of care

Examples: Relational discipline to help resolve conflict, and social-emotional learning

E: Education for the whole community

Example: Hosted workshops for parents and guardians





BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

A SOLID FOUNDATION, WITH A COMMITMENT TO KEEP IMPROVING

For a school yet to even celebrate its silver anniversary, The Alexander Dawson School is on solid footing with an exciting future in front of it. Thanks to the backing of the Alexander Dawson Foundation, the school has been able to invest in core resources and launch a program that other more established schools might envy. At the same time—and perhaps due in part to its geographical location in the beautiful desert southwest—the school



adopted a culture of continued exploration and bold innovation. Thus, the next director of teaching learning will find a school community both ready for, and experienced with, assessing and evolving its curricular and instructional program.

As described earlier in this document, several initiatives are already in motion. Dawson is heavily invested in Challenge Success and has seen many positive impacts from that program, which helps a school community develop and implement a thoughtful social-emotional program tied to student well being in its broadest sense. This is year three of the partnership, and next year Dawson will be one of the first schools in the country to bring Challenge Success to its early childhood program—an addition that will allow the Challenge Success framework to take root in the earliest grades on campus.

A newer initiative is the School’s curricular redesign toward a competency-based education (CBE) approach. The school has partnered with The OESIS Group to lead it through an exciting journey that is just beginning: this is year one. Early pilots have occurred in the middle school, where student projects focused on interest, choice, and research are being introduced in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, respectively. The move toward CBE is a natural continuation for Dawson, which has always embraced project-based learning (PBL), student-centered education, modern learning, and mission-based grading.

TWO HERALDED LEADERS AT DAWSON

A discussion of this current opportunity would be incomplete without a brief summary of the accomplishments and leadership of the current head of school, the current assistant head of school, and the head of school-elect. But in an exciting twist, what makes this moment in Dawson’s history extra special is that those last two individuals are in fact one in the same: the assistant head of school will become Dawson’s next head on July 1, 2020.



The current head of school came to Dawson in 2016. Her experience as a prior head of school was perfect for Dawson at a time when the school was just coming into its own. She brought stability, organization, professionalism, and vision. Her primary academic leadership partner was the then-director of education and head of lower school, who later became assistant head of school. Together, they led the school through curricular and pedagogical innovation, but in a way that was thoughtful, inclusive, respectful, and collaborative.

Now, Dawson stands as a model school that does not rest on its laurels, but also knows how to operate on a solid foundation and follow best practices and procedures. Earlier this academic year, the head of school announced her retirement at the end of this academic year. After thoughtful reflection, the board of trustees unanimously voted to appoint the current



assistant head of school to become Dawson’s next head of school, starting July 1, 2020—to the delight and celebration the internal and external school communities. Thus, the school will enjoy a graceful and smooth transition in the executive seat—and not skip a beat in its current trajectory of innovation and excellence.

THE NEXT DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

First and foremost, Dawson seeks an amazing school leader well-versed in contemporary pedagogical trends and research related to EC-8 teaching and learning. With the next head herself a true educator, and with a seasoned academic leadership team that has been given broad areas of responsibility across the program, Dawson also wants a collaborative leader who can empower, partner, and support others. The director of teaching learning is in many ways like a connecting interchange for the school, helping to weave through lines and move initiatives forward by bringing the right people together at the right time.

Because continued attention and development of project-based learning, signature writing pieces, cornerstone projects, and capstone experiences are a top priority, Dawson would be particularly excited by candidates with middle school experience. Dawson also seeks someone who not only was a part of institutional change at an educational organization, but also played a leading role. The director of teaching and learning is the chief architect for all professional development, and more broadly the guiding light for the faculty as the school implements exciting but complex initiatives. Thus, a positive and inspirational mindset is an absolute must for this role—in addition to knowledge and enthusiasm for PBL, CBE, and student-centered education in general. With the school’s experience and commitment to SEL, this is not necessarily an area that requires deep fluency of the director of teaching and learning, but rather simply a willingness to learn and support what has been a truly successful student wellness initiative at Dawson.



The academic leadership model has evolved over the years, and likely that will continue to be the case going forward. Several years ago, the school employed traditional divisional heads. The school found that this approach was too siloed at an innovative and fluid school like Dawson, so a few years ago the academic team reorganized itself around EC-8 fluency areas, including SEL and service learning, diversity, curriculum and CBE, operations, and instructional design. Recognizing that the pendulum might have swung a bit too far, this year the school introduced a matrix approach to leadership, called the Homes model.

Under the Homes approach to leadership, those aforementioned EC-8 fluency areas have continued, but in addition each director is concurrently responsible for one of four grade-level groups: EC-1, 2-4, 5-6, and 7-8. Homes directors supervise and evaluate grade-level faculty members under the guidance of the director of teaching and learning. The next director of teaching and learning will serve as the chief strategist for curriculum development in all four homes and will lead the home's leaders in all matters related to teaching and learning—as well as work with both the head of school-elect and the team itself to continue to tweak and improve the model. The current assistant head of school has herself also been one of the Homes leaders, and the school believes this dual role will be useful to the next director of teaching and learning—particularly in a first year that is often about getting acclimated and building credibility with both faculty and the academic program as a whole.

FINAL THOUGHTS

On paper, this job has four big areas of academic responsibility: curriculum, teacher hiring, teacher training, and change leadership. But at Dawson, this role transcends any job description. It operates squarely within the heart and soul of the school. Dawson would not be where it is today without the amazing school leaders that have come to campus—and right now Dawson truly needs and deserves another inspirational, passionate, smart, and dedicated leader to continue leading the charge. The good news is that the next director of teaching and learning will find faculty, students, and administrators who have all bought into a common vision, and in particular a new head of school who herself has been designing and implementing that vision. And when the school's silver anniversary does arrive in 2025, the school will undoubtedly be celebrating even more innovation—likely in no small part due to the able leadership of the next director of teaching and learning.

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

The distinct Dawson learning environment is reflective of the diverse community that surrounds us. The celebration of differences drives the Dawson Mission and unifies the school-wide focus of self and social awareness. Students benefit from working with and learning from other students and teachers who are varied in learning styles, socioeconomic backgrounds, race, religions, ideology, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, culture, and ethnicity. We are committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning community.



KEY STATISTICS

Founded: 2000

Location: 33-acre campus in the community of Summerlin, located approximately 15 miles west from the Las Vegas airport and just a few minutes from Red Rock Canyon

Students: Approximately 520 students from early childhood through grade 8

Faculty and staff: Approximately 100 full- and part-time employees, including nearly 70 faculty; faculty-to-student ratios of 8:1 (kindergarten through grade 8) and 5:1 (early childhood)

Accreditation: Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Relevant Associations and Memberships: National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Business Officers Association (NBOA), Independent School Management (ISM), The OESIS Group

Tuition: Early childhood (\$17,730); Kindergarten through grade 8 ranges from \$25,440 through \$26,260

Financials: Operating budget of approximately \$12,300,000; endowment approximately \$2,800,000 as of June 2019

Website: www.adsrm.org



QUOTE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL ELECT

"We believe our students will be future leaders in the Las Vegas community and beyond. The director of teaching and learning is an essential role to ensuring that we prepare our students to become empathetic change agents who understand their civic and social responsibility in the world."

Roxanne Stansbury, Head of School Elect



DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Curriculum and Instruction

- Work with the head of school, administration, and faculty to articulate, implement, evaluate, and continually improve the curricular and instructional program at Dawson.
- Inspire and guide programmatic changes through pragmatic, socially aware and thoughtful leadership decisions, communications, and presentations.
- Pursue, establish, and maintain meaningful collaborative partnerships with external organizations that support and inspire EC-8 transformative change, and stay on top of current trends, research, and emerging ideas in the education space.

Faculty Supervision and Development

- Lead the hiring process for faculty and ensure a high-quality induction program for new faculty.
- Guide and lead the faculty in its exploration, implementation, and assessment of modern learning approaches that deepen student understanding and improve learning outcomes.
- Facilitate a professional development program and teacher academy sessions for all faculty members by way of a process that aligns with the pedagogical goals of the school and is customized to the differentiated needs of teachers.
- Support high-quality collaboration among teaching teams in a way that values individual talents and clarifies school-wide approaches to curriculum planning, documentation, assessment and technology integration.

Leadership and Administration

- Supervise and appraise all direct reports in accordance with school procedures and evaluation processes.
- Work collaboratively with enrollment managers on retention strategies and admission procedures, and business managers on the overall academic budget.
- Develop productive parent partnerships and educational opportunities characterized by open communication, mutual trust, and a shared understanding of Dawson's curriculum.
- Work with senior administrators and campus leaders to foster and support a student culture of collaboration, dignity, and resilience, as well as a respect for individual differences.
- Maintain a visible presence throughout the school and at events.
- Perform other duties as assigned.



DAWSON IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...

Professional Qualifications:

- Experience as a school administrator leading trainings and major initiatives related to curriculum, pedagogy, and student experience—preferably at a progressive school offering a EC-8 program
- Experience designing, implementing, and improving co-curricular programs and events that connect directly to a school’s mission and values
- Immersion in diversity work—both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- Experience guiding parents and guardians on sensitive student-related matters
- Multiple years of experience as a middle or elementary school teacher
- Possession of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, which is a minimum requirement, though preferably possession of a graduate degree

Leadership and Personal Qualities:

- Inspirational, pragmatic, diplomatic, and patient leadership that honors the core values of Dawson, but also encourages risk-taking
- An ability to create organizational systems and apply project management skills in support of institutional-wide change within a complex academic program
- Authentic empathy, warmth, and collegiality, and an ability to spread these qualities across an entire staff
- A passion for inspiring programmatic change, but an understanding that to do so requires establishing lasting peer-to-peer relationships
- Savvy communication and dynamic presentation skills—both written and oral
- A collaborative, cooperative, and growth-oriented mindset
- Enthusiasm for students and teachers to pursue their passions, talents, and interests, both in and out of the traditional classroom
- A vision that is aligned with the needs of a dynamic and diverse staff
- A love of learning and love of school, and a willingness to support unique and unpredictable learning journeys of both young students and staff



HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of The Alexander Dawson School to identify exceptional teaching and learning leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

Gabriel Lucas
Principal, 12M Recruiting
jobs@12MRecruiting.com

APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED THROUGH FEBRUARY 27, 2020.

Candidates should email the following four separate PDF attachments to jobs@12MRecruiting.com with the subject heading **ADSRM DTL**:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Dawson search committee
- CV or résumé
- A list of four references (include each person's name, current organization, title, phone number, email, and past connection to you—though we will not contact any references without obtaining your permission first)
- Response to the following prompt:

What does modern teaching and learning look like to you? How would you inspire and lead school-wide change in areas such as CBE and PBL? And just as importantly, how would you help connect dots and weave together initiatives across a diverse landscape of educators and learners—without stifling the individual innovative mindsets of teachers and students?

